Murdoch University

Oppression Definition

Preamble

Murdoch University has a longstanding commitment to social justice, inclusion, and the protection of human rights. As a university that values diversity and academic freedom, we are dedicated to fostering an environment in which all staff and students are treated with respect and dignity, free from discrimination or racial vilification.

We affirm the fundamental importance of academic freedom and freedom of speech in the pursuit of knowledge and open debate. However, we recognise that these freedoms are not unlimited and must be exercised in a manner that is consistent with human rights principles, ensuring they do not infringe upon the dignity, equality, and rights of others within our University community.

Definition

Oppression is the unjust use of power or authority resulting in discrimination, prejudice, harassment, exclusion, vilification, intimidation or violence that impedes an individual's ability to participate as an equal in educational, political, religious, cultural, economic or social life. It can manifest in a range of ways including negative, dehumanising, or stereotypical narratives about a group which the individual identifies with or is identified with by others. Further, it includes hate speech, epithets, caricatures, stereotypes, tropes, the denial of historical atrocities committed against the group, and the display of symbols associated with the oppression or repression of the group or atrocities committed against them. In the context of this definition, 'power' includes the power of position; the power of physical, psychological or economic strength; and the power of numbers (such as a majority group over a minority group, or a group over an individual).

Observations

Targeting of an individual based on their racial, cultural, religious, sexual or gender identities alone is discriminatory and unacceptable. Criticism of the policies and practices of any government, state, or group is not in and of itself oppressive or unacceptable. However, such criticism can be oppressive when it calls for the elimination of people identifying with or identified with a particular group, or when it holds individuals or communities responsible for the actions of a government, state or

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group they identify with or are identified with. It can be oppressive to make assumptions about what individuals think based only on the fact that they identify with or are identified with a particular group.

Racism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, ableism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, antisemitism, and Islamophobia are all encompassed by this definition. Oppression as defined here is not protected by principles of academic freedom or freedom of speech, and oppression exercised by members of Murdoch University or visitors to the University is unacceptable and will lead to disciplinary action and/or expulsion from the University and its grounds.

Speech or conduct of any kind that is hate speech or discriminatory is not acceptable to the University community, and is precluded by our Policies and Procedures, as well as by law.

Governance

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Related University Legislation and Policy Documents	
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Please refer to the electronic copy in the Policy and Procedure Manager to ensure you are referring to the latest version.

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