



## Academic Freedom Policy

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## Document Revision History

### Version Log

<b>Committee / Approval Date</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Page Reference &amp; Summary</b>
Quality and Standards Committee 13.08.24	Head of Education & Curriculum	1.1 (updated 26th June 2024)	October 2024	Page 5 – Updated role titles & related policy titles

### Related Documentation

<b>Document Reference No. (Policy version / Supporting doc. #)</b>	<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Link or Dept. Owner</b>	<b>Document Title</b>
1		Registry	<i>Academic Appeals Policy</i>
48		Registry	<i>Student Disciplinary Policy</i>
24		HR	<i>Grievance Policy</i>

## 1. Academic Freedom Policy

1. *'Academic freedom'*: staff and student freedom to question and test received wisdom, teach, debate, study, and pursue knowledge research without interference, restriction or pressure from the School, commercial and political organisations, or the law.
2. Point Blank agrees and advocates the above definition of academic freedom, which is in accordance with the Education Act 1986; the Education Reform Act 1988; the Human Rights Act 1998; the Equality Act 2010 and Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 S.31 and informed by Sections VI and VII of the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel adopted by UNESCO.

Within this definition, Point Blank is committed to:

- a) Integrating and upholding academic freedom into the systematic operations of the School. Staff members and students will never be pressured into the curriculum or teaching against their conscience or the law. However, this freedom must be exercised within Point Blank's professional values, academic quality and standards and professional standards.
  - b) The recognition of the importance of respect and equal rights of all staff and students
  - c) The recognition that the freedom and liberty of people and academic pursuit is necessary in enabling innovation, independence, and a thriving academic community.
  - d) Ensuring that staff members have freedom of speech within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or the privileges they may have at their institutions.
  - e) Enabling staff members to contribute towards the curriculum through consultation or attendance at the Academic Board. All staff members will have the right to challenge new or existing ideas and processes and think for themselves.
3. In keeping with the above commitments, staff members and students at Point Blank are equally required when teaching, learning and publishing:
    - a) To recognise the importance of respecting the dignity and freedom of others. Staff members have a responsibility to uphold mutual respect of colleagues and fellow students when carrying out their duties, during discussion or disagreements and to promote respect for all opinions
    - b) To exercise their right to freedom of speech, debate and inquiry within the laws of the UK, and the School's policies. In particular, this policy, the School's Ethics Policy, and Sexual Harassment Policy.
    - c) To refrain from the expression of views which could be interpreted as discriminatory in any form
    - d) To maintain respect and ethics when acknowledging the work of colleagues, other academics and students, including during the involvement of external collaborators
    - e) To maintain due respect and the necessity of impartiality, confidentiality, evidence and fairness in carrying out their work or studies.

4. Staff members should be aware that in all public communication, they must clearly state that they are not speaking on behalf of or expressing the views of Point Blank unless the permission of the School is given.
5. Any occurrences of student, staff member or visitor actions not in keeping with this policy will be investigated. A resolution will normally be attempted via informal mediation and reconciliation first. If necessary, it will be adjudicated under the relevant disciplinary School policy.
6. Students may progress an issue through the stages outlined in the Complaints Policy.
7. If relevant to academic processes, students may choose to progress an issue through the Academic Appeals policy, or raise a concern with the Head of School & Facilities or Head of Education & Curriculum.
8. Students or staff may progress an issue or complaint through the Student Disciplinary policy.
9. Staff members may progress an issue through the staff Grievance policy.
10. Point Blank will assist the Police and the Crown Prosecution as necessary regarding any occurrences against the law. Criminal charges are expected to take precedence over School disciplinarys.