

**Academic Freedom Policy**

**City College Limited**

69 Steward Street

Birmingham

B18 7AF

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Title   | Academic Freedom Policy | Department   | Quality   |
| Location   | Sharepoint   | Author   | PWA |
| Approved by SLT   |   Yes | Date   | January 2021 |
| Last Review   | January 2022 | Next Review   | January 2023 |
| Version   | Author   | Issue date   | Summery   |
| V.1   | PWA | January 2021   | First draft   |
| V.2 | PWA | February 2022 | Review |

**Key Person(s)**

**Managing Director**

**Associate Director for Quality and Partnerships**

**Higher Education Manager**

**Chief of Staff**

**Academic Freedom Policy**

**Policy Statement**

City College strives to deliver the highest standard of teaching, learning and assessment to each of its students. The College believes in the basic principle of freedom of speech as defined below, protecting the rights of staff and students to hold their own opinions and to express them freely without interference providing those expressions do not compromise the safety of others. This includes the right to express views aloud through.

* Published articles, books or leaflets
* Television or radio broadcasting
* Works of art
* The internet and social media

All staff and students should be aware that joining the City College community involves obligations and responsibilities which are consistent with common principles within the law. The College believes freedom of expression within the law is an important principle to promote student curiosity. The College also recognises the need to ensure that staff and students have freedom, within the law, to question and test knowledge, and put forward new ideas that might be controversial or unpopular.

The overall aim of this policy is to promote, monitor and enhance equality of opportunity and inclusion throughout the College, with our stakeholders and partner organisations, raising levels of student enjoyment, engagement, achievement and enrichment. To do this, the aims of this policy are;

* To foster good relations between staff and students
* To ensure staff and students have the opportunity to question and test received wisdom
* To ensure staff and students are free to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have within the College

The following legislation is relevant to this policy;

* The Human Rights Act 1998
* Equality Act 2010
* Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
* Education Act 2011
* Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
* General Data Protection Regulation 2018
* Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
* Education Reforms Act 1988
* The guide for higher education providers and students’ unions

**Defining Academic Freedom**

Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This means everyone has the right to express lawful views and opinions freely, in speech or in writing, without interference from the state or other bodies carrying out public functions, including City College. This is true even when these views or opinions may offend, shock or disturb others.

The European Court of Human Rights has described the right to freedom of expression as one of the essential foundations of a democratic society because it gives everyone the right to exchange information, debate ideas and express opinions, including political views. Respectful debate and conversation help us to challenge discrimination, get rid of intolerance and harmful attitudes, and build strong, positive communities. Freedom of expression supports artistic, scientific and commercial development. Freedom of expression can mean both the spoken and written word, as well as actions, gestures and the display of images intended to show meaning.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

It shall be the duty of all staff, students and stakeholders to assist the College in upholding the principles of freedom of expression at all times when working for, with or in the interests of the College.

The College will not restrict debate or deliberation simply because the views being expressed may shock, offend or disturb others. In turn, the College expects all staff, students and stakeholders to show the same commitment by not obstructing or interfering with the rights of others to express views with which they might disagree.

All City College staff and students should bring this policy to the attention of any outside organisations who are providing additional services such as guest speakers or organising meetings, rallies and events. Any external speakers or the aims of any events are expected to uphold the principles of this policy and respect the wider values within the City College community in being sensitive to equality, diversity and inclusion.

If staff or students are organising external speakers or events, it is the duty of that student or staff member to ensure the proper security and organisation is in place. This might include stewarding and chairing of that meeting for the purpose of upholding the principles of freedom of expression and complying with aims of this policy

Where a student or member of staff wishes to engage with an external speaker or hold a meeting on College premises where the expression of views that may shock, offend or disturb others, the College shall not unreasonably refuse consent. The College reserves the right to refuse consent to any external speaker or meeting which involves or is reasonably expected to involve the expression of views that are unlawful. Staff and students who believe the refusal to be contrary and lawful can appeal the College decision using the City College Appeals Policy and Procedure without fear of reprisal or recrimination.

Any student refusing to observe the policy will be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Policy. Any staff refusing to observe this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

**Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

During the induction process, all students will be introduced to this policy to ensure they recognise the rights and responsibilities and the implications of academic freedom within the College and their learning journey.

Teaching, learning and assessment will be informed by principles of academic freedom, teaching styles should include opportunities for questioning and promote student curiosity. The development and improvement of teaching, learning and assessment is supported through the College Quality and Delivery Policy and the Staff Development Policy and monitored at Programme Management Board (PMB).

The exercise of academic freedom, since it carries with it legal duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society. The College therefore reserves the right to remove or prevent the implementation of any teaching, learning or assessment materials that are unlawful or designed or cause harm. Staff and students who believe removed materials to be contrary and lawful can appeal the College decision using the City College Appeals Policy and Procedure without fear of reprisal or recrimination.

**Related Policies**

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies including:

* Safeguarding Policy
* Prevent Strategy
* Equality and Diversity Policy
* Governance Code
* Health and Safety Policy
* Student Disciplinary Policy
* Safe Recruitment Policy
* E Safety Policy
* Bullying and Harassment Policy
* Whistleblowing Policy
* Complaints Policy and Procedure
* Fitness to Practice Policy
* Fitness to Study Policy