

LAINE

THEATRE ARTS

Policies

Academic Freedom and Foreign State Interference Policy

ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FOREIGN STATE INTERFERENCE POLICY

1. PURPOSE

Laine Theatre Arts ("the College") is committed to protecting academic freedom, freedom of speech within the law, and institutional autonomy.

This policy sets out the College's framework for identifying, monitoring and managing risks of inappropriate academic interference, including potential interference by foreign states or their proxies.

The policy ensures compliance with statutory duties and Office for Students (OfS) regulatory requirements, while safeguarding academic integrity and institutional independence.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All staff (permanent, fixed-term, freelance and visiting)
- All students
- Board of Directors and senior management
- External partners, collaborators and donors
- International partnerships and recruitment agents

It applies to academic activity, research (where relevant), curriculum design, teaching content, public events, visiting speakers, international partnerships and funding arrangements.

3. DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC INTERFERENCE

For the purposes of this policy, academic interference includes any attempt by an external individual, organisation, or foreign state actor to:

- Influence curriculum content, assessment, research or teaching in a way that compromises academic independence
- Suppress, distort or restrict lawful academic or artistic expression
- Exert pressure on staff or students based on nationality, political belief, cultural identity or protected characteristics
- Condition funding, partnerships or donations on ideological or political compliance
- Access sensitive institutional information for improper purposes

The College recognises that foreign interference may occur overtly or covertly, directly or indirectly.

4. PRINCIPLES

The College will:

- Uphold academic freedom within the law
- Protect staff and students from coercion or intimidation
- Ensure decisions relating to curriculum and assessment remain academically led
- Maintain transparency in international partnerships and funding
- Apply proportionate and risk-based due diligence
- Report concerns through appropriate governance structures

5. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

Ultimate oversight of this policy rests with the Board of Directors.

Operational responsibility lies with the Academic Director and Principal.

The Audit and Risk Committee will:

- Review risks relating to foreign interference through the institutional risk register
- Monitor international partnerships and funding arrangements
- Receive reports of material concerns

This risk will be recorded within the College's Risk Register and reviewed at least annually.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT AND DUE DILIGENCE

The College will undertake proportionate due diligence in relation to:

A. INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

- Review of governance structures and funding sources
- Assessment of academic autonomy within partnership agreements
- Clear contractual protections safeguarding curriculum independence

B. DONATIONS AND FUNDING

- Transparency regarding source of funds
- Assessment of any conditions attached to funding
- Board-level approval for material donations

C. RECRUITMENT AGENTS AND OVERSEAS REPRESENTATIVES

- Formal written agreements
- Monitoring of conduct and compliance
- Termination rights where inappropriate conduct is identified

D. VISITING SPEAKERS AND EVENTS

- Freedom of speech procedures followed
- Risk assessment where concerns arise

7. REPORTING CONCERNS

Staff or students who believe there has been attempted academic interference may report concerns via:

- The Academic Director
- The Principal
- The College Whistleblowing Procedure

Concerns may include:

- Attempts to influence academic judgement
- Pressure relating to political viewpoints
- Intimidation linked to nationality or state affiliation
- Requests for inappropriate data access

All reports will be treated seriously and confidentially.

8. INVESTIGATION PROCESS

Where a concern is raised:

1. A preliminary assessment will be undertaken by the Academic Director (or nominee).
2. If necessary, a formal investigation will be commissioned.
3. Legal advice may be sought where national security or regulatory obligations arise.
4. The matter will be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee where material.

If criminal or national security concerns are identified, the College will liaise with relevant external authorities.

9. PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUALS

The College recognises that foreign interference may create personal risk for staff or students, including harassment or intimidation.

Where appropriate, the College will:

- Provide pastoral or HR support
- Adjust working arrangements where risk is identified
- Escalate safeguarding concerns
- Ensure no detriment arises from raising concerns in good faith

10. DATA PROTECTION AND INFORMATION SECURITY

The College will maintain appropriate information security controls to protect:

- Student data
- Academic materials
- Governance documentation

Access to sensitive information will be restricted on a role-based basis.

11. TRAINING AND AWARENESS

Senior management and governors will receive periodic updates regarding:

- Regulatory expectations
- Emerging sector risks
- Governance responsibilities

Staff will be reminded of reporting routes and academic freedom protections.

12. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed **annually** by the Audit and Risk Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

KEY DATA

Version:	1
Approved by:	Take this to SMC for agreement on the internal process for monitoring and reporting concerns and then to Academic Board for discussion of SMC's monitoring/reporting process - as this will also involve students in the consideration. Academic Board should also identify it as a risk (see below). Then take it to the Board for information including sharing the College's agreed reporting/monitoring process. Academic Interference should also be added to the Risk Register and the monitoring/reporting processes included as the mitigations. I suggest that the risk score is low. APPROVAL PLAN: Senior Management Committee on 26th March 2026 Audit and Risk Committee on 23rd March 2026 (risk register) Academic Board on 23rd June 2026 Board of Directors on 28th July 2026
Review Interval:	1 Year
Last Review Date:	March 2026
Next Review Date:	February 2027