



ETC International College

Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom

December 2024

ETC International College ('the College') is an English Language Teaching Centre and a Higher Education Institution based in Bournemouth, Dorset, United Kingdom.

The College's mission is to be open to people, places, methods and ideas.

All members of the College's academic community, both students and staff, have freedom within the law to:-

- hold and express opinions;
- question and test established ideas or received wisdom;
- develop and advance new ideas or innovative proposals;
- present controversial or unpopular points of view;

In the exercise of this freedom we acknowledge that as members of a welcoming and inclusive community we have responsibilities to each other and to the wider society to:-

- value diversity and recognise that different people bring different perspectives, ideas, knowledge and culture and that this difference brings great strength;
- treat others with courtesy and respect, challenge inequalities, and anticipate and respond positively to different needs and circumstances;
- respect the rights of individuals to hold different beliefs and views and to express them through appropriate contribution to discussion and academic debate;
- communicate in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely, and exemplified by transparency and constructive dialogue.

This means that:-

- we will be academically rigorous, justify our views with evidence and academic argument and be willing to recognise the gaps and weaknesses in our own arguments;
- in promoting our ideas, we will make every reasonable effort to minimise the risks of any harm, either physical or psychological, arising for any person, institution or community;
- staff can exercise these academic freedoms without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges at the College.

The College's Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom is based on the 'Chicago Principles':-

Because the College is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the College community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. Except insofar as limitations on that freedom are necessary to the functioning of the College, the College fully respects and supports the freedom of all members of the College community "to discuss any problem that presents itself."

Of course, the ideas of different members of the College community will often and quite naturally conflict. But it is not the proper role of the College to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive. Although the College greatly values civility, and although all members of the College community share in the responsibility for maintaining a climate of mutual respect, concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community.

The freedom to debate and discuss the merits of competing ideas does not, of course, mean that individuals may say whatever they wish, wherever they wish. The College may restrict expression that violates the law, that falsely defames a specific individual, that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, that unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the College. In addition, the College may reasonably regulate the time, place, and manner of expression to ensure that it does not disrupt the ordinary activities of the College. But these are narrow exceptions to the general principle of freedom of expression, and it is vitally important that these exceptions never be used in a manner that is inconsistent with the College's commitment to a completely free and open discussion of ideas.

In a word, the College's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the College community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the College community, not for the College as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the College community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the College's educational mission.

As a corollary to the College's commitment to protect and promote free expression, members of the College community must also act in conformity with the principle of free expression. Although members of the College community are free to criticize and contest the views expressed at the College, and to criticize and contest speakers who are invited to express their views at the College, they may not obstruct or otherwise interfere with the freedom of others to express views they reject or even loathe. To this end, the College has a solemn responsibility not only to promote a lively and fearless freedom of debate and deliberation, but also to protect that freedom when others attempt to restrict it.

Source: 'Chicago Statement' University of Chicago via policyexchange.org.uk, 2018.

This version V2.0 updated December 2024 Board of Governors
Next update due December 2027



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Confirmation of Reading

I confirm I have read and understood the **Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom**

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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