

Thursday, 20 December 2018

The Hon Robert S French AC
Suite 2, Level 13
Allendale Square
77 St George's Terrace
Perth WA 6000

Dear Mr French,

Thank you for your correspondence dated 29 November 2018 advising of your independent review of policies supporting freedom of expression and intellectual inquiry in Australian higher education.

Please find attached information to address questions 1-3 of your request concerning University statutes, rules, regulations, policies and agreements that cover public engagement, comment and academic freedom. This information is contained in the following documents, also summarised in [Appendix 1](#):

- [Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 2010](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [RMIT University Enterprise Agreement 2018](#)
- [Staff Ethics and Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Freedom Commitment Statement](#)

The University does not have a standalone policy governing public comment by RMIT Staff or Students.

With respect to the latter aspect of your request, in 2016 Academic Board made academic freedom a strategic priority. The decision to do this stemmed from several incidents including:

- The controversial and ultimately unsuccessful proposal to establish the Bjorn Lomborg Consensus Centre at The University of Western Australia;

- La Trobe University's suspension and reinstatement of Roz Ward, the co-founder of the Safe Schools Coalition;
- The University of Chicago's letter to incoming students in August 2016 explaining that the University does not support "trigger warnings" or "safe spaces"; and
- External complaints to RMIT from community groups upset about proposed or actual academic papers or conferences the content of which they found offensive.

An initial strategic conversation of the Academic Board included a panel of guests invited to discuss academic freedom. Panel members were chosen to broadly represent various opposing positions on this topic, from those expected to champion freedom of speech to those who might be expected to see safety and the need to protect minorities as more important values. Panel members included a lawyer from a legal service representing sex workers, an economist known publicly for championing freedom of speech, and students.

Despite the diversity of panel members, the discussion ended up with a near consensus. It was agreed that while academic freedom was an important value, the RMIT academic community had the right to temper that value in practice to ensure that the powerful could not use their voices to silence others by humiliating or belittling them, and that minorities in particular should be supported to ensure that their views are well heard. Importantly, how this pragmatic view would be operationalised was not discussed.

Through this discussion, the Board determined that the University needed to a) improve the way in which it enshrined the rights of academics to pursue knowledge, and b) strengthen the mechanisms available to it to assess claims that the powerful were using their voices to harm in the course of knowledge creation and/or dissemination.

This conversation was continued through a University-wide forum hosted by the Board, and resulted in the development of the University's [Academic Freedom and Responsibility Commitment Statement](#). The Statement was developed collegially and openly with the University Community via Academic Board with Council oversight and support.

The Commitment Statement augments the University's [Staff Ethics and Integrity policy](#) which includes a section added in 2016 entitled '*Intellectual freedom and RMIT Group values and social responsibility*'. The provision is designed to guide how complaints involving academic freedom are managed, including the role of the Academic Board to consider and provide independent academic advice to management on how complaints about academic freedom should be addressed.

Underpinning this approach is the idea of separating conceptually academic governance and management. At the time the section was added, it was felt that many of the recent national and international controversies over academic freedom stemmed from university management becoming too quickly involved, without appropriate reference to the views of academic staff and students. The policy provision provides Academic Board advisory powers over complaints to do with academic freedom, with management reserving the right to make a final decision.

The Academic Board remains active in monitoring cases in the national and international context on academic freedom and the University's role as a site of public discourse. This continued conversation has actively engaged and challenged the Academic Board, Council and Management, and has stress tested the University's policy provisions in this space.

In July 2018, the Staff Ethics and Integrity policy (discussed above) was invoked to assess a complaint regarding external speakers at a conference convened by an RMIT Academic staff member. The sub-committee convened under the policy was composed of three professors representing each academic College, nominees of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and the Deputy Vice Chancellor-Research and a PhD student, and was chaired by a senior professor nominated by the Chair of the Board (the latter stood down from this role due to a potential or perceived conflict of interest).

The sub-committee concluded that the conference should proceed and provided this advice to senior university management and the Vice-Chancellor. While the speakers were assessed to have views that were perceived by many Board members to be deeply offensive and contrary to RMIT's publicly stated values, the event was deemed to be in the academic's area of scholarly expertise and that it was an appropriate exercise of academic autonomy for them to determine the scheduled speakers.

