



Azii 1920 || Azerbaijan State Oil & Industry University

Ethics policy

Purpose and Guiding Principles

The primary objective of this Enhanced Ethical Policy is to **strengthen ASOIU's commitment** to ethical standards across all its academic, research, and administrative functions. These standards embody:

- **Integrity** – Upholding honesty, responsibility, and consistency in all pursuits.
- **Transparency** – Ensuring open communication and clear decision-making processes to build trust.
- **Accountability** – Taking ownership of decisions, actions, and outcomes, and applying fair sanctions for violations.
- **Respect for Diversity** – Embracing the different backgrounds and perspectives of students, faculty, staff, and stakeholders.
- **Fairness** – Guaranteeing impartial and equitable treatment in hiring, evaluations, promotions, assessments, and all forms of collaboration.

2. Scope of Application

This policy applies to:

- **All Students** (bachelor's, master's, doctoral, exchange, continuing education)
- **All Faculty** (full-time, part-time, visiting, adjunct, and research fellows)
- **All Staff** (administrative personnel, contractors, volunteers)
- **Alumni and External Partners** involved in university-sponsored programs, events, or collaborations

3. Governance Structure and Roles

3.1. Council of Ethics

1. Composition

- **Chair:** Vice Rector for Social and Ethical Affairs (or designated official)
- **Faculty Representatives:** Two faculty members (preferably from different academic faculties)
- **Student Representatives:** Two students (one undergraduate, one graduate) chosen through the Student Government or a transparent selection process
- **Administrative Staff Representative:** One staff member with relevant experience (HR, compliance, or student affairs)
- **External Advisor:** One legal/ethics expert from outside the university (e.g., an NGO, a law firm, or a retired judge)

2. Primary Responsibilities

- Develop and maintain ASOIU's Ethical Policy and guidelines, updating them periodically to align with changing legal and educational standards.
- Oversee the resolution of ethics-related violations, ensuring due process and appropriate sanctions.
- Provide policy recommendations to the Rector's Office and the University Senate for final approval.
- Collaborate with the Whistleblower Protection Committee (WPC) to ensure safe and confidential reporting channels.
- Organize university-wide ethics training, workshops, and public awareness campaigns.

3. Meeting Frequency & Timeline

- **Regular Council Meetings:** Held **monthly** (i.e., one time a month).
- **Special Sessions:** May be convened by the Chair when urgent ethical issues arise requiring immediate attention.
- **Reporting Cycle:**
 - The Council presents a **Ethical Update** to the Rectorate summarizing open cases, resolved cases, and any policy recommendations.
 - At the end of each year, the Council compiles an **Annual Ethics Report** detailing trends, successes, challenges, and forward-looking goals.

3.2. Whistleblower Protection Committee (WPC)

1. Composition

- Minimum of three members with diverse expertise (faculty, legal counsel, HR).
- At least one member must have a background in compliance or investigations to handle sensitive reports effectively.

2. Primary Responsibilities

- Operate and maintain **confidential reporting channels** (online, email, physical drop boxes).
- Conduct preliminary fact-finding on whistleblower complaints.
- Ensure whistleblowers are protected from retaliation, harassment, or adverse actions.
- Refer credible cases to the Council of Ethics for formal investigation.

3. Meeting Frequency & Timeline

- **Monthly Check-In Meetings:** The WPC convenes at least **once a month** to review new or ongoing whistleblower submissions, assess progress, and coordinate with the Council of Ethics.
- **Case-Specific Meetings:** Scheduled as needed for urgent or complex complaints that require immediate deliberation.

- **Semi-Annual Review:** Twice a year, the WPC publishes a summarized Whistleblower Report, anonymizing details of complaints but indicating outcomes and systemic improvements needed.

3.3. Ad-Hoc Investigation Panels

1. Composition

- Appointed by the Council of Ethics on a case-by-case basis.
- Typically includes **3–5 members** with relevant expertise (subject matter specialists, legal counsel, a student representative if the case involves students, etc.).

2. Primary Responsibilities

- Gather and evaluate evidence for complex or specialized ethics cases (e.g., research misconduct, large-scale cheating rings, conflict of interest with external funding).
- Interview complainants, witnesses, and the accused; analyze supporting documentation.
- Prepare a detailed investigation report with recommendations for the Council of Ethics, which then makes a final decision.

3. Meeting Frequency & Timeline

- **Case-by-Case:** Panels dissolve once they conclude their assigned investigation.
- **Typical Duration:** Each investigation aims to conclude within **30–60 days**, with possible extensions for exceptionally complex cases.
- **Interim Reports:** If a case is expected to take longer than 60 days, the Panel provides **bi-weekly** (every two weeks) updates to the Council of Ethics for status tracking.

