![[UCU logo]]()

**University of Liverpool UCU Academic Charter**

The University of Liverpool University and College Union defends academic freedom as a fundamental foundation for the work of the academic in research, professional life and wider society. Specifically, the UCU upholds the following principles as applying to any and all staff engaged in academic work:

* **Academic freedom**

A core principle of Higher Education widely recognised by United Nations agencies, non-government agencies, educational bodies and individual nations is the importance and protection of academic freedom. University staff should have the right to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and to state controversial or unpopular opinions, and not be disadvantaged, or subject to less favourable treatment by their employer for the exercise of this freedom.

Academic freedom for these purposes then is understood in terms of both: active institutional support; and restraint from institutional interference.

* **Academic autonomy**

The pursuit of knowledge depends on the academic freedom of scholarly practitioners and academic bodies. Academic practitioners must be guaranteed academic autonomy to question, investigate and test current paradigms and present new knowledge freely amongst peers and the wider community. Academic practice must exist in an environment free from bias and without fear of the need to misrepresent or conceal scholarly outputs.

This applies to the conduct of research, the publishing of research findings, the design of curricula content and student teaching.

* **The right to tolerance of divergent opinion and freedom from political interference**

Academic practitioners must be free to hold, express and debate divergent academic perspectives, regardless of organisational agendas or wider societal pressures, including commercial, political or other imperatives which might preclude bias regarding academic opinions or outputs.

* **Freedom of expression**

The Education Act (No 2) 1986 requires the University to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for its employees, students and visiting speakers. This also includes the duty to ensure, as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any of the University’s premises is not denied to any individual or body of persons on the grounds of their beliefs, views, policies or objectives. Section 43 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986 requires under subsection 3 that the governing body of the establishment shall issue, and keep up to date, a Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, setting out the procedures to be followed by students and staff in connection with the organisation of meetings and activities which fall within any class specified within this Code.

The UCU calls upon the University to further undertake to ensure that no member of the University or visiting speaker by act, association or incitement violates the rights of any other individual or group because of their ethnicity, religious identity, disability status or sexual orientation (or any other kind of social characteristic and/or disadvantage).

* **The University as a public/ publicly accountable institution**

The role of Quality Assurance and regulatory frameworks are essential for academic practice to reflect the pursuit of knowledge without bias. Additionally, the University of Liverpool and wider Higher Education sector plays an important role as a driver of civic development, social meritocracy and stimulus for regional and national prosperity. As such, the University should remain an independent but publicly accountable institution, regulated within the frameworks of Higher Education agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Higher Education Funding Council for England and should not - at present or in the future - pursue a path toward de-regulation to become a non-statutory educational provider, nor seek to deprecate those crucial civic functions previously described.

* **The collegiate model of higher education**

The University must safeguard its historical collegiate approach to Higher Education. Specifically this is grounded in an academic environment which is research and scholarship-led, conducting academic affairs against national and international standards of academic excellence and peer review.

* **Academic relationship with student representative bodies**

The Liverpool Guild of Students / National Union of Students presence on-campus must be closely involved in the academic life of the University, including participation in academic meetings and strategic decision making affecting the student body. The fostering of transparency and inclusivity with regard to student representation is an important element for the dissemination and expansion of the University mission within the academic and wider community and for embedding academic values in the undergraduate and postgraduate student body.

* **Academic and institutional responsibility**

The ability to report irregularities without fear of retribution is an important aspect of collaborative governance whereby all staff and students are encouraged to take some measure of responsibility for the good and proper administration of the University. Academic staff (and indeed all staff and students) should be free to comment or raise concern regarding any aspect of University governance, academic practice or the general conduct of the University and its constituent departments and officers.

* **Role of the senate, court, faculty fora and other University organs**

The University senate, court, faculty fora and other governing organs provide a vital conduit for decision making and University affairs across the academic community and for external community stakeholders. It is important to maintain historical University organs to ensure collective participation of academic staff and community stakeholders in decision making bodies within the University.

As the trade union representing academic and academic-related staff, the UCU is a legitimate stakeholder for consultation on issues of academic management and governance.