

Gisma University of Applied Sciences
Academic Freedom Policy

1. Introduction

The Academic Freedom Policy of Gisma University of Applied Sciences has been informed by the German Basic Law. As part of the German Basic Law, (Art. 5 III S.1), the fundamental right to academic freedom constitutes an independent and genuine right on its own – not a derivative or a subpart of more general right to freedom of expression or speech, but the acknowledgement that there is a particular social value to protecting a free and independent academia. These definitive reference points set out how academic standards are established and maintained and how excellence in the quality of learning opportunities is assured.

Furthermore, the policy is informed by the Brandenburg Higher Education Law (BbgHG) § 4 – Freedom of teaching, research and study in science and art, scientific integrity.

This provision protects the freedom of universities, researchers, and academics to pursue their research, teaching, and other scholarly activities without interference from the government. It also allows for the free exchange of ideas and opinions, even those that may be unpopular or controversial.

2. Key Aims and Principles

The University is primarily a teaching and learning institution in which scholarly activity is supported to ensure that the appropriate level of academic standards is maintained and enhanced. Within and consistent with the University's strategies, policies and terms and conditions of employment and/or enrolment, the University supports and protects:

1. Within the framework of the teaching tasks to be fulfilled, freedom of teaching includes the content and methodological design of courses as well as the right to express scientific and artistic teaching opinions. Decisions by university bodies on teaching are permissible insofar as they relate to the organization of teaching and to the establishment of and compliance with study and examination regulations; they must not impair freedom within the meaning of sentence
2. Freedom of research includes the freedom in selecting the research topic, the principles of methodology, the evaluation of research results and their dissemination. Decisions by university bodies on research are permissible insofar as they relate to the organization of research operations, the promotion and coordination of research projects and the establishment of research priorities. They must not impair freedom within the meaning of sentence 1.
3. Freedom of study includes, without prejudice to the study and examination regulations, in particular the free choice of courses, the right to determine the focus of a course of study of one's own choosing, and the development and expression of scientific and artistic opinions. Decisions by university bodies on studies are permissible insofar as they relate to the organization and proper implementation of teaching and study operations and to ensuring proper study.
4. The exercise of the rights referred to in paragraphs 1 to 3 shall not release the student from compliance with the rules governing coexistence at the university.

5. All academics at the university, including doctoral candidates and students, are obliged to act in accordance with scientific integrity. As part of self-regulation in science, universities establish rules for compliance with the generally accepted principles of good scientific practice and for dealing with scientific misconduct. Employment contracts for academic staff should require them to act in accordance with scientific integrity. When publishing research results, employees who have made their own scientific or other significant contribution should be named as co-authors; their contribution should be identified as such wherever possible.

3. Responsibilities

Academic freedom is qualified to the extent that it must co-exist with the core values of Gisma University of Applied Sciences, its' strategies, policies and terms and conditions of employment and/or enrolment. In the exercise of academic freedom, staff and students must be mindful of their corresponding responsibilities, namely:

- To keep an open mind at all times.
- To ensure academic debate is conducted through rational enquiry and supported by demonstrable evidence.
- To comply with ethical considerations when conducting research.
- To recognise and articulate clearly where personal belief impinges upon academic debate and judgment
- To express dissent in a way that is not injurious to others or to the reputation of the University or disruptive to teaching, and discussion.
- To refrain from all forms of discrimination whether on grounds of gender, racial background, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious belief, marital status, caring responsibilities or any other personal characteristics.
- To be sensitive to the personal beliefs, cultural attitudes and opinions of others, and not to cause unnecessary distress in the expression of contrary ideas and opinions.
- Not to attempt to impose a set of beliefs on others.
- To listen and take account of views and arguments which challenge those personally or institutionally held.
- To ensure that professional or academic activities do not conflict with relevant national/EU or International law or the University's policy and procedures.
- If communicating in public, staff and students should indicate clearly that they are not communicating on behalf of the University unless expressly authorised to do so.
- To observe the University's communications policies.

4. Compliance

This policy is adopted by all individuals and bodies associated with Gisma University of Applied Sciences (staff, students, boards, committees and subcommittees)

Should any of the above individuals infringe on any of the Responsibilities set out above, including by bringing the University into disrepute, they may be subject to the Gisma Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy as appropriate.

5. Responsibility for the provision

Responsibility for the effective implementation of the provision lies with the Academic Board and the Presidium. Responsibility for reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the of this policy lies with the Heads of Department and Programme Directors. Formal responsibility for monitoring and evaluation lies with the Vice-President (Research).