4. Reporting and Case-Handling Procedures

4.1. Reporting Channels

- **Online Portal:** Secure, password-protected website form for anonymous or named submissions.
- **Email:** Dedicated WPC email address (e.g., ethics@asoiu.edu.az) monitored daily.

- **Physical Drop Boxes:** Strategically placed in student centers, faculty lounges, and administrative offices.
- **Direct Reports:** Any Council of Ethics member or the WPC can be approached privately.

4.2. Intake and Preliminary Review

1. Intake

- The WPC logs each complaint and assigns a confidential case reference number.
- Urgent matters (threats to safety, severe misconduct) receive immediate escalation.

2. Preliminary Review

- The WPC examines submitted evidence, checks for jurisdiction (whether it falls under the Ethical Policy), and may conduct a brief fact-finding interview.
- If credible, the complaint is either handled by the WPC (minor infractions) or referred to the Council of Ethics (moderate to severe infractions).

4.3. Formal Investigation and Adjudication

1. Initiating an Investigation

- The Council of Ethics convenes to determine if an **Ad-Hoc Investigation Panel** is needed (for complex or specialized allegations).
- If yes, the Panel is appointed, and a timeline for the investigation is established.

2. Due Process

- Both complainant and respondent are notified in writing of the investigation scope and timeline.
- Both parties have the right to submit evidence, provide witness lists, and request an in-person hearing.

3. Decision and Sanctions

- At the conclusion, the Panel submits its findings and recommended sanctions to the Council of Ethics.
- Sanctions may include:

- **Warnings:** Written warnings placed in permanent records.
- **Suspension:** Temporary removal from the university for a defined period (students/faculty/staff).
- **Expulsion** (Students) or **Termination** (Faculty/Staff): For severe or repeated violations.
- **Legal Referral:** In extreme cases involving criminal elements (e.g., fraud, physical harm).

4. Appeals Process

- Appeals must be filed within 14 days of a formal decision.
- An **Appeals Panel** (composed of individuals not involved in the initial investigation) reviews the case for procedural fairness and consistency.

5. Timelines and Scheduling

- **WPC:** Meets **monthly** plus additional sessions for urgent cases. Publishes a **semi-annual report** on whistleblower concerns.
- **Council of Ethics:** Meets **monthly**, and in **special sessions** as required for immediate issues. Presents a **Ethical Update** and an **Annual Ethics Report**.
- **Ad-Hoc Investigation Panels:** Formed **as needed**; each investigation generally lasts **30–60 days**, with **bi-weekly progress updates** if extended.
- **Annual Ethics Conference:** Held **once per year** in early fall, providing a forum to share the **Annual Ethics Report**, discuss policy updates, and promote training initiatives.

6. Continuous Improvement

6.1. Regular Audits

1. Internal Audits

- Conducted twice a year, reviewing the effectiveness of reporting channels, investigation timelines, and resolution outcomes.
- Identifies any recurring issues (e.g., exam cheating patterns, undisclosed conflicts of interest) for policy refinement.

2. External Reviews

- Every two to three years, an independent third-party ethics or legal consultant may be invited to evaluate ASOIU's Ethical Policy, measuring it against international benchmarks.

6.2. Training and Workshops

1. Mandatory Onboarding

- All new students, faculty, and staff receive ethics orientation covering this policy, reporting procedures, and their responsibilities.

2. Refresher Sessions

- Annual or semi-annual sessions tackle evolving ethical issues, such as **AI-based plagiarism**, data privacy, or conflicts of interest in industry partnerships.

6.3. Policy Evolution

1. Annual Policy Review

- The Council of Ethics proposes amendments based on the year's challenges and lessons learned from actual cases.

2. Stakeholder Engagement

- Town halls, surveys, and feedback sessions gather input from the wider ASOIU community, ensuring the policy remains relevant and effective.

7. Communication and Transparency

1. Ethics Portal

- A designated page on the ASOIU website hosts the Ethical Policy, instructions for reporting, and updates on general (anonymized) case statistics.

2. Summary of Cases

- A high-level summary of resolved cases (omitting personal identifiers) is published in the **Annual Ethics Report**, illustrating how the policy is enforced.

3. Public Awareness

- Posters, digital signage, and email bulletins periodically remind the university community about the importance of ethics, how to report misconduct, and whom to contact with questions.

8. Policy Violations

1. Examples of Violations

- Exam misconduct (cheating, unauthorized aids).
- Research misconduct (plagiarism, data falsification).
- Conflicts of interest (undisclosed financial or personal ties).
- Harassment, discrimination, or bullying.
- Fraud or misuse of university funds/assets.

2. Consequences

- Vary based on severity, frequency, and the individual's history of misconduct.
- May escalate from warnings to permanent dismissal.