In drawing this conclusion, the panel considered a range of mitigating factors including:

- That the event program represented a wide and diverse cross section of expertise and opinion on the overall conference theme;
- That no one speaker was provided a privileged platform, and that the event design promoted a plurality of voices and views;
- With respect to the non-academic speakers, that cross sectoral representation appeared to be a design principle of the event and reflected a diversity of views; and
- That one of the proposed speakers who was deemed by the complainants to be particularly offensive in their views was to be a panel member and not a speaker as such.

Reflecting the nature of matters pertaining to deeply held values, the outcome was not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties and did not sit comfortably with many involved in the decision-making process. However, having an articulated policy allowed the Board as the peak academic governance body to provide independent advice to management, and enabled transparency of process and deliberation. The matter was dealt with effectively and gave all affected parties the right to be heard.

A post-implementation review is currently being conducted to ensure the policy is designed to best draw on appropriate expertise, mitigate the potential, perceived or actual conflict of interest for staff who may be required to exercise decisions and actions in a management capacity at a later point, and to respond in a timely way to high risk, time sensitive matters.

In conclusion, RMIT like many Universities in Australia and globally is deeply attuned to ensuring it upholds its legislative obligations relating to intellectual freedom and free speech under the Act as a condition of operation. The Academic Board will continue to actively review RMIT's policy settings and engage the university community in discussion on matters of speech on campus and general principles of academic freedom.

I am strongly of the view that matters such as this one go to the heart of what a university is about. But by definition, this cannot be determined by fiat. What this means in practice should be allowed to play out in different ways according to the preferences and views of the academic staff (and students) of each institution. It is a profoundly disrespectful process to force others to adhere to a crucial policy provision without them being allowed to have a say in the condition of their own existence.

I am delighted with the way that RMIT has engaged with this most crucial of issues over the last five years, and in particular with the way that senior university management and University Council have encouraged such a highly consultative process to determine our university's position on this matter.

We look forward to the review findings to contribute to these ongoing institution level discussions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Hayward', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor David Hayward
Chair, RMIT University Academic Board

Instrument	Section	Clause/provision
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 2010	Part 2—Constitution and governance of the University, Section 5 - Objects of the University,	(e) to serve the Victorian, Australian and international communities and the public interest by— (i) enriching cultural and community life; (ii) elevating public awareness of educational, scientific and artistic developments; (iii) promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society;
Code of Conduct	5. Recognising intellectual freedom	5.1. Staff have a general right to intellectual freedom of enquiry and expression. This applies to areas of intellectual life over which the academic can demonstrate that they possess a level of expertise. In particular, staff should: 5.1.1. Act responsibly with respect for the intellectual property rights of others. 5.1.2. Exercise intellectual freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for and dissemination of knowledge. 5.1.3. Support the role of the University as a place of independent learning and thought, where ideas may be put forward and reasoned opinion expressed freely while maintaining respect for and openness to others. 5.2. Intellectual freedom does not justify poor behaviour or disrespectful treatment of others.
RMIT University Enterprise Agreement 2018	Chapter Two Part 2A: Academic employment	cl. 36.5 An Academic Employee is expected to support the role of the University as a place of independent learning and thought, where ideas may be put forward and reasoned opinion expressed freely while maintaining respect for and openness to others. cl. 36.7 Academic Employees have the right to participate and express opinions in public debates about issues and ideas related to their area of expertise and higher education issues generally.
Staff ethics and Integrity Policy	5. Intellectual freedom and RMIT Group values and social responsibility	5.1. Where necessary, a Sub-Committee of Academic Board is convened to consider and provide advice on academic and research activities that may be thought to conflict with the RMIT Code of Conduct, objects or values. 5.2. The Sub-Committee considers significant, high-risk activities which cannot be resolved via existing processes. 5.3. The Sub-Committee is chaired by the Chair of Academic Board. 5.3.1. Three Professors with relevant disciplinary expertise (one chosen from each College); 5.3.2. One Vocational Education teacher; 5.3.3. One PhD candidate; 5.3.4. Chair of Research Committee; and 5.3.5. Chair of Education Committee. 5.4. The Sub-Committee's recommendation is submitted to Academic Board for approval. 5.5. The Sub-Committee's recommendation and the decision of Academic Board are available as part of the Academic Board minutes.
Academic Freedom Commitment Statement	In toto	

**PART 2—CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE
UNIVERSITY**

Division 1—The University

4 Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

- (1) Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology is declared to have been established as a University on 1 July 1992.
- (2) The University established in accordance with subsection (1) and as constituted under the **Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Act 1992** as in force immediately before its repeal—
 - (a) continues in existence under this Act; and
 - (b) is a body politic and corporate by the name Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.
- (3) The University consists of—
 - (a) the Council; and
 - (b) the staff other than the staff of any class that is designated from time to time by the Council not to be staff for the purposes of this section; and
 - (c) the graduates; and
 - (d) the students; and
 - (e) the emeritus professors of the University.

