



**Azli 1920 || Azerbaijan State Oil & Industry University**

## **Annual Ethics Report for ASOIU**

**Reporting Period: 2024**

## 1. Introduction

This report outlines the ethics governance at Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) for the year. It provides insights into the implementation of ethical standards, the activities of the Ethics Council, key cases investigated, and improvements in compliance and ethics systems. The report also reflects ASOIU's commitment to creating an ethical environment for all stakeholders, highlighting both the progress made and areas that still need development.

## 2. Ethical Policy Overview

The **ASOIU Ethics Policy** ensures that the university adheres to principles such as **Integrity**, **Transparency**, **Accountability**, **Respect for Diversity**, and **Fairness**. These principles apply across academic, research, and administrative functions. The policy emphasizes ethical behavior in student interactions, faculty engagements, staff actions, and collaborations with external partners.

The **Ethics Council**, chaired by the Vice Rector for Social and Ethical Affairs, provides guidance on ethical issues and oversees investigations into misconduct. The **Whistleblower Protection Committee (WPC)** and **Ad-Hoc Investigation Panels** play crucial roles in managing specific ethical issues.

## 3. Governance and Oversight Structure

The governance of ethics at ASOIU follows a decentralized but structured approach:

- **Council of Ethics:** Provides oversight and guidance on ethical policies and resolves major ethics violations. The council meets regularly to review cases, update policies, and ensure compliance across the university.
- **Whistleblower Protection Committee (WPC):** Operates secure and confidential reporting channels for unethical behavior and protects whistleblowers from retaliation.
- **Ad-Hoc Investigation Panels:** Formed for urgent cases or specialized areas, these panels investigate serious misconduct such as research fraud or conflicts of interest.

#### 4. Key Cases Addressed in 2024

Throughout the reporting period, ASOIU dealt with several significant ethics-related cases:

- **Case #2024-04 (Exam Misconduct):** Involved students using smartphones to share notes during a final exam. An investigation confirmed the violation, resulting in penalties including failing grades and academic probation.
- **Case #2024-10 (Unauthorized Device Usage in Exams):** Preliminary findings suggested unauthorized devices were used during exams, prompting an investigation and the formation of an ad-hoc panel.
- **Case #2024-11 (Conflict of Interest – Research Funding):** A faculty member was investigated for directing university grants to a personal business. This case is under further review.
- **Case #2024-09 (Plagiarism in master’s Thesis):** A student’s thesis was flagged for a high percentage of plagiarism. The council is considering the appropriate penalty, ranging from a rewrite to expulsion.

#### 5. Ethical Committee Goals: Achievements and Progress

The **Ethics Committee** set several goals for the year, with notable progress made in some areas and ongoing efforts in others.

##### Achieved Goals:

- **Goal 1: Establish a Transparent Reporting System**  
*Achievement:* The Ethics Council and Whistleblower Protection Committee developed a secure and confidential reporting system for ethical violations, which was effectively utilized throughout the year. This system has helped increase the reporting of unethical behavior while ensuring the safety of whistleblowers.
- **Goal 2: Improve Ethical Education and Training**  
*Achievement:* Mandatory ethics training sessions were conducted for faculty, staff, and students, with new modules on research integrity, plagiarism, and data privacy added. The

university also began developing a dedicated online training platform to enhance the accessibility and quality of these training sessions.

- **Goal 3: Strengthen Ethics Monitoring**  
*Achievement:* Monitoring systems were implemented to track compliance with ethical standards in research and academic activities. The Ethics Council initiated an annual review of ongoing projects and ethical applications to ensure they comply with university standards.

#### **Ongoing Goals:**

- **Goal 4: Establish an Online Ethics Application and Monitoring System**  
*Progress:* The development of an online ethics application system is in progress. Although some delays were encountered due to resource limitations, the first phase of the system has been completed, which will simplify the ethics application process and improve monitoring capabilities.
- **Goal 5: Refine the Code of Ethics**  
*Progress:* The Ethics Council initiated a comprehensive review of the **Code of Ethics**, aiming for clearer documentation and more practical guidance. This revision is expected to be completed in the upcoming year.
- **Goal 6: Increase the Efficiency of Ethics Review Process**  
*Progress:* The Ethics Committee has been working on reducing the time for ethics review by enhancing internal processes. The review times for initial applications and re-submissions have significantly decreased, but further improvements are necessary for faster response to urgent cases.

#### **6. Education, Outreach, and Training**

To ensure awareness and compliance with ethical standards, ASOIU has implemented several educational initiatives:

- **Ethics Workshops:** The university conducts mandatory workshops and training for all staff and students on ethics, research integrity, and specific topics like plagiarism, harassment, and conflicts of interest.
- **Online Ethics System:** ASOIU is in the process of developing an online system for ethics application and monitoring. This system will streamline the approval process, improve tracking, and provide better guidance for researchers and faculty members.
- **Specialized Training:** New modules are being developed for staff and students, including training on **research integrity** and **data security**. These training sessions aim to mitigate breaches in ethical standards and reinforce compliance.

## 7. Risk Management and Compliance

ASOIU continuously assesses and mitigates ethical risks through regular audits and risk assessments. Key areas of focus for the year included:

- **Research Ethics:** Monitoring research activities, particularly regarding external funding, foreign influence, and compliance with regulations.
- **Student Misconduct:** Investigating allegations related to academic integrity, such as cheating or plagiarism, and ensuring fair and consistent penalties.

The Ethics Council has also reviewed and revised policies on **conflict of interest** and **research funding**, ensuring compliance with national and international standards.

## 8. Future Goals and Policy Enhancements

Looking ahead, ASOIU plans to further enhance its ethics framework by:

- **Policy Revisions:** Continuing the revision of the **Code of Ethics** to simplify the documentation and provide clearer guidance.
- **Increased Monitoring:** Expanding monitoring mechanisms for ethics applications and project progress to ensure ongoing compliance with university policies.

- **Annual Ethics Review:** Conducting a thorough review of ethical practices and investigating emerging issues, such as the ethical implications of **artificial intelligence** in academic settings.

## **9. Conclusion**

ASOIU has made significant strides in building a robust ethics program, addressing misconduct, and fostering a culture of integrity. The ongoing efforts to revise policies, train stakeholders, and monitor compliance will ensure that the university continues to meet its ethical commitments. The university remains dedicated to maintaining the highest standards of conduct across all activities, ensuring fairness and transparency for all members of the ASOIU community.