

BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom Terms of Reference

Objectives

'To monitor and defend academic freedom¹ in the research, study and teaching of Middle East Studies in the UK and anywhere in the world, including in academic institutions in the Middle East and North Africa.'

It will do so by:

- (a) monitoring issues of academic freedom relating to the Middle East and North Africa and to the study of those regions;
- (b) defending academic freedom through communications on behalf of the Society;

Considerations

In pursuing these objectives the Committee shall bear in mind the Society's Constitution and charitable status. The Committee shall also keep in mind the need to respect the principles of equality, diversity and inclusivity to which the Society is committed.

The Committee shall also have in mind that BRISMES should represent the concerns not only of its own members but also those of all academics and students involved in Middle East Studies.

Other professional academic societies, including sister Middle East Studies associations, either have active Committees on Academic Freedom or are active in defending academic freedom. The Committee will consider whether in some cases an appropriate course of action would be to work in coordination with or in support of such academic organisations in pursuit of the Committee's goals.

Composition of the Committee on Academic Freedom

1. The minimum membership of the Committee shall be as follows:

- The BRISMES President
- The BRISMES Vice-President
- One member nominated by the student section
- Four other members of Council, selected by vote of Council according to the procedure in 4–6 below

2. Council shall have the power to co-opt up to four further members to the Committee from either members of the Council or from ordinary BRISMES members to ensure diversity of membership and an appropriate range of academic expertise. The minimum number of members of the Committee, including the President and Vice-President, will accordingly be seven, and the maximum eleven.

¹ [1] 'Academic Freedom' is defined in the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel as 'the right, without constrictions 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.'

3. The Committee will be chaired by the Vice-President.
4. Council members will be invited to express an interest in serving on the Committee. The Student Section will be invited to nominate one member
5. If there are more expressions of interest than available positions on the Committee, Committee members will be elected by a vote of Council.
6. The normal term of office of members of the Committee will be for three years, with the possibility of renewal once only. Terms will be staggered to ensure continuity. No member may serve for more than two terms until after a further year has elapsed.

Mode of Operation

The Committee will convene one meeting a year, in conjunction with the Annual Conference, but will otherwise normally work by email. Should an additional meeting be required, this will normally be arranged in advance of a Council meeting, so that the minutes/resolutions can be put before Council.

The Committee shall produce a report for the AGM, and further reports for Council as necessary.

Administration

The BRISMES Administrator will service the Committee and will be copied into correspondence and will attend and minute its meetings.

External communications on behalf of the Committee will be signed by either the President or Vice-President.

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Information on MESA's committee on academic freedom:

<https://mesana.org/advocacy/committee-on-academic-freedom/protocol>

BRISMES Committee on Academic Freedom Operating Guidelines

1. Issues for consideration may be brought to the Committee's attention by a member of the Committee itself, by a member of BRISMES Council, by another BRISMES member, or by an external party.
2. As soon as an issue has been brought to the Committee's attention, a member of the Committee shall be identified by the Committee Chair as Co-ordinator for that issue.
3. The Co-ordinator will be responsible for drafting an appropriate statement or other communication, circulating it to other Committee members, and co-ordinating an agreed response.
4. The Co-ordinator will normally be expected to circulate an initial draft document to other Committee members within two weeks of the issue being raised.
5. Except in cases of urgency, Committee members will normally be allowed a minimum of one week to comment on any draft circulated.
6. If the Co-ordinator, after considering the issue, concludes that it would not be appropriate for BRISMES to issue any communication, s/he will recommend accordingly to the Committee.
7. Members of the Committee shall declare any conflict of interest relevant to the discussion of particular cases. In the event of an issue or document being put to a vote, members who have declared a conflict of interest will refrain from voting.
8. No statement or other document shall be released by the Committee unless it has been approved by a majority of Committee members (excluding any non-Council members). In the event of a tied vote on a statement or other document, then the chair shall have a second or casting vote.
9. All external communications will be signed by the President (or in their absence, the Vice-President).
10. All Committee correspondence will be copied to the BRISMES Administrator, who will be responsible for arranging the delivery of the communication by email or other appropriate means.