

The Place
(London Contemporary Dance School)

Academic Freedom Policy

Introduction

The Place, with particular view to London Contemporary Dance School (LCDS), have agreed the following definition of academic freedom which is central to the Education Reform Act 1988.

Academic freedom is a term used to describe the law that allows for open and honest debate in an academic context. LCDS has a legal duty to ensure academic staff 'have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, 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 their institutions' (Education Reform Act 1988 section 202(2)(a)).

Academic freedom and responsibility are essential to the full development of the school and apply to teaching, research and creative activities. In the development of knowledge, research and creative activities, academic staff must be free to cultivate a spirit of inquiry and scholarly criticism and to examine ideas in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all academic staff at LCDS, including guest and visiting lecturers, who are engaged in research or in teaching.

LCDS will maintain the academic freedom of staff, which includes freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.

The rights of academic staff

LCDS will maintain the rights of staff undertaking academic activities as appropriate to their terms and conditions of employment, including:

- ensuring that academic staff 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;
- enabling academic staff to provide education, promote learning and engage in research efficiently and economically;

- allowing academic staff to have the ability to fulfil their functions without discrimination of any kind;
- enabling academic staff to teach without any interference, subject to accepted professional principles including professional responsibility and intellectual rigour with regard to standards and methods of teaching. Academic staff should play a significant role in determining the curriculum;
- having the ability carry out research work without any interference. Academic staff should also have the right to publish and communicate the conclusions of the research of which they are authors or co-authors.

Responsibilities of academic staff

Staff undertaking academic activities should recognise that the exercise of rights carries with it responsibilities, including the obligation to respect the academic freedom of other members of staff and to ensure fair discussion of contrary views. In particular the responsibilities of academic staff include:

- maintaining an effective, safe, and supportive learning environment which promotes an atmosphere of fairness and impartiality in their relationships with students. Academic staff will refrain from all forms of harassment, prejudice and unfair discrimination whether on the grounds of sex, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, or age, and in accordance with The Place Equal Opportunities Policy Statement.
- using their best efforts to promote learning of the specified unit and course material by students. At the beginning of a unit academic staff will provide the unit aims and outcomes, and the assessment criteria. These criteria should relate clearly to the academic purposes of the course and unit. Assessment feedback provided should be performed conscientiously, without prejudice or favouritism, and be consistent with the criteria stated.
- avoiding misusing the studio or classroom by presenting personal views on topics unrelated to the course subject matter. If the staff member finds it pedagogically useful to advocate a position on controversial matters, they exercise care to assure that opportunities exist for students to express and consider other views. Academic staff should encourage students to remain open to new ideas and will not reward agreement or penalize disagreement with their own views.

- basing their research and scholarship on an honest search for knowledge and truth. Teaching, research and scholarship should be conducted in full accordance with ethical and professional standards. They will respect and acknowledge the scholarly work of academic colleagues and students and, in particular, ensure that authorship of published works includes all who have materially contributed to, and share responsibility for, the contents of a publication;

An academic staff member who believes that they do not enjoy the academic freedom that LCDS endorses through this policy should raise their concerns through The Place Grievance Procedure.