

# ITALIA CONTI

## Academic Freedom Code of Practice

Approved by: Senior Leadership Team	
Reviewed by:	Head of Quality Assurance
Checked by:	Policy Steering Group
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This policy will be reviewed and approved by the Policy Steering Group

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## 1. Introduction

Italia Conti is committed to upholding freedom of speech and encouraging an environment where everyone is encouraged to enquire, study and debate. This freedom of expression is also linked to the principle of Academic Freedom.

This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with Italia Conti's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice.

## 2. Academic Freedom (definition)

Academic Freedom is a component of the Freedom of Speech. Academics are free to express their opinions and ideas unless it is restricted by law.

Academic Freedom means that academics are free (within the law) to express their opinions, develop new ideas and question established ones. This means that academics can present unpopular or controversial views without the risk of their employment or their studies at Italia Conti being affected.

## 3. Academic

For the purposes of this *Code of Practice*, an "academic" is defined as:

- a) a member of the teaching staff;
- b) a student who is currently enrolled on an Italia Conti course;
- c) a visiting professional<sup>1</sup> (who is teaching or assisting on an Italia Conti course);
- d) an academic supporting a course in an official advisory or administrative role<sup>2</sup>;
- e) a visiting speaker invited to provide their academic perspective;
- f) a member of an educational awarding, statutory or regulatory body;
- g) any other person who is recognised by Italia Conti as fulfilling an academic role<sup>3</sup>.

Note: this list is not exhaustive.

## 4. Exercising Academic Freedom

Italia Conti recognises that the ideas and views of members of the Italia Conti community, or external speakers, may often be in conflict with those of others. We expect, therefore, that all students and staff engage in any discussion in a constructive manner which preserves the respect and dignity of others.

The right to one's opinion does not extend to breaking the law, harassing or defaming individuals or breaching the rights of privacy of others. As a result, there might be times where Italia Conti has to apply restrictions to the freedom of expression<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> this can include (but is not limited to) choreographers, directors, musical directors, etc.

<sup>2</sup> this can include (but is not limited to) External Examiners, External Assessors.

<sup>3</sup> where there is doubt over the academic credentials of such an individual, the CEO shall be the final arbiter in deciding whether they should be classified as an academic for the purposes of this *Code of Practice*.

<sup>4</sup> such restrictions shall be determined by the CEO (with the advice of members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as appropriate.

As outlined in EHRC guidance on freedom of expression, published in February 2019, exposure to course materials that students might find offensive or unacceptable is unlikely to constitute harassment.

## **5. Limits of Academic Freedom**

Unlawful speech is not permitted. Italia Conti will take the necessary steps to prevent the expression of unlawful ideas and views. This may involve use of the disciplinary code(s) for students and staff and reporting the matter to the relevant authorities.

## **6. Legal Obligations**

Italia Conti expects everyone to respect the law, particularly with regards defamation, discrimination and harassment. It is important that the right to protest against the expression of views should not prevent others exercising their freedom of expression.

There are legal obligations placed on Italia Conti in a number of areas: these include preventing people from being drawn into terrorism, and protecting the health and safety of students, staff and visitors.

## **7. Protests**

No party to whom this *Code of Practice* applies shall take any action (other than by reasonable discussion with Italia Conti and peaceful persuasion) to prevent an academic activity<sup>5</sup> because of the views held or expressed by a member of staff or student. This applies to attempts to prevent a student or groups of students from attending an event or activity which is required for their course of study.

## **8. Raising Concerns**

### a) Staff and students:

Where someone has concerns about the views of a member of staff or student, these should be raised in the first instance with the individual's line manager (for a member of staff) or the Head of Year Tutor for a student.

### b) Other academics:

If concerns are raised about an academic who is not a staff member or student, then this should be reported to one of the Vice-Principals.

## **9. Investigating Concerns**

Concerns over potential breaches of the *Academic Freedom Code of Practice* shall be dealt with in accordance with Italia Conti's *Complaints Policy*.

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<sup>5</sup> Academic Activity includes tutorials, classes, rehearsals, lectures, exhibitions, performances or any other activity which is part of the teaching and learning activities at Italia Conti.

## **10. Unlawful Behaviour**

Where unlawful behaviour is suspected, this should be reported immediately to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Italia Conti will take the appropriate steps to contact the relevant authorities if it has a reasonable belief that any law has been broken.

## **11. Use of premises**

Italia Conti does not intend to prevent students, staff or external organisations from holding events on its premises, but permission must be applied for in accordance with our *Freedom of Speech Code of Practice*.

## **12. Oversight**

The CEO shall have the ultimate responsibility for overseeing the *Academic Freedom Code of Practice*.

## **13. Linked policies**

*Complaints Policy*

*Freedom of Speech Code of Practice*

**END**