



## The Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

### Research Integrity, Publication Ethics and academic freedom Policy

#### 1. Introduction

##### 1. Core Principles

- Research activities contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the social and economic development of society. They rest on a relationship of trust established among researchers, their institutions, funding bodies, and the broader community.
- **Scientific integrity** requires all researchers—faculty, doctoral candidates, and students—to conduct their work honestly, rigorously, transparently, and ethically.
- At ASOIU, we believe there can be no research excellence without full respect for research integrity principles. Consequently, the University actively promotes these standards at local, national, and international levels, drawing on best practices such as the **COPE (Committee on Publication Ethics)** guidelines

##### 2. Institutional Commitment

- ASOIU's leadership is dedicated to creating an environment where ethical research flourishes. This commitment includes endorsing national or international charters on research integrity and ensuring that all researchers (especially doctoral candidates) understand the principles they must uphold.
- The University provides training and resources on ethical conduct, research integrity, and publication best practices to foster a community that values credibility, transparency, and trust.

##### 3. Scientific Integrity Officer (Referent)

- The Rector of ASOIU appoints a **Scientific Integrity committee** serving as the primary point of contact for any integrity-related matters.
- The committee's responsibilities include promoting the University's Code of Conduct, offering training on responsible research practices, investigating alleged misconduct, and representing ASOIU in discussions with local or international bodies dedicated to scientific integrity.

## 2. Research Misconduct Procedures

### 1. Scope of Misconduct

- Research misconduct includes, but is not limited to, **plagiarism, data falsification, data fabrication**, improper manipulation of results, intentional misrepresentation, or violation of the University's Code of Conduct in ways that undermine trust in research.
- Any **breach of confidentiality, unethical use of unpublished data, or unacknowledged conflicts of interest** can also constitute research misconduct.

### 2. Reporting and Initial Assessment

- Any individual who becomes aware of a possible integrity breach should submit a **signed and dated** report (electronically or in writing) to the Scientific Integrity Officer. Confidentiality of the whistleblower is guaranteed whenever possible.
- The scientific Integrity committee evaluates the report to determine whether there is sufficient basis for a formal investigation. If so, the persons concerned are informed that an inquiry will begin.

### 3. Investigation

- The investigation must be conducted fairly, impartially, and confidentially. All parties have a right to present evidence.
- In complex cases, the scientific committee may consult independent experts. Emphasis is placed on objectivity, evidence, and ensuring that all relevant facts are considered.
- The scientific Integrity committee compiles a written report with findings and possible recommendations, which is submitted to the Rector or a designated committee.

#### 4. Outcome and Actions

- Based on the report, the University scientific committee makes the final decision, determining appropriate measures in accordance with internal regulations and applicable legislation (e.g., retraction of a publication, formal warning, or disciplinary sanction).
- The scientific committee ensures that any corrective steps—such as making errata or retractions public—are properly carried out.

### 3. Editorial and Publication Ethics

In addition to broad research integrity obligations, ASOIU observes the following **publication ethics** guidelines, inspired by the Azerbaijani “Publications ethics” framework and international standards

#### 3.1 Responsibilities of Editors

##### 1. Fair and Professional Decision-Making

- Editors (Editor-in-Chief, Managing Editor, Editorial Board) decide which articles to publish based on **intellectual merit**—quality, originality, and relevance—without discrimination based on race, gender, religion, or political views.
- Editors may seek peer reviewers’ opinions but remain accountable for final decisions.

##### 2. Compliance with Legal Requirements

- Editors ensure that submitted manuscripts do not contain material that defames, infringes copyright, or violates any legal or ethical standards.
- When misconduct (e.g., plagiarism) is suspected, they have the authority to reject the manuscript or request corrections.

##### 3. Confidentiality

- The entire editorial team treats all submissions as confidential, discussing the content only with the corresponding author, potential reviewers, or editorial advisors.

##### 4. Conflict of Interest

- Unpublished information from a submitted manuscript must not be used for personal research without explicit, written consent from the author.

- Editors must withdraw from handling any manuscript where conflicts of interest (financial, personal, or collaborative) could compromise their impartiality.

### 3.2 Responsibilities of Reviewers

#### 1. Editorial Contribution

- Peer reviewers help editors make decisions and assist authors in improving their work. Their evaluations should be **constructive, timely,** and **based on objective criteria.**

#### 2. Confidentiality and Objectivity

- Manuscripts under review are confidential. Reviewers must not distribute or discuss the manuscript with individuals not authorized by the editor.
- Criticism should address the work's scientific substance; personal remarks about authors are inappropriate.

#### 3. Identification of Relevant Work

- Reviewers highlight unreferenced but relevant literature if authors have neglected to cite it.
- Any suspicion of **substantial overlap** between the submitted manuscript and another published or unpublished work must be reported to the editor.

