

AZERBAIJAN STATE OIL AND  
INDUSTRY UNIVERSITY



## ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY





Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University

Those charged with governance

Sustainability Committee

**Academic freedom policy**

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An official copy of this policy can be obtained upon request.

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## Contents

SECTION 1: Introduction .....	3
SECTION 2: Objective .....	3
SECTION 3: Scope .....	3
SECTION 4: Policy.....	3
SECTION 5: Rights of Students .....	4
SECTION 6: Rights of Teachers in Classroom.....	4
SECTION 7: Faculty as Citizen .....	4
SECTION 8: Right to Research .....	4
SECTION 9: Intellectual Debate.....	5
SECTION 10: Promoting academic freedom.....	5
SECTION 11: Matters Relating to Academic Freedom .....	5
SECTION 12: Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations (AFVs) .....	5
SECTION 13: Preliminary Determination and Investigation.....	6
SECTION 14: Confidentiality .....	6
SECTION 15: ASOIU Policy and Procedure for Student Complaints.....	6

## SECTION 1: Introduction

Academic freedom serves as the foundation of intellectual exploration and the progression of knowledge within higher education institutions. It is a fundamental principle that guarantees scholars, educators, and researchers the liberty to seek truth, engage in meaningful discourse, and share ideas without the threat of censorship or retaliation. At its essence, academic freedom protects the rights of academic community members to investigate diverse viewpoints, question established norms, and contribute meaningfully to the collective quest for understanding.

At ASOIU, academic freedom stands at the core of its mission to foster knowledge generation and critical thinking. The university's Academic Freedom Policy is developed in alignment with internationally recognized frameworks, notably the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure and the UN Special Rapporteur's guidelines on academic freedom. Upholding this freedom nurtures a dynamic intellectual climate where the open exchange, discussion, and exploration of ideas can flourish.

This policy articulates ASOIU's firm commitment to advancing and safeguarding academic freedom for all constituents of its academic community—faculty, students, and researchers alike. It reinforces our pledge to cultivate an environment that promotes intellectual curiosity, values diverse opinions, and upholds the foundational ideals of free inquiry and expression.

In support of this commitment, ASOIU aims to establish a policy framework that:

1. Protects and promotes the rights and responsibilities tied to academic freedom for all faculty, students, and researchers.
2. Defines the scope and boundaries of academic freedom in accordance with institutional values and ethical standards.
3. Ensures the presence of clear, transparent procedures to address and resolve disputes or conflicts related to academic freedom fairly and equitably.
4. Fosters an inclusive academic culture that encourages open inquiry, critical dialogue, and intellectual plurality, thereby driving innovation and excellence.

Through the implementation of these guiding principles, ASOIU reinforces its dedication to building an academic environment where freedom of thought is respected, knowledge is advanced, and the pursuit of truth remains a central priority.

## SECTION 2: Objective

Academic freedom is not only fundamental to the advancement of knowledge at ASOIU but also crucial for encouraging global collaboration and innovation. It allows scholars to take part in international research initiatives and contribute meaningfully to worldwide academic conversations. Academic freedom holds a central place in the university's mission. The development of knowledge relies on the ability of faculty, students, and librarians to explore, exchange, and critique ideas and information without fear of retaliation or punitive consequences.

## SECTION 3: Scope

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to prioritize the pursuit of truth, the advancement of knowledge, the cultivation of intellectual skills, and the production of credible scholarly work. Fulfilling these goals depends fundamentally on the protection and promotion of academic freedom. At ASOIU, academic freedom encompasses the exploration of truth and knowledge across all

academic fields, supports interdisciplinary engagement, and embraces diverse viewpoints. This commitment is in accordance with globally recognized standards, including the AAUP's 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur's principles. These frameworks underscore academic freedom as essential to fostering creativity, collaboration, and the unrestricted flow of ideas.

