



POLICY ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

1. Introduction and Purpose

This document sets out Nazarene Theological College's ("the College") commitment to securing and promoting freedom of speech and academic freedom within our community.

2. Scope and definitions

- 2.1. This policy is applicable to all employees and students at the College, including applicants, and anyone invited to speak or otherwise take part in events to be held or organised by the College.
- 2.2. **Academic freedom** means the freedom of academic staff to question and test received views and wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, within the law, without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges or reducing the likelihood of them securing promotion or different roles within the College.
- 2.3. **Freedom of speech** means the freedom, within the law, to impart ideas, opinions or information by means of speech, writing or images (including in electronic form).

3. Securing and promoting the importance of Freedom of Speech

- 3.1. The College is committed to securing and promoting freedom of speech within our community. This is embedded in our purpose as we advance education, knowledge and wisdom for the good of society. As set out in our Constitution, the work of the College is carried out in a spirit of tolerance and collegiality, freedom of opinion, mutual respect, and openness, all exercised within the law. As members of the College community, we each have a role in securing freedom of speech across all College activities.
- 3.2. We embrace and celebrate difference, diversity and debate, and strive to provide an environment in which students, employees and invited speakers are able to express their ideas freely, however polarising they may be. As a College, we value being a community in which, within the law, we can question and test received wisdom, express new ideas, and explore controversial or unpopular opinions.
- 3.3. We recognise that this will not always feel comfortable, as freedom of speech must extend not only to ideas that are favourably received, but also to those that may offend, shock or disturb. Promoting freedom of speech sits alongside our commitment to excellence in education, strong relationships, and a community characterised by respect and tolerance. Employees and students affected by the speech of others can access appropriate support.

4. Speech that is not protected or which may be restricted/regulated

- 4.1. Our commitment to freedom of speech extends only to speech within the law (speech that breaches either civil or criminal law is not protected). The College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech identifies the civil and

criminal laws which are likely to be most relevant in this context

- 4.2. In addition, freedom of speech is a 'qualified' right, and there may be circumstances in which it is legitimate and proportionate for the College to restrict or regulate lawful speech in line with legal and regulatory requirements. Whilst we operate under a very strong presumption in favour of permitting lawful speech, the application of these principles is set out in the College's Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

5. Securing and promoting the importance of Academic Freedom

- 5.1. The College is committed to securing and promoting the importance of academic freedom. In accordance with the definition above, academic staff shall have the freedom, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves at risk of losing their employment, privileges for progression within the College.

6. Decision-making and policy development

- 6.1. We recognise that there will be difficult and complex challenges for the College when considering matters of free speech, academic freedom and balancing competing rights and obligations.
- 6.2. We will keep this policy, the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech, and all relevant policies and procedures under review, in consultation with our wider College community, to ensure that we continue to secure and promote these fundamental rights.

7. Policy Content

Version amendment history		
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