5 Objects of the University

The objects of the University include—

- (a) to provide and maintain a teaching and learning environment of excellent quality offering higher education at an international standard;

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- (b) to provide vocational education and training, further education and other forms of education determined by the University to support and complement the provision of higher education by the University;
 - (c) to undertake scholarship, pure and applied research, invention, innovation, education and consultancy of international standing and to apply those matters to the advancement of knowledge and to the benefit of the well-being of the Victorian, Australian and international communities;
 - (d) to equip graduates of the University to excel in their chosen careers and to contribute to the life of the community;
 - (e) to serve the Victorian, Australian and international communities and the public interest by—
 - (i) enriching cultural and community life;
 - (ii) elevating public awareness of educational, scientific and artistic developments;
 - (iii) promoting critical and free enquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate within the University and in the wider society;
 - (f) to use its expertise and resources to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia in its teaching, learning, research and advancement of knowledge activities and thereby contribute to—
 - (i) realising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations; and
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Code of Conduct

Defines how RMIT's values are demonstrated in the day-to-day activities of the University

This process belongs to the [Staff ethics and integrity policy](https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy.html) ([/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy.html](https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy.html)).

What is it?

The Code of Conduct for Staff provides definition on how RMIT's values are demonstrated in the day-to-day activities of the University. The Code outlines the expected standards of behaviour and how members of the RMIT staff community are to conduct their duties while representing RMIT and working towards achieving the goals of the University. All standards contained in this Code are in addition to the general obligations imposed on staff members including implied duties such as the duty of fidelity and to act in good faith.

Who is it for?

The Code applies to all staff, contractors, agency staff, honorary and visiting appointments and other personnel involved with the University. Other members of the University community who are covered by this Code include members of University committees, the Council and its committees. The Code does not apply to staff employed by RMIT subsidiaries and offshore partner institutions of RMIT.

Principles

1. Respecting others

1.1. When working with others, staff are expected to treat students, other staff and members of the community with respect for their rights and obligations by:

1.1.1. Being courteous, honest and fair when dealing with others and when making decisions.

1.1.2. Treating all people justly, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion, marital status, age, political conviction or other attributes.

1.1.3. Acting in ways that support the reputation of staff, students, clients or partners of the University.

1.1.5. Respecting cultural backgrounds of staff, students, clients and partners and conducting activities sensitive to the cultural context in which staff are representing RMIT.

1.1.6. Avoiding behaviour which might reasonably be perceived as harassment, discrimination, bullying or intimidation.

2. Behaving professionally

2.1. Staff are expected to carry out their work duties in a professional and conscientious manner at all times by:

2.1.1. Behaving in accordance with RMIT's values.

2.1.2. Behaving in accordance with relevant University policies, contractual obligations or agreements and legislation,

2.1.3. Behaving ethically and taking action to prevent unethical practices.

2.1.4. Maintaining confidentiality of RMIT information which the reasonable person would consider confidential.

2.1.5. Seeking to attain the highest possible standards of performance and providing accurate, timely and useful information to colleagues and students.

2.1.6. Ensuring any public comments made in the University's name are authorised and in accordance with RMIT's Brand and engagement policy.

2.1.7. Responsibly controlling the use of substances that could adversely affect behaviour or performance in line with RMIT's Health, safety and wellbeing policy.

2.1.8. Reporting fraud or corrupt conduct to appropriate internal or external authorities

2.1.9. Dressing and maintaining an appearance in accordance with standards appropriate to the duties undertaken and the responsibilities held.

2.1.10. Conducting activities in a manner that supports health, safety and wellbeing for all affected members of the RMIT community.

2.1.11. Refraining from acting in any way that would unfairly harm the reputation of the University.

3. Avoiding conflict of interest

3.1. Staff must take reasonable steps to avoid any actual or potential conflict of interest and act in the best interests of the University including, but not limited to by:

3.1.1. Performing their duties primarily in the interests of the University's mission and strategic directions.

3.1.2. Disclosing actual or potential conflict of interest and withdrawing themselves immediately from the situation giving rise to the conflict.

3.1.3. Not misusing the influence of their position to pursue personal, sexual or financial relationships with other staff, students or members of the community.

3.1.4. Not accepting gifts which go beyond common courtesies consistent with ethical and accepted business practices, or which could be considered bribes.

