



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

Statement on Academic Freedom

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG COUNCIL

11 DECEMBER 2020

UOW Council Statement on Academic Freedom

The Council of the University of Wollongong notes with appreciation the Review of the Adoption of the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom by Emerita Professor Sally Walker and adopts the following Statement to collect into one document references to the University's safeguards of Academic Freedom. This Statement forms part of the process of consolidation of Academic Freedom that has been undertaken by means of a comprehensive review of University Policies, Codes and Guidelines in 2019, and by purposive amendments of them in 2020 to ensure consistency with principles of Academic Freedom, and that will culminate in 2021 in the adoption of a University governance instrument that holistically integrates these safeguards.

As an institution with a vision to inspire a better future through education, research and partnership, the University of Wollongong is committed to intellectual openness, empowerment and academic freedom and affirms the importance of institutional autonomy to achieving its aims.

Academic freedom at UOW is one of our defining values as expressed in our [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#). This involves the freedom to have different opinions and different ideas, and encouraging the asking of difficult questions and discovery of innovative solutions. It also comprises of the following elements:

- the freedom of academic staff to teach, discuss, and research and to disseminate and publish the results of their research;
- the freedom of academic staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry, to express their opinions and beliefs, and to contribute to public debate, in relation to their subjects of study and research;
- the freedom of academic staff and students to express their opinions in relation to the higher education provider in which they work or are enrolled;
- the freedom of academic staff to participate in professional or representative academic bodies;
- the freedom of students to participate in student societies and associations.
- the autonomy of the higher education provider in relation to the choice of academic courses and offerings, the ways in which they are taught and the choices of research activities and the ways in which they are conducted.

Our [Enterprise Agreement](#) offers a further definition which supports and strengthens these concepts.

Our governing legislation (the [University of Wollongong Act 1989 \(NSW\)](#)), [2020-2025 Strategic Plan](#), [University Code of Conduct](#), [Respect for Diversity Policy](#), [Student Conduct Rules](#), and [Campus Access and Order Rules](#) all safeguard and ensure that we adhere to academic freedom as a defining value and the freedom of lawful speech as an underlying principle of paramount value.

The exercise of these principles should not be unduly restricted nor their exercise unnecessarily burdened by restrictions or burdens, other than those imposed by legal obligations and as necessary to foster appropriate behaviours that respect the wellbeing of staff, students and visitors. Our [University Code of Conduct](#) provides the right for all members of our university community to experience a safe environment free from unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, vilification or bullying.

To assist staff in exercising their rights to make comments, our [Use of University Name in Public Statements Policy](#), [Social Media Policy](#) and [Inclusive Language Guidelines](#) offer appropriate guidance.

The University of Wollongong welcomes further feedback from its community on this issue and our [Complaints Management Centre](#) is an available avenue to raise any concerns.

STATEMENT APPROVED BY UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG COUNCIL ON 11 DECEMBER 2020