#### 4. Conflict of Interest

- Reviewers must decline to review if personal, financial, or competitive relationships could bias their evaluation.
- Privileged information or ideas obtained in the review process must remain confidential and cannot be used for personal gain.

### 3.3 Responsibilities of Authors

#### 1. Accuracy of Reporting

- Authors must provide a clear and accurate account of their research, including its objectives, methodology, data, and interpretations.
- Data or results should never be fabricated, falsified, or misrepresented.

#### 2. Originality and Plagiarism

- Authors are required to ensure their submissions are original. If other works or ideas are used, they must be properly cited or quoted.

- Submitting the same manuscript to multiple journals, or resubmitting previously published work in another publication, is unethical.

### 3. Authorship Criteria

- Only individuals who have **significantly contributed** to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the study can be listed as co-authors.
- All contributors should give final approval to the version that is submitted for publication.

### 4. Funding and Conflict Disclosures

- Authors must declare all potential conflicts of interest (financial, institutional, or personal) that might affect the objectivity of their work.
- All sources of financial support for the research must be properly acknowledged.

### 5. Correcting Errors

- If authors discover a significant error in their published work, they must promptly inform the editor or publisher and cooperate to issue a correction, retraction, or other appropriate notice.

## 4. Training, Awareness, and Continuous Improvement

### 1. Mandatory Training

- All doctoral candidates and new researchers at ASOIU must receive induction training on research integrity, publication ethics, and responsible conduct of research.
- Ongoing workshops and seminars for faculty and research staff encourage continuous reflection on ethical standards.

### 2. Preventive Measures

- ASOIU encourages open discussions about potential ethical dilemmas and fosters an environment in which individuals feel safe to raise concerns.
- The University regularly reviews procedures and policies to remain in line with international best practices (e.g., updates from COPE, national charters, or new research regulations).

### 3. National and International Collaboration

- ASOIU’s Scientific Integrity Officer represents the university in national working groups and international networks that address research integrity.
  - The University seeks partnerships with global organizations, ensuring adherence to the highest ethical standards across collaborative projects.
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## **5. Academic Freedom**

The following sections outline ASOIU’s commitment to promoting and safeguarding **Academic Freedom** for faculty, students, and researchers, consistent with local needs and global academic standards.

### **1. Introduction**

- Academic freedom is the cornerstone of intellectual inquiry and the advancement of knowledge within institutions of higher education. It is the bedrock principle that ensures scholars, researchers, and educators can pursue truth, engage in critical discourse, and express their ideas without fear of censorship or reprisal. At its core, academic freedom encompasses the rights of individuals within the academic community to explore diverse perspectives, challenge prevailing beliefs, and contribute to the collective pursuit of understanding.
- ASOIU prioritizes academic freedom as key to its mission of knowledge creation and critical thinking. This freedom fosters a lively intellectual environment for open exchange, debate, and exploration of ideas—an environment that aligns with Azerbaijan’s broader national strategy of fostering innovation and higher education growth.

### **2. Objective**

- Academic freedom plays a vital role in the university’s mission. Progress in knowledge relies on the ability of faculty, students, and librarians to explore and exchange ideas and facts without the threat of punishment or backlash.

### **3. Scope**

- Institutions of higher education must prioritize the pursuit of truth and knowledge, the transmission of intellectual skills, and the creation of trustworthy scholarly works. Achieving these objectives necessitates upholding academic freedom, especially in a rapidly evolving national context.

#### **4. Policy**

- Academic freedom encompasses the right of teachers, students, and academic institutions to conduct teaching, learning, and research activities without unjustified interference or restrictions imposed by legal authorities. It serves to protect individuals and organizations engaged in academic endeavors, including teaching and research.
- Institutional academic freedom denotes the university's entitlement to define its educational goals autonomously, without interference or influence from the government or any other external sources.

#### **5. Rights of Students**

- Students' rights to academic freedom entail corresponding duties and responsibilities. In the classroom, faculty members should endeavor to establish an environment where intellectual diversity is respected. Students should feel assured that they won't face consequences for expressing opinions or beliefs that diverge from others' perspectives, fostering an atmosphere conducive to unrestricted free inquiry and discourse.

#### **6. Rights of Teachers in Classroom**

- Academic freedom also extends to the right of teachers to deliver their curriculum without undue interference from university officials. Teachers should feel full freedom of instruction, provided they fulfill their other academic duties adequately.
- Controversy is a natural aspect of academic inquiry and teaching, and it is appropriate to incorporate both the expertise and personal beliefs of faculty members into their teaching. However, it is essential to maintain a constant effort to distinguish between factual knowledge and personal belief. While teachers have the liberty to discuss their subject matter in the classroom, they should be careful not to introduce controversial topics or irrelevant matters unrelated to the course content.

