Purpose and Intent

Wesley Institute seeks to serve the common good by freely developing, disseminating, and exposing student and staff to knowledge and understanding that crosses a broad range of domains, disciplines, and perspectives. These ends are attained by an Institute-wide commitment to academic freedom. Academic freedom necessarily entails, but is not limed to, freedom from managerial intervention or other institutional censorship with respect to academic activities; other than interventions or censorship that are carried out in accordance with relevant statutory and legislative responsibilities (e.g., responsibilities pertaining to racial and sexual discrimination laws).

Definition

Academic freedom includes the right, without any additional restriction imposed by the Institute over and above that pertaining to all Higher Education providers in Australia, to:

1. teach and discuss issues relevant to teaching, learning and research;
2. carry out research and publish the results thereof;
3. acquire, preserve, and provide student access to material relevant to learning;
4. produce and perform creative works;
5. engage in service to the institution and in the community;
6. express appropriately opinions concerning the Institute and its administration; and
7. participate in professional activities and serve on representative professional bodies.

Responsibilities

The preservation, and constructive outworking, of academic freedom requires that academic staff maintain an active role in the governance, and in building the reputation, of the Institute. As such, academic staff are expected to:

1. contribute to committees and collegial governing bodies responsible for academic matters including but not limited to curriculum, assessment procedures and standards, appointment, tenure and promotion;
2. proactively seek information and advice so as to stay informed of developments pertaining to the growth, strategy, directions and activities of the Institute; and
3. avoid making public comment on matters not within their immediate areas of expertise and involvement.

Academic freedom is not absolute but is always qualified – by the discipline, and by the good of the academic community.\(^1\) Academic staff have the responsibility to use academic freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base research and teaching on an honest search for knowledge. Academic freedom must always be approached ethically. The rights of academic freedom enable academics to explore their disciplines, but ethically this does not provide a mandate to injure others.\(^2\) In particular, the teaching ethic demands that lecturers extend the principle of academic freedom to their students. Curricula, teaching and assessment must all provide for and respect open and free intellectual enquiry and expression.

\(^1\) AUQA Submission to Senate Enquiry into Academic Freedom, August 2008, page 3.
\(^2\) Ibid, page 3.
In the Community
All academic staff members have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, expression, assembly, and association. Academic staff will not be hindered or impeded in exercising their legal and civic rights as individuals, including the right to contribute to social change through action and free expression of opinion on matters of public interest. Academic staff will not suffer any institutional penalties due to the exercise of such rights.

References and Related Documents
AUQA Submission to Senate Enquiry into Academic Freedom
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011