#### SECTION 4: Policy

Academic freedom includes the rights of educators, students, and academic institutions to pursue teaching, learning, and research without undue interference or constraints from legal or governmental authorities. It acts as a safeguard for both individuals and institutions engaged in scholarly activities, ensuring that their academic pursuits, whether instructional or investigative—are protected.

ASOIU upholds this principle by implementing protective measures such as tenure, which secures faculty employment and supports independent scholarship, and due process, which guarantees fair and transparent procedures in instances of alleged violations. Moreover, institutional academic freedom affirms the university's right to establish its own educational mission and priorities, free from external pressures or governmental influence.

#### SECTION 5: Rights of Students

ASOIU is dedicated to creating support systems—such as counseling and advocacy services—to aid students who encounter violations of their academic freedom. The academic freedom afforded to students carries with it certain responsibilities and expectations. Within the classroom setting, faculty members are encouraged to cultivate an environment that honors intellectual diversity and open dialogue. Students should have the confidence to express differing views or beliefs without fear of academic or personal repercussions, thereby contributing to a climate where free inquiry and thoughtful discourse can thrive.

#### SECTION 6: Rights of Teachers in Classroom

Academic freedom also includes the right of faculty to teach their courses without unwarranted interference from university administration. Instructors should be granted full autonomy in their teaching, as long as they responsibly fulfill their broader academic responsibilities.

Engaging with controversial issues is an inherent part of scholarly inquiry and higher education, and faculty are encouraged to draw on both their subject expertise and personal perspectives when appropriate. However, it remains essential to clearly differentiate between evidence-based knowledge and personal opinion. While educators are free to explore their discipline in the classroom, they should refrain from introducing unrelated or provocative topics that fall outside the scope of the course. Maintaining a focus on relevant content ensures that classroom discussions remain meaningful and academically grounded.

#### SECTION 7: Faculty as Citizen

- University faculty members fulfill multiple roles—they are citizens, professionals within specialized fields, and essential contributors to the academic community.
- When expressing personal views as private citizens, faculty should take care not to imply that they speak on behalf of the university. While they are entitled to speak or write freely in public forums, they should be protected from institutional censorship or disciplinary action for doing so. Nonetheless, their position within the academic sphere carries certain responsibilities.

- Faculty are expected to uphold standards of accuracy, demonstrate thoughtful restraint, and respect the rights of others to express differing opinions. As scholars and educators, they must also recognize that their public statements may influence how both their profession and their institution are perceived. For this reason, they should consistently aim for factual accuracy, remain respectful of diverse perspectives, and clearly indicate when their views are personal rather than institutional.

#### - SECTION 8: Right to Research

- Academic freedom includes the right to engage in research, scholarship, and creative work with the goal of advancing knowledge, as well as the freedom to share research findings in a responsible manner alongside other academic duties.
- This freedom encompasses the ability to pursue inquiry grounded in evidence and to draw independent conclusions, while also inviting scrutiny, critique, and the evaluation of one's work by peers.
- However, with this freedom comes the obligation to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct. Researchers are expected to demonstrate a strong commitment to accuracy, honesty, and academic integrity in all stages of their work, ensuring that their contributions maintain the credibility and rigor essential to scholarly advancement.

#### - SECTION 9: Intellectual Debate

- Academic freedom also applies equally to educators and students, granting them the right to engage in intellectual exchange without fear of censorship or retaliation. This freedom ensures that individuals are able to express diverse ideas and engage in meaningful dialogue, thereby supporting an atmosphere where open debate and the pursuit of knowledge are actively encouraged.
- To uphold these values, ASOIU will establish and maintain forums for regular academic discussions and intellectual debates. These platforms will promote a culture of open inquiry, critical thinking, and respectful discourse within the university community.

