

Protecting Academic Freedom at the London Film School

1. Introduction

The London Film School (“LFS”, “we”, “our”, “us”) is committed to protecting academic freedom and freedom of speech for students, staff and guests (“you”, “your”).

Academic freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are all enshrined in the school’s ethos and are important to ensure that new ideas can be advanced and free debate can take place.

Academic freedom, however, is not an unqualified privilege and LFS is subject to a range of legislation and obligation to ensure the safety and well-being of students and staff (see ‘General Stipulations’ below).

2. General Stipulations

- 2.1. LFS will ensure that staff have academic freedom as outlined in the 1988 Education Reform Act and our own policies without placing themselves at risk of losing their jobs or privileges at LFS.
- 2.2. This freedom is extended to LFS’s students while also ensuring that our statutory duty “*to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*” (Section 26(1) of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) is met.
- 2.3. Academic freedom at LFS is not limited to teaching and learning, but extends to discussions, extra-curricular activities, research, professional/industry work, and to joining professional and representative bodies.
- 2.4. You have freedom to question and test ideas, share your opinions, develop and discuss new ideas, and bring forward controversial or difficult ideas for others to listen to, discuss, and challenge.
- 2.5. LFS expects you to exercise your rights and freedoms in a constructive way and apply principles of critical analysis and engagement in discussions, teaching and learning activities, coursework, research, professional/industry work, and other areas relating to the principles of academic freedom.
- 2.6. The protection of freedom of speech does not extend to allowing a speaker to commit a criminal offence in the course of speaking
- 2.7. LFS is subject to legal responsibilities such as preventing discrimination, harassment and victimisation and the health, safety and welfare of employees, students, external speakers and visitors.
- 2.8. Guest speakers, whether they are invited by the School or the Students’ Union must be vetted using the school’s procedure (see ‘LFS Guidance on External Engagement’).

3. The Student Charter

The LFS Student Charter which covers aspirations, expectations and responsibilities of LFS, its staff and its students outlines key components in the aforementioned areas, including:

- Fair and respectful treatment regardless of gender, age, race, nationality, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief;
- Fostering of a safe and tolerant atmosphere in which creative and academic goals may be pursued free from harassment and discrimination of any kind;
- Valuing of the international and culturally diverse community at the School.

4. Students' Film Exercises and Scripts

The nature of the courses encourages you to choose subjects for your film exercises and scripts from a wide range of topics and genres.

Considering both the diverse student body and the wider environment LFS operates in, current affairs, conflicts and disputes, including those involving ethnicity or religion, may sometimes be the subject of students' projects.

It is LFS' responsibility to ensure that it monitors such projects carefully and identifies those that are at risk of becoming unlawful and/or pose harm or risks to students, staff and guests while also promoting a safe and tolerant atmosphere in which you can exercise your academic freedom.

The day-to-day monitoring of the application of the principles of academic freedom of all teaching and learning activities and coursework on the MA programmes is the responsibility of the Course Leaders, Module Leaders, Term Tutors who has oversight over all projects. This includes ensuring that the principles of the Student Charter are adhered to and that your freedom is not unfairly or unlawfully limited while ensuring that LFS continues to provide a safe and tolerant environment.

In addition, Personal Tutors are in regular contact with their tutees and monitor the progress and well-being.

Relevant training with regard to 'Prevent' will be provided to staff involved in monitoring students' activities.

The process for 'Sharing Information About Vulnerable Students' can be found in a separate document.

5. Extra-Curricular Events

Approval of extra-curricular events, including guest speakers is covered in the 'LFS Guidance on External Engagement'.

6. Version Control

Version Number	Changes	Author, Title	Date
0.1	-	Philip Range, Academic Registrar	20/04/2016
1.0	Approved by Leadership Group	-	17/05/2016
1.0	Reviewed by Academic Board; no changes made	-	13/03/2018
1.1	Updates to fully reflect the 1988 Education Reform Act; other changes to languages and additional clarification and emphasis of matters relating to academic freedom	Philip Range, Academic Registrar	Published 27/08/2021