

POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND INTEGRITY

CODE: P064

Section: Academia Procedure Owner: ARPB

Policy Owner: Academic Research and Publications Board

Procedure Owner: Chief Operations Officer – Academia and IT Department

1. Policy Overview

ITS is committed to the promotion of academic freedom, integrity, and free intellectual enquiry and expression. This commitment is consistent with the requirements imposed by the regulations of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority.

This Policy lies within the functions and responsibilities of the ARPB, in line with its Terms of Reference and other relevant policies, including the Plagiarism Policy.

2. Commitment to Scholarship and Academic Integrity

To realise its strategic goals that include the pursuit of intellectual knowledge and the nurturing of a scholarly research culture of the highest order, all ITS academics are expected to pursue academic research with full regard to the expected standards of scholarship in general and the individual academic disciplines in particular. This shall be regarded as a mark of excellence in higher and further education.

In support to this pursuit of knowledge, ITS commits to provide all academic staff with freedom of academic inquiry without undue fear of repercussion. Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of knowledge and should be interwoven throughout the fabric of an academic community – including managers, researchers, lecturers, and students.

When academics and students undertake intellectual enquiry, it is important that their academic freedom is leavened with the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. The Institute takes academic misconduct seriously and shall apply sanctions to members found guilty, after due process, of offences such as misrepresentation of personal work, improper use of scholarly research resources, fraud, plagiarism, inappropriate behaviour towards colleagues in pursuit of their own research, and misuse of data.

3. Respect for Academic Freedom

Academic freedom and its related responsibilities as recognised and practised by ITS have their roots in cultures commonly found in universities and other higher education providers. Therefore, subject to social, financial, and time constraints, academic staff and students may freely choose scholarly activity that supports, encourages, and drives the notion of intellectual enquiry. Furthermore, academic staff are entitled to freely present and discuss any subject as part of their contact duties with students as long as their behaviour does not break the Laws of Malta.

However, academics should be wary of introducing potentially controversial matters which have little or no relevance to the subject and must ensure that materials and concepts deemed necessary by their discipline and/or appropriate disciplinary bodies are well covered.

ITS makes a clear distinction between the academic's expressions as a member of staff and as a private citizen. In the latter case, the Institute's regulations are not applicable. However, academics are reminded that this distinction may not be clear to the public and that any expressions as a private citizen may impinge their standing as a scholar.

Therefore, ITS encourages academics to demonstrate academic and scholarly rigour, integrity, and decorum by demonstrating appropriate restraint, showing reasonable respect for the opinions of others, and ensuring that expressed notions are accurate and reasonably appropriate, without indicating that they are speaking on behalf of ITS or allowing such a perception to persist.

Academic staff must refrain from using their institutional affiliation when publicly expressing an opinion on topics outside their area of expertise and/or on contentious issues where their opinion may deviate from ITS's rules, regulations, and/or position.

ITS staff and students need to feel reassured that their personal opinions and values will be respected, irrespective of other people's different opinions and reactions, provided that their expression is in line with the Laws of Malta.

4. The Principle

The academic freedom, integrity, and free intellectual enquiry principle is when an opinion and/or its derivative actions threaten public safety (e.g., antivaccine, threats, agitation, harassment, and defamation). Academic freedom comes with associated responsibilities to exercise due professional competence. These include:

- a. Conducting teaching and research;
- b. Opening academic work to the critical scrutiny of others (not limited to peer reviews);
- c. Considering the impact that one's work may have on others; and
- d. Not negatively affecting the ability of others to freely engage in teaching and learning, research, and academic debate.