3.1.5. Declaring private paid outside work, including directorships and board memberships in line with RMIT's [Conflict of interest policy process](https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html) ([/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html](https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html)).

4. Using University resources

4.1. Staff are expected to use all University facilities, equipment and processes efficiently, carefully and in a proper manner by:

4.1.1. Using University resources economically and securing resources against theft, damage, or misuse.

4.1.2. Being green in the workplace: pursuing the principles of sustainability and understanding the impacts and opportunities of their work.

4.1.3. Not using University resources for personal purposes unless permission has been granted in accordance with relevant University policy.

5. Recognising intellectual freedom

5.1. Staff have a general right to intellectual freedom of enquiry and expression. This applies to areas of intellectual life over which the academic can demonstrate that they possess a level of expertise. In particular, staff should:

5.1.1. Act responsibly with respect for the intellectual property rights of others.

5.1.2. Exercise intellectual freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for and dissemination of knowledge.

5.1.3. Support the role of the University as a place of independent learning and thought, where ideas may be put forward and reasoned opinion expressed freely while maintaining respect for and openness to others.

5.2. Intellectual freedom does not justify poor behaviour or disrespectful treatment of others.

6. Breach of the Code of Conduct

6.1. Failure to behave in accordance with the RMIT Code of Conduct for Staff may lead to disciplinary action.

6.2. Staff should report suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct in the first instance to their manager. Particular breaches may be dealt with under the relevant University policy in instances where the policy has a defined reporting or review procedure.

6.3. Suspected breaches should be dealt with under the appropriate review procedure prior to reporting to the RMIT Ombudsman. Nothing in this Code of Conduct restricts the right and ability of staff to report concerns as set out within the [Protected disclosure policy process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html).

Related links

[Conflict of interest policy process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html)

[Protected disclosure policy process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html)

Status & details

Custodian: Senior Manager, Policy & Workplace Relations

Operational responsibility: Human Resources

Effective from: 2 December 2010

Last updated: 14 March 2014

Contact: [hr.assist@rmit.edu.au \(mailto:hr.assist@rmit.edu.au\)](mailto:hr.assist@rmit.edu.au)

Document reference: POL/2011/00120

CHAPTER TWO

PART A – ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

36 BEING AN ACADEMIC EMPLOYEE AT RMIT

Academic Employee employment arrangements

- 36.1 Academic Employees are entitled to pursue a diverse range of career options in line with the University's strategic goals. The career options will incorporate the Domains of:
- (a) Engagement
 - (b) Teaching
 - (c) Research
- 36.2 Academic Employees are also entitled to consult, subject to RMIT's policy on Conflict of Interest, outside the University, and to engage in non-teaching work related to the development of their professional experience.
- 36.3 An Academic Employee will contribute to:
- (a) Internal and external engagement activities, scholarship and research, professional and community service activities;
 - (b) educating students to contribute creatively, critically and responsibly to their professions, vocations, employers and the community in an international and local context;
 - (c) the academic teaching and learning program, including preparation, marking and student consultation; and
 - (d) the administration and management of a School, Department, academic organisational unit or other organisational unit and/or an interdisciplinary area.
- 36.4 The specific duties of an Academic Employee will vary from time to time but should be consistent with the Minimum Standards for Academic Levels (MSALs) located in **clause 40** and the academic activities and related provisions of this clause.
- 36.5 An Academic Employee is expected to support the role of the University as a place of independent learning and thought, where ideas may be put forward and reasoned opinion expressed freely while maintaining respect for and openness to others.
- 36.6 Academic Employees will at all times:
- (a) perform their duties diligently and honestly; and
 - (b) provide a duty of care to their students; and
 - (c) act in a manner that ensures the efficient and effective expenditure of University funds.
- 36.7 Academic Employees have the right to participate and express opinions in public debates about issues and ideas related to their area of expertise and higher education issues generally.

Principles of academic resourcing, availability and travel

- 36.8 The University will provide the facilities, office space, technical systems and services necessary for all Academic Employees to fulfil their responsibilities of engagement, teaching and research.

Staff ethics and integrity policy

Sets out expected standards of behaviour for RMIT staff and rules for managing real or potential conflicts between academic freedom and University values.

Who is it for?

All staff, including consultants, visiting researchers, contractors, third party suppliers, honorary appointments, visiting appointments and agents of the organisation who have access to RMIT's information systems or information, in the RMIT Group.

