

## What is Academic Freedom?

### Academic Freedom in Europe: Time for a Magna Charta?

The June 2009 issue of *Higher Education Policy* ([www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/)) published by Palgrave Macmillan for the International Association of Universities (IAU), features a vital and timely article by Dr Terence Karran proposing a universal definition of academic freedom for the European Union.

Institutions and academics are quick to defend the notion of academic freedom but in order for the concept to be upheld and maintained there is necessity for a clear charter.

Dr Karran's work follows on from his previous article "Academic Freedom in Europe: A Preliminary Comparative Analysis" in *Higher Education Policy*, 20(3): 289-313 which concluded: "a succinct yet inclusive and coherent working definition of academic freedom is needed for Universities in the EU nations, derived from, and built on, their historic commitment to this principle." Dr Karran's working definition originates from the common elements of national legislation within the EU, identified in the previous article, and seeks to outline the exercise of academic freedom in both teaching and research practice.

Dr Karran asserts that this paper:

*"...goes beyond traditional discussions of academic freedom by specifying not only the rights inherent in the concept but also its accompanying duties, necessary limitations and safeguards".*

With increasing teaching and research pressure the application of academic freedom can often be forgotten – endangering the rights for future scholars.

Jeroen Huisman, Editor of *Higher Education Policy* commented:

*"Much has been said and written about academic freedom, but only few have dared to think through the practical consequences - in terms of rights and duties - for the academic profession."*

Read the full article in *Higher Education Policy* - see <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/journal/v22/n2/full/hep20092a.html>

Read the previous article in *Higher Education Policy* - see <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/journal/v20/n3/full/8300159a.html>

Dr Terence Karran is a Senior Academic in the Centre for Educational Research and Development, University of Lincoln. He is also Docent Professor in the Education Faculty, University of Oulu, Finland. His research interests focus on ICT in higher education, the European Credit Transfer System and academic freedom in Europe. His recent publications include "Academic Freedom: in defence of a universal ideal", (May, 2009) *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(3): 263-283; and "Academic Freedom in Europe: Reviewing UNESCO's *Recommendation*", (June, 2009) *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 57(2): 191-215.

### Publication details

*Higher Education Policy*, 2009, Volume 22 Issue 2, published quarterly.

ISSN: 0952-8733 [www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/](http://www.palgrave-journals.com/hep/)

***For further information, please contact:***

Laura Ingle, Product Manager, Palgrave Macmillan, Houndmills,  
Basingstoke RG21 6XS, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1256 302959 x 3038  
Email: [l.ingle@palgrave.com](mailto:l.ingle@palgrave.com)

Nicholas Poulton  
Editorial Assistant, International Association of Universities, Unesco House, 1 rue Miollis  
75732 Paris Cedex 15. France  
Tel: +33 1 45 68 48 02  
E-mail: [iau@unesco.org](mailto:iau@unesco.org)  
Web: [www.unesco.org/iau/](http://www.unesco.org/iau/)

***Notes to Editors:***

**About Higher Education Policy**

*Higher Education Policy* (HEP) is an international journal for advancing scholarly understanding of the policy process applied to higher education through the publication of original analyses, both theoretical and practice-based, the focus of which may range from case studies of developments in individual institutions to policy making at systems and at national level. *HEP* is the Quarterly journal of the [International Association of Universities](http://www.unesco.org/iau/) (IAU).

**About the International Association of Universities (IAU)**

IAU, founded in 1950, is the UNESCO-based worldwide association of higher education institutions. It brings together institutions and organisations from some 150 countries for reflection and action on common concerns and collaborates with various international, regional and national bodies active in higher education. Its services are available on the priority basis to Members but also to organisations, institutions and authorities concerned with higher education, as well as to individual policy and decision-makers, specialists, administrators, teachers, researchers and students.

The Association aims at giving expression to the obligation of universities and other higher education institutions as social institutions to promote, through teaching, research and services, the principles of freedom and justice, of human dignity and solidarity, and contributes, through international cooperation, to the development of material and moral assistance for the strengthening of higher education generally.

**About Palgrave Macmillan**

Palgrave Macmillan is a global academic publisher, serving learning and scholarship in higher education and the professional world. It publishes textbooks, journals, monographs, professional and reference works in print and online. Its programme focuses on the Humanities, the Social Sciences and Business. As part of the Macmillan Group, it represents an unbroken tradition of 160 years of independent academic publishing.