

Freedom of Expression Statement

The University reserves the right, at its discretion, to deny visitors permission to use its venues where it believes that the responsibilities and obligations set out in this statement are unable to be or are unlikely to be met, or to require that visitors contribute to the cost of the provision of security or other mitigations necessary for the safety of students, staff and members of the public.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

The University of Waikato is committed to upholding the fundamental principles of free expression and academic freedom as vital to intellectual growth and the pursuit of knowledge.^{1 2} We recognize that a vibrant academic community thrives on the open exchange of opinions and ideas where diverse perspectives are explored and debated in a respectful and constructive manner. Any expression of academic freedom must be carefully considered and made respectfully, in full acknowledgement that others may hold opposing views.

Providing opportunities for students, staff and visitors to challenge ideas and to engage in well-informed debate is an essential purpose of higher education. Exploration of a wide range of contrasting and conflicting views and beliefs contributes to a richer educational experience and prepares our students to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Our commitment to free expression is not to be interpreted as an endorsement by the University of any of the views expressed but an affirmation of our belief in the importance of enquiry, debate, criticism and protest in the academic setting. The University's [Media Policy](#) and [Social Media Policy](#) set out the principles and procedures with respect to staff engagement with the media as academic experts and provide guidance to staff with respect to both personal and official University use of social media.

The exercise of free expression carries with it important responsibilities and obligations, balancing the right to freedom with the University's need to also "create a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of the University community, fostering a sense of belonging and respect to ensure that all staff and students experience the University as a welcoming, affirming and supportive environment" and to "share responsibility for the creation of a culture of tolerance and safety and ensure that we do not accept behaviours that undermine that culture."^{3 4} The [Education \(Pastoral Care of Tertiary and International Learners\) Code of Practice 2021](#) emphasises the responsibility of the University to provide a learning environment that ensures that students are able to actively participate and share their views safely.

Actions that disrupt classes, operations or events, cause harassment or physical harm to any person or persons or cause them to fear for their safety, constitute defamation, discrimination, abuse or intimidation or that cause damage to property will not be tolerated. Complaints about such actions will be considered in accordance with the [Code of Student Conduct](#), [Student Discipline Regulations](#), [Student Complaints Procedures](#) or [Staff Code of Conduct](#).

The University of Waikato Council
25 February 2025

¹ "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive, and impart information and opinions of any kind in any form" s.14, [New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990](#)

² Academic freedom means "the freedom of academic staff and students, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas, and to state controversial or unpopular opinions" s.267(4)a, [Education and Training Act 2020](#)

³ Strategic Priority 4, [University of Waikato Strategy 2025-2029](#)

⁴ As a university located in Aotearoa New Zealand, we recognise our commitment to ensuring that our practices respect the values and rights guaranteed to Māori as expressed in the [University of Waikato Treaty Statement](#)