The [Student conduct policy \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/student-conduct-policy.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/student-conduct-policy.html) sets out the expected standards of behaviour for students and the rules of management of student misconduct.

Policy provisions

1. Code of Conduct

1.1. RMIT Group staff, contractors, agency staff, honorary appointments, visiting appointments and members of University committees, the Council and its committees must abide by the *Code of Conduct* approved by Council.

1.2. Complaints about behaviours that breach the [Code of Conduct \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/code-of-conduct.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/code-of-conduct.html) are reported via the *Staff issue assessment and intervention policy process* or the [Student or third party complaints policy process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/complaints-resolution-policy/student-third-party-complaints-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/complaints-resolution-policy/student-third-party-complaints-process.html).

2. Protected disclosures

2.1. Any individual can make a disclosure to Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission about the conduct of staff or officers of the RMIT Group.

2.2. Disclosers remain liable for their own conduct even though this conduct has been disclosed.

2.3. Disclosures must be made in accordance with the [Protected disclosure policy process](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html) ([/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html)), approved by the Chief Risk Officer.

3. Acceptable use of information and communications technology

3.1. Staff, consultants, visitors, contractors, third party suppliers, honorary appointments, visiting appointments and agents of the organisation who have access to RMIT's information systems or information, regardless of whether the information is held on RMIT's premises or at other locations, and/or are bound by RMIT policy where their contract of engagement with the University specifically provides for this must abide by the Acceptable use of information and communication technology standard approved by the Chief Information Security Officer.

3.2. Any use of the University's ICT facilities contrary to this standard may result in withdrawal of access.

3.3. The RMIT Group does not assume legal responsibility or liability for any content placed or communications made on social media platforms by its employees outside of the RMIT Group business.

3.4. Individuals are responsible for content placed or communications made on social media platforms.

3.5. ITS monitors and reviews online behaviour.

3.6. Exemptions to the [Acceptable use of information and communications technology standard](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/information-technology-policy/acceptable-use-of-technology-standard.html) ([/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/information-technology-policy/acceptable-use-of-technology-standard.html](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/information-technology-policy/acceptable-use-of-technology-standard.html)), must be sought via the *ITS policy exemption request policy process* approved by the Chief Information Security Officer.

3.6.1. Exemptions must be sought prior to undertaking investigations or research.

4. Conflict of interest and outside activities

4.1. Staff members disclose potential or actual conflicts of interest between their personal interests and their duties, obligations and responsibilities to RMIT. [Conflict of Interest guidelines](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process/coi-guideline.html) ([/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process/coi-guideline.html](https://www.rmit.edu.au/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process/coi-guideline.html)) for staff are approved by the:

4.1.1. Senior Manager, Policy and Workplace Relations for RMIT University

4.1.2. Chief Executive Officer for RMIT Training

4.1.3. The President RMIT Vietnam

4.1.4. The Executive Director RMIT Europe.

4.2. It is the responsibility of each staff member, contractor and consultant to understand and disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest via the [Conflict of interest policy process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html\)](https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html), approved by the:

4.2.1. Senior Manager, Policy and Workplace Relations for RMIT University

4.2.2. Chief Executive Officer for RMIT Training

4.2.3. The President RMIT Vietnam

4.2.4. The Executive Director RMIT Europe

4.3. For all fixed term and continuing staff, private paid outside work must be disclosed and approved where the work:

4.3.1. Directly or indirectly involves the professional expertise for which the staff member is employed at RMIT, regardless of when the work is undertaken. This includes external directorships and co-directorships of companies; and/or

4.3.2. Would be undertaken during a staff member's required days and hours of work;

4.3.3. Where the University has not stipulated set days and hours of work, the requirement for disclosure applies to private paid outside work that would be undertaken from Monday to Friday inclusive;

4.3.4. This does not imply any requirement for hours of attendance for academic staff; and/or

4.3.5. Impacts on the staff member's ability to perform in their current role in any way.

4.4. Any other potential or actual conflicts of interest between outside paid work and a staff member's duties, obligations and responsibilities to RMIT also must be declared.

4.5. For the purposes of disclosure, private paid outside work includes work where a benefit flows to a business enterprise with which the staff member or their immediate family or relatives are associated.

5. Intellectual freedom and RMIT Group values and social responsibility

5.1. Where necessary, a Sub-Committee of Academic Board is convened to consider and provide advice on academic and research activities that may be thought to conflict with the RMIT Code of Conduct, objects or values.

