IBCM Policy on Freedom of Expression (including Academic Freedom)

1.0 Purpose

1.1 International Business College Manchester aims to provide students with a positive, enjoyable and rewarding learning experience, where there are no barriers to student success and progression.

1.2 All students should feel supported and encouraged to freely express their ideas and opinions in an atmosphere of mutual respect, with no fear of penalty for expressing views which may be unpopular with others.

1.3 Academic staff should also feel able to question and test received wisdom and put forward new, controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or contract.

1.4 The purpose of this policy, therefore, is to ensure that these principles are upheld at all times, but at the same time are (i) balanced with the need to protect the welfare of both staff and students and (ii) do not conflict with compliance with any relevant legislation such as the Equality Act.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all enrolled students whether full or part-time, physical students or remote (online) learners.

2.2 The policy applies to all staff and governors of the College whether academic or administrative staff and whether employed or working on a freelance basis

2.3 The policy also applies to any visiting speakers who may, from time to time, attend IBCM in the interest of student progression or to provide information/training to IBCM staff members.

3.0 Responsibilities

3.1 It is the duty of all those to whom this policy applies to assist IBCM in upholding the principles of freedom of expression.

3.2 Staff and students of IBCM should bring this policy to the attention of any outside organisations who may be providing speakers or are responsible for organising meetings/training events etc. All those involved are expected to uphold the principles of this policy.

3.3 The Board of Governors will oversee the implementation of this policy.

4.0 Breach of the policy

4.1 Any breach of the provisions of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the relevant IBCM disciplinary procedure or other appropriate sanction.

5.0 Freedom of Expression

3.1 **"***Freedom of expression is a key part of the higher education experience. Sharing ideas is crucial for learning and allows students to think critically, challenge and engage with different perspectives"* (Equality and Human Rights Commission: Freedom of expression: a guide for higher education providers and students' unions in England and Wales).

3.2 Freedom of expression is a fundamental right protected under the Human Rights Act 1998. It is however a qualified, rather than an absolute right, which means that the rights of the individual must be balanced against the interests of society. It is limited by laws to protect others from violence, hatred and discrimination, to protect national security and public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, to protect health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of other sand to prevent the disclosure of information received in confidence.

3.3 Freedom of expression specifically does not protect statements that breach UK legislation and are defined as "hate speech". This includes those that constitute unlawful harassment or incite violence or hatred against other persons or groups particularly by reference to their race (including language, national origin or immigration status), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy & maternity or gender reassignment.

3.4 The College has a duty in law to take steps as are reasonably practicable, to ensure that freedom of expression within the law is secured for students, employees and visiting speakers. This includes a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the use of any college premises is not denied to any individual or body of persons on any ground connected with the beliefs or view of that individual or body.

6.0 Academic Freedom

6.1 Academic Freedom refers to the right of all academic staff at IBCM to have the freedom, within the law, to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions and to test and question perceived wisdom, without having any fear of their job/contract being at risk, or any other negative consequences.

6.3 All staff joining the academic team should be aware of their obligations and responsibilities consistent with the above principles and the law.

6.4 It is contrary to this policy for any person or body to whom this policy applies to take any action, other than by reasonable and peaceful persuasion or peaceful protest, to prevent the holding/continuation of any tutorial, lecture or other academic activity

because of the lawful views held or expressed (or reasonably likely to be expressed) whether or not within the college, by the academic concerned.

7.0 Social and electronic media

6.1 The principles of freedom of expression and academic freedom apply to the use of electronic and social media; however the college requires responsible and legal use of the technologies and facilities available to staff and students at IBCM, including the use of the internet, email and social media.

8.0 Reference points

The following policy and procedure documents support the information in this policy:

- IBCM Student Charter
- IBCM Disciplinary Policy
- IBCM Staff handbook
- IBCM Student Handbook
- IBCM, Internet and email policy
- IBCM Social Media Policy

9.0 Version History

Version	1.2
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