

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression: Curriculum and Education (Learning and Teaching) Work Stream

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of this Work Stream is to consider aspects of academic freedom and freedom of expression in the context of curriculum and education (learning, and teaching).

Guiding Question(s)

1. How can educators be aided to support students to become highly skilled in participating as citizens in society's contested spaces?

Remit

The Work Stream will:

1. liaise with the Curriculum Transformation Project team to foreground the critical skills of listening, dialogue, disagreeing well, and empathy, as key aspects of criticality throughout the Edinburgh curriculum.
2. provide guidance, including tools and frameworks, to help individuals to engage constructively in discussions around academic freedom, freedom of expression, and EDI matters.
3. develop supportive training guidance and materials for teaching staff, including Postgraduate Tutors, to help them to effectively engage with challenging conversations in tutorials and seminars.
4. create training, guidance, and materials for those chairing controversial educational events.
5. consider any gaps in existing University processes and training; e.g., support for staff in relation to the use of social media, guidance for Heads of School in facilitating and handling the expression of controversial views, and making recommendations informed by experience in other Higher Education contexts, and the lived experience of staff and students, reflecting a range of views across the University community, in respect of these.

Membership

The Work Stream membership will comprise those with relevant academic and professional expertise and experience.

Membership will be by invitation, following discussion between the Work Stream Convenor and Convenor/Deputy Convenor of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Coordinating Group. However, the group will be inclusive and will wish to engage a wide variety of stakeholders and contributions to develop its proposals and take forward and deliver the outcomes of the work.

Timescale and meeting arrangements

The number, frequency and format of meetings will be ordinarily monthly. However, additional meetings may be scheduled in support of the milestones and key deliverables. To ensure maximum participation, meetings may be online unless the purpose of the meeting would be better supported by a different mode.

The meeting agenda and any papers will normally be circulated via email, at least 5 working days prior to each meeting, and a note of actions will be circulated within 5 working days of each meeting.

Each Work Stream member is responsible for contributing opinions and relevant examples of experience for discussion at the group. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they will be invited to submit a written contribution to the group, to ensure their views are considered in their absence.

Reporting

The Work Stream will report regularly on its progress to the Coordinating Group and will support the achievement of deliverables within its focus area.

Governance and Operation

The Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression Curriculum and Education (Learning and Teaching) Work Stream reports to the Coordinating Group via the Work Stream Convenor.