

CHICKENSHED

THEATRE CHANGING LIVES

Chickenshed Academic Freedom Statement - 2025

Chickenshed's vision for Academic Freedom is based on inclusivity and openness. This means openness to and inclusive of the ideas, opinions and methods of communication of all members of our HE staff and student body. This statement is part of the Chickenshed Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom Framework

Chickenshed's HE Student and Staff body should be empowered to do the following:.

- Hold and express opinions - freely
- Question and test ideas, opinions and received wisdom on any theme, subject or body of knowledge.
- Initiate new ideas or innovative project thoughts and proposals – through practice as research, research, discussion and project exploration.
- Present controversial or unpopular opinions and represent these to others.

These rights are exercised from a freedom within the law framework in line with our Chickenshed Student Freedom of Expression Framework and Student Charter. As practitioners of inclusive HE Education and Theatre we both value our academic freedom and we take responsibility for it – in the following ways:

- Chickenshed value diversity and recognise that different people bring different perspectives, thoughts, knowledge and inclusivity of culture and experience. This enables Chickenshed's work and the work of students and staff to flourish and be recognized positively.
- Chickenshed treats others and the academic/education/artistic work of others with courtesy and respect. We challenge inequalities, and anticipate and respond positively to different equality needs and experiences to enrich our theatre, education, outreach and social inclusion.
- Chickenshed respect the value of individuals taking different beliefs, opinions and views and expressing them through appropriate contribution to discussion, academic debate and communication in an individual's preferred method or style.
- Chickenshed staff and students communicate in ways that are clear, relevant, respectful, accurate and timely, with open dialogue and transparency being key to make sure no-one is disadvantaged by over complex communication and language in relation to academic statements , proposals and debate.
- Chickenshed staff and students will be challenging in academic debate , justify views with evidence and academic argument and be willing to recognise the ways in which their own arguments can be developed and strengthened.
- When presenting opinions Chickenshed staff and students will make every reasonable effort to minimise the risks of any harm, either physical or psychological for any person or group who may be affected or involved in the opinion – mindful about issues of both immediate harm and delayed impact of harm.
- Chickenshed will be aware that some academic opinions and arguments may cause challenge or offence to people but that this is not, in itself, a reason to shut down opinions and arguments. Chickenshed staff and students will be sensitive to the views of others and will not communicate or challenge views in a way that is hostile or degrading in any forum or medium direct or virtual or that intimidates other individuals from feeling free to respond and disagree in an inclusive open manner.
- Chickenshed encourage others to challenge views, with accurate evidence, facts and reasonable argument.
- Chickenshed staff and students will always be mindful in its creative and academic products and practices not to confuse personal opinions with Chickenshed views or any other person, group of people or organisation who may have an association with Chickenshed either as a HE organisation or a theatre company or a Community Youth Arts organisation.
- Chickenshed staff and students will consider the legal implications of their work and communication. They will recognise that there may be consequences if they act in breach of the law and will only involve others with their express consent being mindful of the need to communicate clearly and with no conscious or unconscious bias.

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- Chickenshed staff will apply these principles in teaching, research, study, and debate. Staff and students will be proactive in enabling academic freedom for themselves and for others to be valued and use this responsibility for the promotion of knowledge and understanding both internally and externally.

Academic Freedom Responsibility and Employment Protection

1. Chickenshed as a Higher Education provider – respects the Academic Freedom of expression of its staff. In practice this means that in the planning and delivery of teaching, practice as research, research, monitoring, assessing and other duties and responsibilities commensurate with Chickenshed HE Course and student responsibilities – staff are both free to AND encouraged to exercise their Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression.
2. In the exercising of their right to Academic Freedom staff have their employment rights protected by Chickenshed and will not experience any form of discrimination, harassment, negative career treatment or any other sanction as a result of exercising this freedom.
3. Inappropriate restraint, on staff academic freedom can be exhibited in a number of ways including:-
 - a) Preventing necessary creation or dissemination of the results of their work – be those results research based ‘practice as research’ devised, composed, choreographer or based on any other research, teaching, directorial, educational or artistic function.
 - b) Not being given due credit or acknowledgement of work – or denied ownership of work.
 - c) Denial of intellectual property rights which are not covered by contract agreements with internal or external individuals or bodies.
 - d) Denial of promotion or career progression or training opportunities as a result of exercising academic freedoms.
 - e) Being made to teach/deliver against an individual’s best knowledge or conscience.
 - f) Denial of the right to undertake professional activities of research outside of employment which do not interfere with employment responsibilities – and student education.

This is not an exclusive list. Organisation practice must avoid these and any other forms of Academic Freedom denial or restraint.

4. Staff need to be aware that alongside Academic Freedom - Academic Responsibility needs to be observed with both being mutually important for Chickenshed, it’s Higher Education beneficiaries and its inclusive ethos.

When experiencing academic freedoms staff need to be aware of the following factors in relation to observing out their academic responsibilities as part of their employment terms and conditions.

- a) Respect for the academic freedom of others.
- b) Base research ‘practice as research’ and other academic freedom activities on honest, fair ethical and professional standards.
- c) Exercise freedom of expression and academic freedom processes equitably, treating beneficiaries with respect. Demonstrate practice which does not negatively discriminate due to protected characteristics and opinions which differ from those held by staff members.
- d) To observe and respect the confidentiality of staff, students and other beneficiaries when exercising academic freedom in line with positive inclusive academic and professional practice.
- e) Be aware of contractual issues in relation to intellectual property ownership, also funding agreements, confidentiality agreements and other contractual issues which might need to be considered when exercising academic freedom.

Where a member of staff feels that their academic freedoms/freedom of expression are being restricted – particularly if they feel it is affecting their employment rights and protection they should discuss the issue initially with their line manager or equivalent. If the matter cannot be resolved the staff member should go to HR for further support in dealing with the issue including, where appropriate, exercising other Chickenshed organizational HE procedures.