



Declaration on academic freedom

The University of Southern Denmark's
Declaration on Freedom of Research,
Freedom of Teaching and Freedom of
Debate and Expression

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In January 2022, the University of Southern Denmark set up a task force with a view to defining a frame of reference for the benefit of the University's management, employees and students in matters concerning freedom of research, freedom of teaching and freedom of debate and expression. The task force has consulted widely across the University and considered the University's existing support for principles concerning academic freedom and responsibility as well as intellectual autonomy. This Declaration upholds these principles and sets a direction for the University in a changing, internationalised world.

The University of Southern Denmark's Declaration on Freedom of Research, Freedom of Teaching and Freedom of Debate and Expression

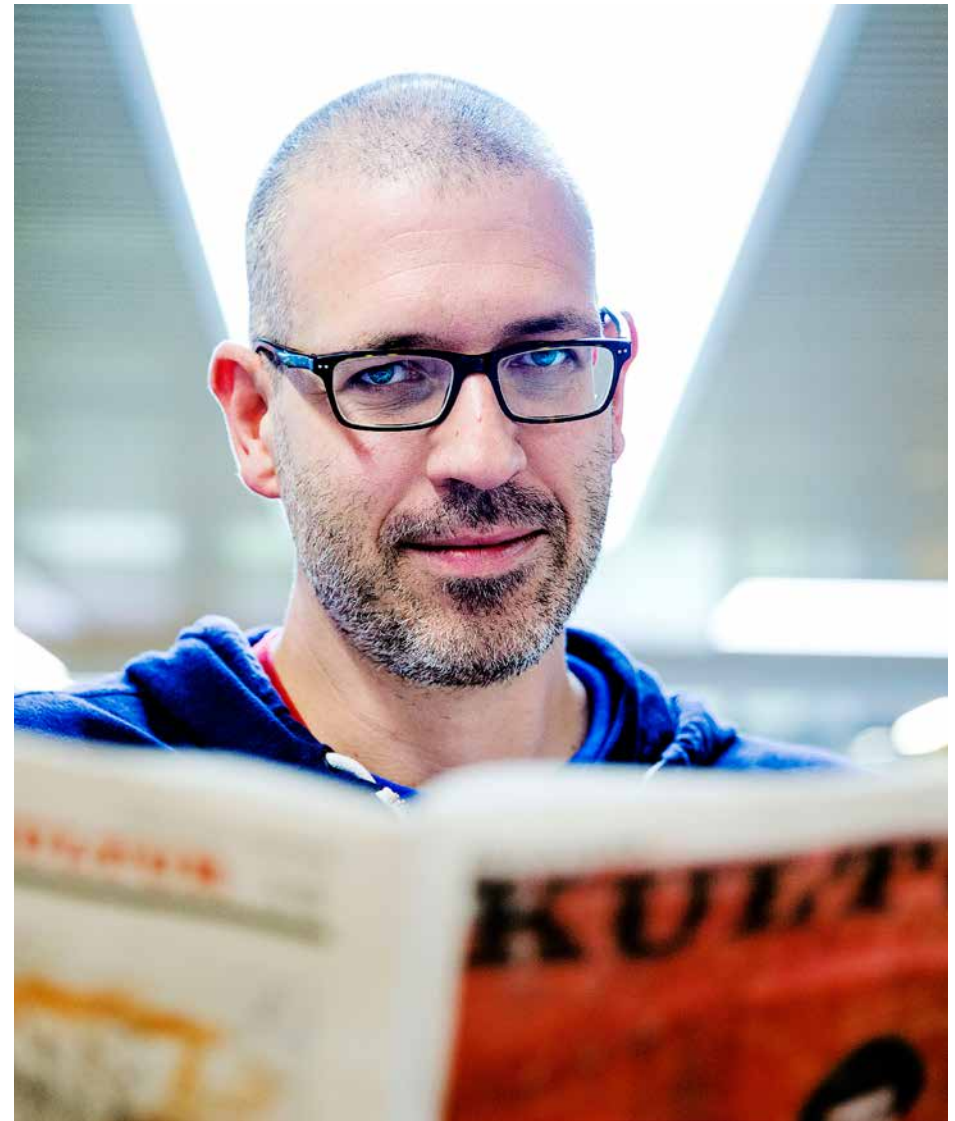
The purpose of the University is to seek, create and disseminate knowledge for the benefit of society and humanity.

Freedom of research, freedom of teaching and freedom of debate and expression are means that support this purpose. These freedoms create the institutional autonomy of the University and the individual space of freedom for researchers and lecturers that the creation of new knowledge presupposes. These freedoms are historically conditioned and must not be taken for granted. They emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries when universities by and large broke with the hold of the church and the state. With freedom came the responsibility to create and maintain autonomous, responsible and critical, formative and enlightening research and educational environments.

Freedoms thus oblige.

- They oblige other institutions of society to respect the autonomy of universities as well as the freedom of researchers and lecturers.
- They oblige the management of the universities to protect the freedoms, to involve staff and students in fundamental issues of university activities and to make available necessary resources for free research, teaching, and debate.
- Furthermore, they oblige researchers and lecturers to act in accordance with fundamental academic values such as curiosity, accountability, transparency and credibility. This involves seeking new knowledge (truth), communicating as correctly as possible (correctness), respecting academic dialogue (pluralism), and challenging dogmas and ideas (educating and enlightening).

Freedom of research means that the researcher has the freedom to define research questions and choose research methods, as well as the freedom to present the research. The researcher's freedom to pursue own academic ideas is followed by the obligation to engage academic communities constructively and critically and to uphold the above-mentioned academic values.



'Strategic' research that targets specific societal needs is increasingly in demand by both public and private institutions. The funding for such research is increasingly significant. The desire of external institutions to cooperate with universities in order to create relevant knowledge is legitimate and can strengthen the universities' research. However, this trend also imposes a responsibility on the university to maintain a reasonable breadth of research as well as conditions for freedom of research. The University will place research freedom at the heart of the strategic dialogue with grantors and other actors.

Freedom of teaching means that the lecturer has the academic and pedagogical freedom to challenge students' academic insight and ideas. The lecturer and the student are obliged in their freedom by several considerations: The ideal of seeking truth through critical dialogue, the respect for values such as correctness and pluralism, as well as the learning objectives of the education programme.

While poorly described in legislation, freedom of instruction is central in cases concerning students' experiences of their political, philosophical, or religious ideas being challenged and subjected to criticism. Teaching may fundamentally challenge and criticise such ideas without it being inherently problematic. Students should expect free and critical teaching at the University. The starting point is confidence in the lecturers' ability to teach based on their own academic and pedagogical choices and with respect for academic values.

Freedom of debate and expression means for university employees an extensive freedom to express academic knowledge and implications hereof to society. The limits of this freedom are set partly by legislation and partly by academic obligations in terms of professionalism and correctness. It is the employee's responsibility and privilege to engage in an open, respectful, and critical debate about societal values and conditions, including contributing to a good social tone characterised by mutual respect and the willingness to consider the views of others. However, the right to freedom of expression cannot be overridden by the desire to uphold certain social conventions.

As freedom of debate and expression is the lifeblood of the University and a pillar of the freedoms of research and teaching, the University wishes to highlight its ambition to actively protect and support freedom of debate and expression. The University thus undertakes to invest in its special role as an active framework for free debate.

The University of Southern Denmark regards these values and this Declaration as a compass for the University's continued development and investment in the free research, education and debate that characterise and serve a free and open society. With this Declaration, the University of Southern Denmark wishes to promote in society respect for the autonomy and societal mission of universities.





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