

Statement on Academic Freedom

The University of Manchester stands by its Royal Charter under which it is committed not to impose any religious, racial or political test on any person.

The University will comply with the provisions of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the anti-discrimination regulations on sexual orientation and religion and belief which were introduced as part of the Employment Equality Regulations 2003.

The University will undertake these responsibilities in accordance with its fundamental commitment to the academic freedom of all its members, without fear or favour, to express unpopular opinions, advocate controversial views, adduce provocative arguments or present trenchant critiques of conventional beliefs, paradigms or ideologies.

In applying these principles, the University accepts that the true test of freedom of expression is not a willingness to tolerate the expression of views with which other members of the community disagree, or which occasion them moderate offence; rather it is a willingness to tolerate the advocacy of opinions that other members of the community find unconscionable, that offend their deepest values or run counter to their most fundamental beliefs. Such tolerance is the true hallmark of respect for freedom of expression.

Of all institutions, universities have a special responsibility for safeguarding this freedom. An authentic university is an institution that so respects the potency of truth and the efficacy of open, rational inquiry, that it can also respect and defend the expression or advocacy of any lawful idea, opinion or argument.

Such universities have historically been bastions of freedom for individuals, for minorities and for creative thought generally, and as such they remain singularly reluctant to use or encourage the use of legal powers to curb academic freedom, including the advocacy of unconscionable and/or deeply offensive opinions.

Approved by the Board of Governors 10 December 2007