



Academic Freedom

Code of Practice & Policy

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Responsible Committee:	SMT
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Linked policies:	<p>Academic Management Framework Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy Academic Appeals Policy Employee Handbook Safeguarding and Prevent Policy Anti-Bullying & Anti-Harassment Policy Equal Opportunities Policy Equality and Diversity Policy External Speakers Policy</p>
External reference:	<p>UK Quality Code UKSCQA/02 [March 2018] ‘...to [have] in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality’</p> <p>Equality Act 2010 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 OIA</p>
Audience:	Academic and other staff and stakeholders

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Oxford Business College's (OBC) approach to the key principle and practices of academic freedom, which is essential for the College as a place of learning, where ideas and opinions can be freely expressed. The College ensures that academic freedom is upheld through its corporate academic governance framework, academic management framework and policies and processes in line with academic, regulatory and legal requirements.

2. Purpose

Oxford Business College (OBC) sees academic freedom as vital for respecting each student, staff member or other stakeholder as an individual. It is the College view that opinion and debate in an educational context is of paramount importance. This is further supported by the College's commitment to ensuring that academic staff, along with visiting tutors and speakers, have freedom within the law to question and challenge received wisdom. To this end, the College encourages academic freedom among staff members to research, teach or communicate ideas or facts without detriment, recognising this as essential to the principles of a vibrant and enquiring academic environment.

In addition to our commitment to academic freedom, the College remains mindful of Prevent and Safeguarding policies along with anti-bullying and anti-discrimination measures. For this reason, teaching faculty members are encouraged to avoid opinionated debate on controversial issues that are not related directly to their field of study. If communicating opinions in public, staff should indicate clearly that they are not speaking on behalf of Oxford Business College (OBC) unless they have been authorised to do so by the Managing Director.

3. Scope

This Code of Practice applies to all staff members and stakeholders at Oxford Business College (OBC), whether employed permanently, temporarily or in an advisory capacity. It is specifically designed to provide academic staff with reassurance and guidance on how academic freedom is facilitated at the College.

4. Responsibilities of Academic Staff

Staff involved in academic activities should recognise that their exercise of rights incur specific responsibilities, including the obligation to respect the academic freedom of other members of the academic community, both within the College and externally, and to ensure fair discussion of opposing views.

Academic freedom requires individuals to ensure that any research they conduct is based upon on the honest search for truth, in accordance with the following ethical and professional standards:

- to seek to achieve the highest possible standards in their professional work
- to teach students effectively with the means provided by the College

- to ensure that the approved aims, objectives and content for each subject are covered
- to be fair and equitable to all students, irrespective of gender, race, religion, age, and sexual orientation, as well as those with disabilities or special education needs
- to ensure, within reason, that students have access to the broadest possible range of views about any topic being examined
- to encourage the free exchange of ideas between themselves and their students, and to be available to guide students through their studies
- to conduct research and disseminate the results of such research without prejudice
- to base their research on an honest search for knowledge with due respect for evidence, impartial reasoning and reporting
- to avoid conflicts of interest and to resolve them through appropriate disclosure and full consultation with Oxford Business College (OBC), initiated through contact with the Managing Director, and obtaining approval for any conflict of interest as and when required
- to be fair and impartial when presenting a professional appraisal of the work and performance of academic colleagues and students
- to undertake appropriate duties on behalf of the College, as required by professional and regulatory bodies

5. Practicing Academic Freedom

The College upholds the principles of academic freedom through the following practices, which are not exhaustive but are provided as clear examples:

- Supporting opportunities for academic discussion and debate in various bodies and platforms, which include, but are not restricted to, the Partnership, Programme Review and Development Committee (PPRDC), Strategic Planning and Advisory Committee (SPAC) Quality and Enhancement Committee (QEC), Personal Tutor Committee (PTC), Academic Board (AB) and Senior Management Team (SMT). These Committees and Boards provide opportunities for interaction between management, staff and other stakeholders.
- Encouraging regular engagement from academic staff in initiating, adapting and developing course content and methods of assessment wherever possible.
- Canvassing members of the College to contribute to decision making either directly, through participation in meetings or indirectly with management, student representatives or with external advisors and bodies.
- Making all papers and supporting documentation available for meetings (including minutes) to those they are intended for, limited only by confidentiality requirements.
- Ensuring full approval and consent by the College's Research Ethics Committee (REC) has been provided for academic research being conducted by staff or students at the College, particularly where primary research involving human participants is required

The senior management team (SMT) is committed to consulting widely and taking account of a range of views when developing and implementing policies and strategic plans in an honest and transparent debate. It is understood, however, that it may not always be practicable for the College to defer decisions until all interested parties have been able to express their views on the matter.

6. Code of Practice

All staff members are entitled to make use of academic freedom in order to express opinions which may be deemed annoying, offensive, in bad taste, or ill-mannered but which are not unlawful and may be deemed appropriate in a particular context, for example when teaching a particular course. It is contrary to the Code or Practice for any person, Board, Committee or other body within the College, to take any action in relation to an opinion or strongly held view, apart from reasonable, non-violent persuasion or peaceful protest.

Should academic freedom contravene or conflict with legislation such as the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, or the Equality Act 2010, the Managing Director may intervene. This will normally begin with an initial assessment and report on the matter in line with relevant guidelines in relevant policies. The Managing Director may also consult the SMT or College partners and validating bodies for guidance. At all times, the College's priority will be the safety, health and welfare of its students, employees, other stakeholders and visiting members of the public.