



Swiss International  
Institute Lausanne

## **ACADEMIC FREEDOM STATEMENT**

**Swiss International Institute Lausanne - SIIL**

Approved by:	Academic Council
Date of Approval:	01.09.2020
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Owner:	Quality Assurance Office
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# ACADEMIC FREEDOM STATEMENT

## Swiss International Institute Lausanne - SIIIL

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## I DEFINITION

The UNESCO *defines academic freedom as* “the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.” In this sense, academic freedom as defined by the UNESCO is not guaranteed in many countries in the world. Sensitive topics cannot be openly discussed without jeopardising well-established collaborations. This is particularly true in social sciences and humanities.

Sensitive topics, among others, are:

- Territorial issues
- Human Rights and Universal Values
- Ethnicity
- Religion
- Criticism of the government

Sometimes, criticizing the government’s political line on those topics is not allowed at all and can lead to severe punishment. However, as Higher Education sector in Switzerland is operating under greater academic freedom, those issues can be addressed by scholars based in Switzerland in a way that will not conform to the partner’s official line. In this case, there will be a confrontation between two value systems and particular attention must be paid to the personal security of the partners.

## II PRINCIPLES REGARDING ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The Working Group organized by the Academic Office and composed by the representatives of the teaching staff, students, as well as the administrative staff proposes the following principles in order to steer the institutional response to the challenges of the modern world. In particular they should serve to inform the Academic Council and all Offices, and the Quality Assurance Office in their policy and oversight roles at all levels.

### 1. Freedom of Expression:

Policies should recognise that freedom of expression is a core value in SIIL. No policy should be adopted that would, inadvertently or otherwise, curtail freedom of expression among either staff or students. Likewise, decisions made by SIIL Officers in the performance of their duties should give due importance of the benefit to the academic community, and society as a whole, that flows from freedom of expression. Staff and students should understand the obligations and responsibilities that freedom of expression brings.

### 2. Teaching:

Notwithstanding the requirement of teaching staff to teach a curriculum arrived at through collegial discussion at discipline or other appropriate level, SIIL maintains an environment for teaching and learning that values diversity of opinion, encouraging exchange of opinion between teacher and student as part of a robust educational process. Staff are not required to present as valid what they consider to be inaccurate or untrue, and students will be enabled to question that for which inadequate evidence is given. In all cases, SIIL will seek to develop the search for truth as a part of the experience of teaching and learning, relying not on the imposition of authority or acceptance of received knowledge but rather on the exercise of the critical faculties of the human mind. Diversity, whether in teaching and learning styles and modalities, subject matter, or learning outcomes, is valued as a natural consequence of academic freedom.

### **3. Research:**

Recognising that the search for new knowledge, experience, and practice is an essential part of the SIIL reason for being, SIIL will ensure that an environment is maintained that facilitates the pursuit of knowledge wherever it may lead. The maintenance of this undertaking relies on both a positive principle of support and a negative principle of restraint. On the positive side, SIIL's policy is to support, by various means available to it, individuals and groups in pursuit of their diverse research aspirations. This support includes the role of SIIL in incentivising or rewarding particular areas of research in an open manner. Subject to the requirements of law and good academic practice, however, the principle of restraint ensures that SIIL will not actively disadvantage any particular area or type of research.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Specific queries on this statement or requests should be directed to the Quality Assurance Office (email: [a.isanina@siil.ch](mailto:a.isanina@siil.ch)), who will progress as appropriate.

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