



# MLA COLLEGE

## MLA College Academic Freedom Policy

The governance and management of MLA College has been informed by the models of good practice operated across its parent companies, namely BAU Global, across its worldwide network of education providers and the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST), a registered charity with Royal Charter status.

The governance and management structures of MLA College were reviewed in July 2019 and as part of that review the College has committed itself to adopting public interest governance principles as well as complying with the relevant legal requirements under company and charity legislation. It has looked to the information and guidance offered by The Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance for all higher education providers, as well as the public interest principles that are cited by the Office for Students and the University and College Union's (UCU).

“ Academic staff at an English higher education provider have freedom 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 privileges they may have at the provider.”<sup>1</sup>

To meet this principle MLA College has adopted the University and College Union's (UCU) academic freedom policy<sup>2</sup> in its entirety to support staff and students in meeting the aims and principles of extending knowledge and understanding in society. Its statement is set out below and applies to staff of MLA.

“UCU statement on academic freedom”

---

<sup>1</sup> Office for Students <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/public-interest-governance-principles/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ucu.org.uk/academicfreedom>

1. “One of the purposes of post-compulsory education is to serve the public interest through extending knowledge and understanding and fostering critical thinking and expression in staff and students, and then in society more widely. Academic freedom is essential to the achieving these ends and therefore to the development of a civilised democracy.
2. Academic freedom includes the right(s) to:
  - freedom in teaching and discussion; freedom in carrying out research without commercial or political interference;
  - freedom to disseminate and publish one's research findings;
  - freedom from institutional censorship, including the right to express one's opinion publicly about the institution or the education system in which one works; and
  - freedom to participate in professional and representative academic bodies, including trade unions.
3. Academic freedom is also bound up with broader civil liberties and human rights. Higher and further education staff have the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, opinion, expression, association and assembly. Staff must not be hindered or impeded in exercising their civil rights as citizens, including the right to contribute to social change through free expression of opinion on matters of public interest. We recognise that this may touch upon sensitive or controversial issues.
4. Academic freedom also comes with the responsibility to respect the democratic rights and freedoms of others. In particular, the University and College Union (UCU) expects all its members to respect national rule 6.1.\*
5. Academic freedom requires the development of open, democratic and collegial forms of institutional governance, including access to proper whistleblowing procedures. UCU believes that academic and academic-related staff must play the pre-eminent role in determining the curriculum, assessment standards and research priorities. Academic freedom means that academic and academic-related staff should also have the right to elect a majority of representatives to academic bodies (Senates, Academic Boards etc) within their college or university, as well inclusion on governing bodies. Collegial decision-making should encompass decisions regarding curricula, research, administration, outreach and community work, the allocation of resources and other related activities.
6. Academic and academic-related staff must be free to criticise and publish without fear for their jobs. Academic freedom, therefore, is dependent upon proper employment conditions for higher and further education staff. Security of employment in the profession constitutes one of the major procedural safeguards of academic freedom and against arbitrary decisions by managements and funders.

\*Rule 6.1: All members and student members...shall refrain from all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination whether on the grounds of sex, race, ethnic or

national origin, religion, colour, class, caring responsibilities, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or other status or personal characteristic”.