#### **7. Faculty as Citizen**

- A university faculty member embodies multiple roles: they are both a citizen, a member of a specialized profession, and an integral part of the educational institution.
- When faculty express their views as citizens, it's important for them to avoid giving the impression that they are speaking on behalf of the entire university.

- While speaking or writing as citizens, faculty members should be shielded from any form of institutional censorship or punishment. However, their unique position within the academic community entails certain responsibilities.
- Faculty members must understand that their professional standing comes with obligations to ensure accuracy, exercise appropriate restraint, and respect the rights of others to express their opinions.
- As individuals who possess knowledge and serve as educators, faculty members should be mindful that their public statements can reflect upon both their profession and the institution they represent.

## **8. Right to Research**

- Academic freedom encompasses the liberty to engage in research, scholarship, or creative endeavors aimed at advancing knowledge, and to disseminate research findings responsibly. This freedom entails the ability to conduct research based on evidence, draw conclusions, and allow for critique of one's findings.
- With academic freedom comes a responsibility to uphold professional standards in all aspects of a researcher's conduct. This entails a commitment to accuracy and integrity to ensure the integrity of academic work.

## **9. Intellectual Debate**

- Academic freedom also extends to both educators and students, allowing them to participate in intellectual discourse without the fear of censorship or reprisal. This means they have the liberty to express and exchange ideas freely, fostering an environment conducive to open debate and the pursuit of knowledge.

## **10. Promoting Academic Freedom**

- This Policy and a reminder of ASOIU's dedication to academic freedom will be distributed at the beginning of each academic year.
- The University will create and maintain an academic freedom resources center that outlines the University's commitment, pertinent resources and materials for additional learning, and on-campus events (conferences, workshops, lecture series) encouraging academic engagement and dialogue.



- To increase knowledge and comprehension of academic freedom and how it appears in a university context, the institution will organize yearly events for academic leadership and faculty.

### **11. Matters Relating to Academic Freedom**

- Matters relating to academic freedom are heard and discussed in the general meetings of the Scientific Council of ASOIU, organized by the Scientific Secretary. The Faculty Scientific Council is another forum where matters are brought up and discussed. Every member of the scientific community—from research fellows and faculty staff to administrative staff members and students—may be involved, as applicable.
- To investigate a complaint alleging a violation of academic freedom, the Scientific Council may enlist the assistance of subject matter experts.
- The Scientific Council and the Faculty Scientific Council are mandated to:
  - Oversee effective implementation of this Policy;
  - Investigate complaints of abuses of academic freedom and, when appropriate, offer recommendations;
  - Provide specialized trainings and seminars on academic freedom.

### **12. Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations (AFVs)**

- A university community member may file a complaint with the Faculty Scientific Council or raise the issue during a Scientific Council meeting if another member's academic freedom is infringed.
- Such complaints should be raised either in writing or verbally. If the matter is not given enough consideration, the claimant may then raise the issue during the meeting of the Scientific Council.

### **13. Preliminary Determination and Investigation**

- After receiving a complaint, the Faculty Scientific Council or the Scientific Council will investigate and analyze the matter—normally within 30 days—to determine the complaint's relevance, accuracy, and scope.
- If the complaint is determined to be valid, it is admitted to the members of the Faculty Scientific Council who have expertise in the subject matter. Valid complaints are then addressed; complaints found invalid are closed.

### **14. Confidentiality**

- The parties' right to privacy will be upheld in all procedures. All documents, discussions, procedures, and decisions must be treated with complete confidentiality by members of the Faculty Scientific Council and the general Scientific Council.
- Meetings devoted to discussing complaints under this Policy take place behind closed doors.

### **15. ASOIU Policy and Procedure for Student Complaints**

- **Academic Freedom:** Students have the right to express views on university matters, policies, and broader social issues.
- **Complaints:** Students who feel penalized for their opinions can file a written complaint. It will be investigated to determine if disciplinary action is justified. Appeals can be made to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

## **6. Conclusion**

ASOIU underscores the **inseparable link between research and education excellence and ethical conduct**. Upholding these standards:

- **Strengthens trust** among researchers, funders, and society;
- **Protects the reputation** of the University and its scholarly community;
- **Contributes to global science** by ensuring valid, reproducible, and transparent research outcomes.

All members of the ASOIU community—administrators, faculty, researchers, and students—are expected to uphold this **Research Integrity and Publication Ethics Policy**. Adherence to these guidelines ensures that ASOIU remains a leading institution in engineering, science, and innovation, grounded in the highest ethical principles.