### SECTION 10: Promoting academic freedom

- This Policy, along with a reaffirmation of ASOIU's commitment to academic freedom, will be distributed to all members of the university community at the start of each academic year.
- ASOIU will also develop and maintain dedicated academic freedom resources. These will outline the University's principles and commitments, provide access to relevant materials for further learning, and promote on-campus initiatives that foster academic engagement—such as conferences, workshops, and lecture series.
- ASOIU will establish digital platforms—including online forums and moderated social media groups—to promote open dialogue and the exchange of ideas related to academic freedom among students, faculty, and researchers.

### SECTION 11: Matters Relating to Academic Freedom

Matters concerning academic freedom are addressed during the regular meetings of the Scientific Council of ASOIU, which are convened by the Scientific Secretary. The Faculty Scientific Council also serves as a platform for raising and discussing issues related to academic freedom.

Participation in these discussions may include all members of the academic community, including research fellows, faculty, administrative staff, and students, as appropriate.

To conduct a preliminary review or investigate a complaint regarding a potential violation of academic freedom, the Scientific Council may engage any member of the university community, including subject matter experts, to assist in the process.

The Scientific Council and the Faculty Scientific Council are entrusted with the following responsibilities:



- Overseeing the effective implementation of this Academic Freedom Policy;
- Investigating reported violations of academic freedom in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy, and providing recommendations based on the outcomes of such investigations;
- Ensuring that specialized training sessions and seminars on academic freedom—covering its principles, background, and objectives—are delivered prior to or at the beginning of each academic year.

## SECTION 12: Complaints of Academic Freedom Violations (AFVs)

Any member of the university community may submit a complaint to the Faculty Scientific Council or raise the issue during a meeting of the Scientific Council if they believe that another member's academic freedom has been infringed upon within the university setting—such as through the application or enforcement of a university policy or regulation. Complaints may be submitted in writing or presented verbally during a meeting of the Faculty Scientific Council. If the issue is not adequately addressed at that level, the claimant may escalate the matter by bringing it forward at a meeting of the Scientific Council.

## SECTION 13: Preliminary Determination and Investigation

- Upon receiving a complaint, the Faculty Scientific Council or the Scientific Council undertakes a thorough review and investigation of the matter. This process typically occurs within 30 days and includes a preliminary assessment of the complaint's relevance, accuracy, adequacy, and other pertinent factors. Following this evaluation, appropriate procedures are initiated, and the claimant is provided with a response that reflects due care and diligence.
- If the complaint is found to have merit, it will be referred to the appropriate members of the Faculty Scientific Council who possess expertise in the relevant area. All issues falling within the scope of this policy will be addressed accordingly. Any parts of the complaint determined to be unsubstantiated or outside the purview of academic freedom will be closed without further action.

## SECTION 14: Confidentiality

- The right to privacy for all parties involved will be respected throughout any procedures conducted under this Policy. Accordingly, both parties and witnesses are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding the proceedings and any information shared or received during the course of the investigation.
- While confidentiality is essential, parties may exchange relevant information when necessary. ASOIU will strive to balance confidentiality with transparency by providing periodic updates on the status of academic freedom complaints, as appropriate. All complaints submitted under this Policy—including associated documentation, discussions, procedures, and outcomes—must be handled with strict confidentiality by members of both the Faculty Scientific Council and the Scientific Council. Meetings of the Faculty Scientific Council convened to address academic freedom complaints and their resolution will be conducted in closed sessions to preserve privacy and integrity.
- **SECTION 15: ASOIU Policy and Procedure for Student Complaints**
- Academic Freedom: Students have the right to express their views on matters concerning the university, its policies, and broader social issues without fear of reprisal.

- Complaints: If a student believes they have been penalized for expressing their opinions, they may submit a written complaint. The university will investigate the matter to determine whether any disciplinary actions were justified. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- Regular Feedback Survey: ASOIU will administer regular feedback surveys to collect student input on the effectiveness and fairness of the complaint resolution process. These surveys will help identify areas for improvement and support continuous enhancement of procedures related to academic freedom.







