

Freedom of expression for Aarhus University staff and students

Aarhus University is committed to safeguarding freedom of expression and the individual's ability to realise their potential. Open dialogue and tolerance for different views constitute the very foundation of the university's activities. Universities have always been places where beliefs and opinions are unceasingly explored and contested by staff and students in a free exchange of ideas and thoughts in open, peaceful debate.

Freedom of expression is essential to the university's ability to fulfil its vision: to be a strong, research-intensive university that strives for the highest international quality and excels in creating value through knowledge, new insight and collaboration. The curiosity-driven creation of new knowledge rooted in strong disciplines, and the dissemination of this knowledge to students, partners and society, is the university's very reason for existing.

Academic freedom is the foundation of the university's activities. Freedom of research, freedom of thought and freedom of expression are fundamental to the search for and communication of knowledge and insight. This applies to research, education and collaboration.

Aarhus University is committed to teaching young people to reflect and think critically, and to providing them with a learning environment in which they can express themselves freely and assemble to debate and learn. Students must be free to ask open, challenging and critical questions. It is through the encounter with the views and opinions of others that individuals develop their character and intellectual skills.

The university is one of society's central pillars of knowledge and culture. The university must contribute to a democracy characterised by open discussion and debate and which offers scope for curiosity-driven invention and the free exchange of knowledge to the benefit of society as a whole. Aarhus University commits to safeguarding the ability of its staff to engage in public and political debate independently and freely, in order to contribute to ensuring that important decisions in our society are made on an informed basis. Individual researchers must be able to freely engage in such debate on their own behalf, particularly within their field of expertise.

At Aarhus University, there must be room for a diversity of views, opinions and ideologies within the limits of the law, and it must be possible to discuss ideas and thoughts freely, both in academic debate and in the classroom. This also applies to ideas and thoughts that some may find unpleasant, wrong or even offensive.

Responsibility for contesting ideas or views they dislike or disagree with lies with the individual. Freedom of expression takes precedence over considerations of the individual's discomfort with ideas they might find offensive.

All members of the university community have a responsibility to contribute to a culture of civility. In all contexts – academic as well as social – staff and students must demonstrate courtesy and mutual respect, and must make an effort to understand the views and opinions of others. However, freedom of expression must never be subordinated to such considerations.