



## ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

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### 1. PURPOSE

To articulate the principles for academic freedom for students and staff at Morling College.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purpose of this policy:

Key Term of Acronym	Definition
Academic freedom	The freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations, or public pressure.
AUT	Australian University of Theology
MC	Morling College

### 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students and staff at Morling College.

### 4. POLICY STATEMENT

Morling College (MC) considers that one of the fundamental prerequisites to achieving its aims and objectives is a commitment to the principle of responsible academic freedom.

## 5. PRINCIPLES

### MC PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

#### *Truth*

- 5.1 All truth is God's truth, and God has made it possible for humankind to discover his truth through biblical revelation and human investigation of the natural world.
- 5.2 Academic staff are free to pursue truth and knowledge within their disciplines in the classrooms, in their research and writings, and in other public statements in their field of professional competence.
- 5.3 Academic staff should exemplify intellectual honesty by striving for accuracy and making appropriate use of evidence, by carefully examining ideas, subjecting their work to critical scrutiny, and questioning orthodoxy when new evidence emerges; they should also provide opportunities for students to do the same.

#### *Voluntary Association*

- 5.4 MC affirms the right of scholars and students in a democratic state to freely associate and cooperate around a shared set of core principles.
- 5.5 MC will sustain an academic community in which faculty are free to engage in rigorous scholarly inquiry and expression within an intellectual tradition shaped by the evangelical Christian worldview.
- 5.6 MC asserts that scholarly activity within the context of an evangelical identity, as reflected in the Lausanne Covenant and in MC's Statement of Beliefs, Staff Code and Student Code, will extend knowledge and enrich academic disciplines, benefiting the local, national and international communities.

#### *Humility*

- 5.7 While affirming the truth of the Bible and the knowability of the natural world, MC recognises that people are fallible and may interpret the Bible, ideas and data imperfectly. Since no individual or institution can possess a complete knowledge of truth, MC representatives will maintain a humble stance towards the existing body of knowledge and retain a lifelong commitment to and engagement in further discovery.
- 5.8 Academic staff and students should respect each other's opinions and the opinions of those outside MC and defend the rights of others to hold different views.
- 5.9 Academic staff will not impute beliefs to students or others that are not supported by evidence or claimed by the other person or organisation.

### ***Hospitality***

- 5.10 MC welcomes visitors of all faiths and none into the conversations of its community.
- 5.11 In contrast to sceptical or relativistic approaches which entertain the presence of competing worldviews but deny the validity of ultimate claims to truth, the Christian virtue of hospitality acknowledges that real differences between worldviews exist, and in doing so creates a space for genuine dialogue and engagement to take place. Hospitality builds trust, leading strangers into friendship, and requires that neither the host nor the guest forsake their worldview while instructing and learning from the other around a shared table.

### ***Responsibility***

- 5.12 Academic freedom is not an end in itself, but is to be exercised responsibly, with due regard for the mission and values of MC.
- 5.13 Representatives of MC, including staff and students, should also be conscious that their public statements may lead to others forming perceptions of their faith, their profession, and their institution.

## **PRINCIPAL IMPLICATIONS**

### ***Academic Staff***

- 5.14 In the context of the above principles, Academic staff have the right and responsibility to exercise their professional and personal judgment in teaching and research. They are encouraged to disseminate the results of that research in the classroom, in dialogue with students, or through publications, without undue interference from MC management and Board and outside institutions or individuals.
- 5.15 MC administration will protect faculty from any request to retract or modify their research, publication or teaching merely because a complaint has been received.
  - 5.15.1 Only complaints alleging violations of professional standards, failure to comply with duly enacted and promulgated MC policies or advocacy of positions incompatible with the doctrinal and ethical commitments of MC (see s 5.6) will be considered, and then only when the evidence supporting the allegation is more substantial than mere rumour.
  - 5.15.2 Any disciplinary proceedings that are initiated in response to such complaints will take place in accordance with the principles of natural justice and any applicable MC and Australian University of Theology (AUT) policies and procedures.
- 5.16 Academic staff members believing their academic freedom has been unduly restricted may pursue resolution of this issue through the avenues established under the *Staff Grievance Policy*.

### ***Students***

- 5.17 MC is a Christian institution committed to the development of educational thinking within the framework of Christian faith. Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the various beliefs and values that are addressed in the units, and to subject their own beliefs to reasoned critique, but are not to be assessed based on their personal acceptance of the beliefs and values endorsed by MC. Students' work is assessed and their progression determined solely on the grounds of academic merit.
- 5.18 Students believing their academic freedom has been unduly restricted may pursue resolution of this issue through the avenues established under the *Grievance Policy: CCSC; Education; MRC* or (in the case of students enrolled in ACT awards), the AUT's *Grievance Resolution Policy - Students*.

## **6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND LEGISLATION**

### **INTERNAL**

- Grievance Policy: CCSC; Education; MRC
- Grievance Procedure: CCSC; Education; MRC
- Staff Code
- Staff Grievance Policy
- Staff Grievance Procedure
- Student Code
- Underperformance and Misconduct Policy

### **EXTERNAL**

- AUT Grievance Resolution Policy – Students
- Higher Education Standards Framework 2021

## **7. REFERENCES**

Statement of Academic Freedom, 8 November 2017, Vose Seminary

## **8. VERSION HISTORY**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Approval date</b>	<b>Effective date</b>	<b>Changes made</b>
4.00	Academic Board	12 March 2025	12 March 2025	General review and minor administrative updates.
3.02	Policy Coordinator	Feb 2023	Feb 2023	Header table updated to latest version, including addition of keywords.
3.01	CAoO	11 September 2022	11 September 2022	In 7.2, at the request of ACT, replaced Grievance Resolution Policy for Domestic Students or Grievance Resolution Policy for Overseas Students with Grievance Resolution Policy - Students

3.00	Academic Board	11 November 2020	11 November 2020	Added the 5. Principles. 6.2 Added as reflected in the Lausanne Covenant and in Morling College's Statement of Beliefs and Community Code and outlined the handling of disciplinary proceedings
2.00	Academic Board	February 2014	February 2014	
1.00	Academic Board			New Policy

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