

Globethics.net Statement on Academic Freedom

Introduction

International human rights law, and the ensuing human rights discourse, places paramount emphasis on the Right to Education. The right to education binds ratifying States on three levels, to respect, protect and fulfil the right to education (*Cf. Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, general Comment No. 13 on the Right to Education*). The fundamental principles on which the right to education reposes are the following:

- Non-discrimination
- Equal opportunity and treatment
- Universal access
- Solidarity

The UNESCO 2030 education agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education call for increased attention and efforts to ensure equity and inclusion as part of its overall goal to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Globethics.net, as a foundation with a mandate and mission in higher education, is committed to these fundamental principles in providing its offers and services, particularly as it reaches out to institutions with whom it has established partnerships, to Consortium members, to users of its e-library and publication series, to participants in the network and in the Globethics.net Academic online courses.

Globethics.net operates as an institution in a rapidly changing global context of higher education, in which access to educational resources and knowledge is marked by high levels of disparity. The protection of academic freedom belongs to one of several means by which these disparities can be countered.

Definition

Globethics.net understands Academic Freedom as the freedom to conduct research, to study, to teach, to entertain scholarly exchange, and to publish research. As such, Academic Freedom is a fundamental principle binding all those engaged in intellectual exchange and in dissemination of academic research. Globethics.net promotes and embodies this principle as a community of academic research in ethics together with its Consortium members in all regions of the world and representing a diversity of religious affiliations and worldviews. Languages and cultures.

Scope

One of the objectives of post-compulsory education is to serve public interest through creating and sharing of knowledge, furthering a respectful culture of critical listening, thinking and expression among staff, students and research partners, and ultimately in the wider society. Globethics.net considers Academic Freedom as central for the attainment of these purposes, and by extension for the realisation of a peaceful and value-based world, in which divergent views are exchanged through democratic and non-violent means. Globethics.net acknowledges the frailty of academic freedom in different contexts and nurtures partnerships with academic institutions working in these contexts.

Rights

Globethics.net deems the following rights as distinctive marks of Academic Freedom:

- The freedom of expression without fear nor threat in the context of academic debates;
- The freedom to choose topics for teaching, to design taught courses and to teach;
- The freedom to conduct research without economic, political and religious interference;
- The freedom to communicate on, disseminate and publish one's academic results;
- The freedom from institutional censorship, including the freedom of staff members, students and research partners to express their opinion on the higher education institution or the higher education system in which they work or are affiliated to; and
- The freedom to join professional academic associations or learned bodies, including trade unions.

Responsibilities

Globethics.net understands Academic Freedom also as the responsibility to respect and protect the rights and freedom of others. Globethics.net as an international institution in higher education lays particular emphasis on the following responsibilities:

- The responsibility to create and cultivate a culture of respect in academic exchanges and partnerships, so that freedom of expression and research can be lived out according to agreed-upon conventions;
- The responsibility to establish and nurture open, collegial and transparent forms of governance through its institutional bodies;
- The responsibility to create and nurture collegial procedures of decision-making related to academic research, wherever possible based on consultation, both internally and with partners in academic research;
- The responsibility to ensure that staff members, especially academic staff, is free to criticise and publish without fear nor threat for their employment;
- The responsibility to safeguard that the personal integrity of staff, users, course participants, and research partners is protected by the respect of its Code of Ethics in using their rights related to academic freedom, particularly with regard to the stipulations on non-discrimination;
- The responsibility to ensure fair research relationships (see Globethics.net Policy on Research Partnerships, document GE_BF_AC_19_01_08), which includes fair sharing of knowledge resources and the respect of religious, cultural, linguistic, gender, disciplinary and methodological diversity as key aspect of freedom and of Academic Freedom.

Approved by the Globethics.net Academic Committee and Board of Foundation on 24 October 2019