5.2. The Sub-Committee considers significant, high-risk activities which cannot be resolved via existing processes.

5.3. The Sub-Committee is chaired by the Chair of Academic Board.

5.3.1. Three Professors with relevant disciplinary expertise (one chosen from each College);

5.3.2. One Vocational Education teacher;

5.3.3. One PhD candidate;

5.3.4. Chair of Research Committee; and

5.3.5. Chair of Education Committee.

5.4. The Sub-Committee's recommendation is submitted to Academic Board for approval.

5.5. The Sub-Committee's recommendation and the decision of Academic Board are available as part of the Academic Board minutes.

6. Breaches of this policy

6.1. A breach of this policy and supporting documents may result in disciplinary actions. Depending on the nature and impact of the breach, other action may be instigated, including legal action.

Supporting resources

[Code of Conduct \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/code-of-conduct.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/code-of-conduct.html)

[Conflict of Interest Policy Process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process.html)

[Conflict of Interest Guideline \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process/coi-guideline.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/coi-process/coi-guideline.html)

[Protected Disclosure Policy Process \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process.html)

[Protected Disclosure Guideline \(/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process/protected-disclosure-guideline.html\)](/content/rmit-ui/en/about/governance-and-management/policies/staff-ethics-integrity-policy/protected-disclosure-process/protected-disclosure-guideline.html)

[Staff/Student Relationships Policy Process \(http://www1.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=dnc4mfrslrfyz\)](http://www1.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=dnc4mfrslrfyz)

Status & details

Custodian: Chief Operating Officer

Operational responsibility: Human Resources

Academic Freedom and Responsibility

This Statement is offered as a guide to the choices RMIT academic staff and students make about how and what they research and teach and the terms on which they engage in public commentary.

Commitment Statement

RMIT University was founded on the land of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation and we pay our respects to their elders, past, present and future.

Universities are important sites for the production and re-production of knowledge. Universities are also places where free and open inquiry thrives and where systems of knowledge are critiqued and challenged. Claims and assertions are not taken at face value and cannot be based simply on emotion and personal belief; arguments must be substantiated by rigorous scholarship and supported by evidence.

In this context, RMIT University is a community of scholars and teachers united by the shared commitment to the value of research, education and scholarship for the practical betterment of humanity. Our intellectual community includes teachers, academics, researchers and students who span the vocational and higher education spectrum.

RMIT University upholds and protects the right of members of our community of scholars to be intellectually curious, to be forthright in the respectful expression of informed views and to be able to express their views free from undue institutional constraint.

Scholars exercising their right to academic freedom do so with an awareness of – and acceptance of – their responsibilities with respect to satisfying the principles of academic and research integrity, including declaring any relevant affiliations and potential conflicts of interest, and acknowledging the rights of others to express differing views.

RMIT University recognises that given their role in producing, re-producing and critiquing knowledge, members of our community of scholars often speak from positions of power and influence. Our commitment to being intellectually curious is founded on the inclusive principle that the advancement of knowledge is best achieved through active participation of marginalised groups.

Scope

This Commitment Statement - and Commitment Statements addressing other priorities like student mental wellbeing - will sit alongside RMIT's values and will help to contextualise RMIT policy. This Statement – which applies to RMIT staff and students – covers all activities related to the production, re-production and critiquing of knowledge, including teaching and research activities.

The status and proposed effect of the Statement

This Statement is offered as a guide to the choices RMIT academic staff and students make about how and what they research and teach and the terms on which they engage in public commentary.

Can the Statement be used to discipline staff or students?

No. It is intended to be an ethical guide to underpin academic activity at RMIT University. This Statement is consistent with RMIT's values – passion, impact, inclusion, agility, courage and innovation.

Rules regarding disciplinary proceedings for staff and students are set out in the relevant policies.

This Statement cannot be used by RMIT staff and students as a justification or defence for behaviour that is unlawful. Investigations of conduct that is in breach of RMIT policies regarding staff and student conduct will be managed in accordance with the relevant policy processes.

Can someone make a complaint based on an allegation that the Statement has not been honoured?

Yes. Those who feel that a member of RMIT's intellectual community may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Statement may write to the Chair of the Academic Board setting out their complaint. The Chair may decide to investigate the complaint, drawing on the advice of a panel of experts. The outcome of the investigation is non-binding but is to be used to try to reach an amicable settlement of the complaint with a view to upholding high standards. The Chair may recommend that the matters raised be referred to University management for their consideration under the authority granted to them through other policies (including the Code of Conduct).

Explore more

[Our values \(/about/our-values\)](#)
