Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining Policy

1. Introduction

Masters' Union is committed to maintaining a fair, respectful and inclusive workplace in which employees may express shared concerns, select representatives and exercise their rights to freedom of association and collective representation.

Masters' Union currently does not have a registered employee trade union or a collective bargaining agreement. The absence of an existing union does not restrict or remove employees' rights to organise, associate or seek collective representation.

2. Policy Statement

Masters' Union recognises the freedom of association and collective-representation rights of all employees and faculty, including women and international staff.

All employees have the right to:

- Form or join a lawful trade union or employee association
- Refrain from joining a trade union or employee association
- Select representatives of their choice
- Participate in lawful collective activities
- Present individual or collective workplace concerns
- Seek recognition of an authorised representative body
- Engage in collective consultation and collective bargaining through authorised representatives

Employees may exercise these rights without interference, intimidation, coercion, discrimination or retaliation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all persons directly employed by Masters' Union, including:

- Faculty
- Academic and research staff

- Administrative and professional staff
- Technical and support staff
- Full-time and part-time employees
- Fixed-term employees
- Women employees
- International employees
- Employees across all institutional functions and levels

The principles of this policy also apply to individuals engaged through third-party service providers while working in connection with Masters' Union activities.

4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is aligned with applicable Indian labour and industrial-relations requirements, including:

- The Industrial Relations Code, 2020
- Applicable rules and notifications
- Requirements relating to trade-union registration and recognition
- Requirements relating to negotiating unions and negotiating councils
- Prohibitions against unfair labour practices
- Applicable non-discrimination and non-retaliation requirements

The Industrial Relations framework recognises trade unions, employee representation and consultation mechanisms.

5. Freedom to Organise

Employees may lawfully:

- Discuss common workplace concerns
- Form or join an employee association or trade union
- Seek formal registration where applicable
- Elect or nominate representatives
- Communicate with colleagues regarding collective representation
- Participate in lawful association activities
- Refrain from membership or participation

Masters' Union shall not:

- Establish or control an employee organisation
- Improperly influence the selection of employee representatives

- Prevent lawful organising activity
- Require employees to disclose lawful union membership unnecessarily
- Coerce employees to join or refrain from joining an association
- Provide preferential or adverse treatment based on association membership

6. Recognition of Employee Representation

Where employees form a lawful trade union or representative body, Masters' Union shall consider and process the request for recognition transparently and in accordance with applicable law.

The recognition process may include:

1. Written notification from the union or representative body
2. Verification of registration or representative authority, where applicable
3. Confirmation of the employees represented
4. Identification of authorised employee representatives
5. Identification of authorised institutional representatives
6. Agreement on meeting, consultation and communication procedures
7. Documentation of the recognition arrangement

Where an employee group is not constituted as a registered trade union, Masters' Union may recognise lawfully selected employee representatives for consultation and collective dialogue. Such arrangements shall not restrict the right of employees to form or join a formal union.

7. Collective Bargaining and Dialogue

Where a recognised union or authorised negotiating body exists, Masters' Union shall engage in good faith on appropriate employment matters.

These may include:

- Wages and benefits
- Working hours
- Leave and attendance
- Workplace safety and wellbeing
- Terms and conditions of employment
- Employee welfare
- Grievance procedures
- Organisational changes materially affecting employees
- Other matters mutually agreed for collective discussion

Collective discussions shall be conducted respectfully, without intimidation, and through authorised representatives.

8. Non-Discrimination and Non-Retaliation

No employee shall be subjected to adverse treatment because they:

- Formed or joined a lawful employee organisation
- Declined to join an employee organisation
- Served as an employee representative
- Supported lawful organising activity
- Participated in collective consultation or bargaining
- Presented individual or collective concerns
- Reported interference with association rights

Association or representation activities shall not improperly influence:

- Recruitment
- Remuneration
- Performance assessment
- Promotion
- Training and development
- Work allocation
- Contract renewal
- Disciplinary action
- Termination

9. Inclusion of Women and International Staff

Freedom-of-association and collective-representation rights shall apply equally to women and international employees.

Masters' Union shall ensure that:

- Participation is not restricted on the basis of gender or nationality
- Women and international employees may stand as representatives
- Consultation processes are inclusive and accessible
- Issues specifically affecting women or international employees may be raised
- No employee is disadvantaged for participating in lawful representation activities

10. Responsibilities

10.1 Senior Management

Senior Management is responsible for supporting lawful freedom of association and ensuring good-faith engagement with authorised employee representatives.

10.2 Human Resources

Human Resources is responsible for:

- Communicating this policy
- Receiving and processing recognition requests
- Facilitating appropriate consultation
- Maintaining relevant records
- Addressing allegations of interference or retaliation
- Advising managers on lawful and appropriate conduct

10.3 Managers

Managers shall not interfere with lawful employee organising or subject employees to adverse treatment because of association or representation activities.

10.4 Employees and Representatives

Employees and representatives are expected to exercise their rights lawfully, responsibly and without intimidation, coercion, harassment or disruption of the rights of others.

11. Reporting and Whistleblowing

Employees may report concerns relating to:

- Interference with freedom of association
- Retaliation
- Intimidation or coercion
- Discrimination based on union or association activity
- Unreasonable refusal to consider a lawful recognition request
- Refusal to engage with authorised representatives
- Inappropriate disclosure of union or association membership

Concerns may be reported through Human Resources, Compliance or the institution's designated grievance or whistleblowing channels.

All reports shall be treated confidentially and investigated appropriately. Retaliation against individuals raising concerns in good faith shall not be tolerated.

12. Training and Awareness

Relevant Human Resources personnel, managers and institutional leaders shall receive appropriate guidance on:

- Freedom of association
- Collective representation
- Non-interference
- Non-discrimination
- Non-retaliation
- Recognition and consultation procedures
- Appropriate handling of collective concerns

13. Monitoring and Effectiveness

Masters' Union shall periodically monitor:

- Whether any union or employee association has been established
- Recognition requests received
- Collective consultations conducted
- Complaints alleging interference or retaliation
- Outcomes and corrective actions

The absence of a union shall not be interpreted as employees having waived their rights.

Appropriate improvements shall be implemented where required. This policy shall be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect changes in legal requirements and institutional practices.