

POLICY		
Ref. to Legislative Frameworks: HESF2021: Standards 6.1.4 / 6.7 (Part A); B1.1.1 (Part B) Higher Education Support Amendment (Freedom of Speech) Act 2021 National Code 2018: Standard 8.8.1 / 8.9	Academic Freedom and Intellectual Inquiry	
Version: 6.0	Policy Owner: Academic Board	Issued on: 18/09/2026 Review by: 18/09/2028

Revision History

Current Version	Description of Change(s)	Policy Developer(s)	Effective Date
6.0	Policy title changed to "Academic Freedom and Intellectual Inquiry". References to "free" in relation to intellectual inquiry have been removed. Policy statement and definitions updated. Policy Principles 1–4 updated. Responsibilities updated and additional responsibilities added.	Academic Dean, CEO and Compliance Manager	18/09/2026
5.3	Updated references to HESF 2021 Updated roles, Updated references	Compliance Manager and Academic Dean	09/03/2023
5.2	Revised "Free Intellectual Inquiry" statements Added references to National Code 2018	Quality Assurance Support Officer	25/01/2018

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to affirm the commitment of Academies Australasia Polytechnic (AAPoly) to lawful freedom of expression, academic freedom and intellectual inquiry within its higher education operations.

AAPoly recognises that the advancement of knowledge requires an environment where staff and students are able to explore ideas, question assumptions, and engage in open discussion and debate without fear of censorship or unreasonable interference, subject to applicable laws and lawful and reasonable institutional requirements.

This policy establishes principles that support robust intellectual engagement while promoting that such engagement occurs in a manner consistent with legal obligations and AAPoly's commitment to maintaining respectful, safe, and inclusive learning and working environments.

POLICY STATEMENT

AAPoly promotes academic freedom underpinned by AAPoly core values¹:

- Student-centred
- Respect
- Integrity
- Uphold equity and access principles
- Encourage intellectual inquiry through scholarly activities.

AAPoly develops and maintains an institutional environment in which freedom of expression, academic freedom and intellectual inquiry are upheld and protected. AAPoly believes that intellectual inquiry is inseparable from Academic Integrity, that the right to challenge accepted ideas carries the concurrent obligation to do so through honest, evidence-based, and transparent scholarly methods.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Academic staff including sessional and adjunct teaching staff
- Students
- Visiting scholars, guest lecturers, and researchers
- Any person participating in academic activities organised or authorised by AAPoly

It applies to academic activities, including but not limited to:

- Teaching and learning activities
- Academic research
- Academic publications
- Scholarly debate and discussion
- Academic presentations and seminars
- Institutional forums for intellectual discussion

¹ AAPoly's Strategic Plan (2025-2026)

DEFINITIONS

Academic integrity	Ethical conduct in academic endeavours, including rigour in academic work such as research, assignments and examinations, as well as avoidance of plagiarism or cheating, and the unethical or unauthorised use of Gen AI.
Intellectual inquiry	Systematic questioning to construct a sound thought or answer to enhance the existing body of knowledge about a subject matter. Inquiry must be conducted with "intellectual honesty," meaning the researcher/student must remain open to evidence that contradicts their own hypothesis.
Academic Freedom	According to the <i>Higher Education Support Act 2003</i> (Schedule 1), academic freedom focuses on the rights of staff to teach, research, and publish, and the rights of staff and students to engage in intellectual inquiry and public debate. It includes freedom from institutional censorship, the ability to express opinions about the provider, and institutional autonomy in course offerings.
Freedom of expression	Freedom of expression is the right of individuals to hold and impart opinions, ideas, and criticisms — through teaching, research, scholarship, public debate, or any other medium, without institutional censorship.

POLICY

1. AAPoly recognises:

- the importance of challenging accepted ideas and encouraging vigorous, respectful, and evidence-based debate;
- its academic staff members:
 - have the right and duty to exercise their own professional judgment in engaging in teaching and research and to disseminate the results of that research, without undue interference from any other party, provided that the rights of other parties are respected, and there is no breach of any relevant legislation;
 - have the right to undertake scholarship that informs their teaching and to conduct research that leads to the creation of new knowledge, provided that such activities are conducted in accordance with applicable legal, ethical, and institutional requirements, including ethics review and approval by the relevant ethics committee (when required).;
- that students must be encouraged to develop a capacity for critical judgment and independent thought;
- that students have the right to freedom of expression, and should be encouraged to examine and discuss questions of interest to them, and express opinions publicly, consistent with lawful and respectful conduct; and
- the responsible dissemination and communication of the outcomes of research as publications and creative works.

2. AAPoly is committed to:

- fostering open and respectful academic dialogue
- encouraging critical thinking and evidence-informed scholarly debate

- protecting academic and scholarly activities from undue external influence
 - ensuring academic decisions are made according to scholarly, ethical and institutional standards
 - providing an environment in which staff and students can express ideas without intimidation, harassment, bullying or discrimination
3. AAPoly will support academic freedom while ensuring compliance with:
- applicable laws and regulations
 - anti-discrimination and harassment legislation
 - institutional codes of conduct and professional standards
4. Academic freedom and freedom of expression must be exercised lawfully, respectfully, in good faith, and in accordance with applicable institutional policies, and do not protect or permit:
- unlawful conduct
 - harassment, bullying, discrimination, victimisation or intimidation
 - conduct that seriously disrupts teaching, learning, or institutional operations
 - misrepresentation of personal views as official institutional positions
 - the unethical, unapproved, or unauthorised use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in academic or research activities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that academic freedom and intellectual inquiry is supported within academic governance frameworks.
- The Academic Dean is responsible for communicating, implementing and monitoring the policy, and ensuring academic staff and students are familiar with and comply with it.
- The Associate Dean (Education) is responsible for communicating this policy to students and academic staff and supporting its implementation within academic teams.
- The Head of Academic Integrity is responsible for leading academic integrity education, advice, monitoring, reporting, and continuous improvement across AAPoly.
- The Program Coordinators are responsible for embedding and communicating this policy within their programs, supporting consistent application in teaching and assessment, and escalating academic integrity concerns where required.
- Academic/teaching staff are responsible for reading, understanding, applying, and modelling these principles in their teaching, research, scholarship, and assessment-related activities.
- Students are responsible for understanding and complying with this policy in their studies and academic work.

FEEDBACK

Queries or feedback about this policy should be directed to the Academic Dean through academicdean@aapoly.edu.au. The Dean will respond to the written question or feedback within two (2) weeks from the receipt, unless an extenuating circumstance requires an immediate response or action. The feedback and subsequent outcome will be documented in the version register which will form a part of quality assurance and continuous improvement of AAPoly.

REFERENCES

Source	Document Title
Internal	Academic Board Charter
	Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
	Academic Staff Scholarship Policy and Procedure
	Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination Prevention Policy and Procedure
	Higher Education Student Handbook
External	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
	Higher Education Support Amendment (Freedom of Speech) Act 2021
	TEQSA Guidance note: Academic Leadership
	National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018