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Policy Document Approver	Council
Responsible body/person	Council
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Superseded documents	(See AUT Constitution Objects - Section 2.1(c))
Related documents	Academic Integrity Policy for Coursework Awards, Research Integrity Policy, Communications Policy, Grievance Resolution Policy – Students, AUT Graduate Attributes
Related HE Standards	6.1.4, 5.2.4
Student Lifecycle Stage/s	N/A

1. PURPOSE

This policy describes the approach of the Australian University of Theology Ltd to freedom of intellectual inquiry in accordance with the requirements of HESF 6.1.4 and AUT's faith-based context.

2. DEFINITIONS

Definitions for any words in **Bold** in this document can be found in the [Policy Glossary](#). The first instance of each defined term has been outlined in bold.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to AUT Ltd staff and members of the AUT Council, Boardz and its Committees. It also extends to AUT students, and to Affiliated College staff in the context of related policies at Affiliated Colleges.

4. POLICY

In accordance with the Objects of the AUT Constitution, AUT fosters freedom of intellectual inquiry as part of "engaging in student-centred teaching and learning that advances knowledge, encourages freedom of speech and academic freedom, and enhances the pursuit of vocational excellence" (AUT Constitution 2.1(c)).

Freedom of intellectual inquiry for both individuals and institutions includes the freedom to adopt a faith-based approach to education.

5. PRINCIPLES

5.1 The AUT Constitution (1.3) specifies as its Christian foundation that AUT:

- (a) holds the Christian faith as professed by the church of Christ from primitive times and in particular as set forth in the creeds known as the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed;
- (b) receives all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as being the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary for salvation; and
- (c) obeys the commands of Christ, teaches His doctrine and follows and upholds His discipline.

5.2 AUT works within a tradition of "faith seeking understanding" in which



intellectual inquiry, scholarly exploration, critical analysis, and robust argumentation are essential expressions of higher education. The AUT affirms the Protestant priority of Scripture over interpretive traditions or institutional authorities and therefore no academic work should be discouraged or prevented where it is based on close engagement with Scripture.

- 5.3 The AUT encourages scholarly explorations of Scripture and traditions across its various Affiliated Colleges utilising a variety of methodologies and hermeneutical approaches, including interdisciplinary dialogue, promoting critical discussion within, between, and across traditions, secure in a commitment to the pursuit of truth.
- 5.4 Freedom of intellectual inquiry is encouraged in conjunction with:
 - virtues such as intellectual humility, honesty, and scholarly integrity, including fair dealing with and representation of others, and adherence to policies on academic integrity and research ethics; and
 - the expression of AUT's desired graduate attributes of Christ-like character, such as service to others, and especially to the Body of Christ; recognising all persons, including intellectual adversaries, are made in the image of God.
- 5.5 AUT students are free to inquire into any issue or matter, interacting with scholarship without restriction, employing all critical methods to any assertion, argument, or conviction. Assessment of student work is based solely on the grounds of academic merit. No academic penalty is to be applied to student work that differs from the beliefs of lecturers or Affiliated Colleges where the work demonstrates relevant scholarship and argument. Complaints about student assessment are managed in accordance with the Grievance Resolution Policy – Students.
- 5.6 While AUT and its Affiliated Colleges seek to foster a collegial atmosphere for intellectual inquiry, staff and students can express opinions that may be unpopular or controversial and that may cause offence, while recognising that this does not mean there is any right to harass, intimidate or vilify any other individuals or groups, and that any expression of opinions should be subject to civil and respectful discourse.
- 5.7 AUT Office staff and members of the AUT Council, Boards and its Committees accept and commit to the Christian foundation as expressed in the Constitution.
- 5.8 Affiliated Colleges may have related policies or requirements related to ministry training (for students) or ministry commitments (for staff). This may include affirmation of statements of belief and behaviour with respect to denominational (or similar) accreditation. Students and staff should be made aware of any relevant requirements prior to study or employment.
- 5.9 AUT Office staff and members of the AUT Council, Boards and its Committees should make clear that a view they express is their own, not that of the AUT. Affiliated College staff or governance members should make clear that a view they express is their own, or that of their Affiliated College, not that of the AUT. Public statements on issues related to AUT's operations are managed in accordance with the AUT Communications Policy and overseen by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 5.10 The AUT will analyse the results for the Student Experience Survey "Freedom of Expression" set of questions, and where an Affiliated College does not meet expected



AUT benchmarks, these will be addressed through the review processes of the Academic Quality Committee.

6. RELATED LEGISLATION

[Higher Education Standards Framework – Threshold Standards \(2021\).](#)

7. REFERENCES

[Avondale University Freedom of Inquiry Policy](#)

[Moore College Academic Freedom Policy](#)

Affiliated College Academic Freedom/Freedom of Inquiry Policies

8. VERSION HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Changes made
1	Council	13 November 2023	13 November 2023	New policy, drawing on existing AUT Constitution provisions
2	Vice-Chancellor	June 2025	June 2025	New policy format, minor editorial updates to implement university status.

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