

AZERBAIJAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UNEC)

ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

Table of Contents

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

1.2 Definition of Academic Freedom

Section 2. Principles of the Sustainable Funding & Donations Policy

Section 3. Implementation and Monitoring

Section 4. Rights of Students

Section 5. Rights of Teachers in the Classroom

Section 6. Faculty as Citizens

Section 7. Right to Research

Section 8. Intellectual Debate

Section 9. Promotion of Academic Freedom

Section 10. Matters Relating to Academic Freedom

Section 11. Matters Relating to Academic Freedom

Section 12. Confidentiality

Section 13. Procedure for Student Complaints

Section 14. Future Actions



Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Policy

This policy aims to foster the free development of curricula, encourage new ideas, and promote critical analysis of existing approaches. Academic freedom is essential to ensure institutional autonomy and an environment where diverse ideas thrive. However, it must be exercised responsibly and within ethical boundaries.

This policy is prepared in accordance with the laws regulating education and scientific research in the Republic of Azerbaijan. It aims to protect and enhance academic freedom across all UNEC structures, students, and staff, fostering a culture of intellectual debate and continuous academic development.

1.2 Definition of Academic Freedom

UNEC recognizes academic freedom as one of the core principles of the higher education system. It encompasses the right of faculty, students, and researchers to explore, teach, and share knowledge and ideas freely. UNEC considers the creation of a free and creative environment an integral part of its mission.

For the purposes of this policy, academic freedom refers to the right of students, faculty, and researchers to teach, study, research, publish, and express ideas without undue interference, while respecting ethical standards, institutional policies, and applicable laws.

Section 2. Objective

Academic freedom is central to UNEC's mission. The objective of this policy is to safeguard and promote academic freedom within the university. It aims to provide equal rights and transparent procedures for students and staff, ensuring a supportive academic environment conducive to ongoing development. This policy also aims to strengthen institutional autonomy, promote innovation, support evidence-based scholarship, and ensure that academic decisions are made based on scholarly merit rather than external influence.

Section 3. Scope

Institutions of higher education must commit to the search for truth, knowledge dissemination, and the creation of credible scholarly works. Academic freedom is vital to achieving these goals, granting universities the right to define their educational mission

without external interference. This policy protects those engaged in academic activities, such as teaching and research.

This policy applies to all members of the UNEC academic community, including students, faculty, researchers, visiting scholars, and academic administrators engaged in teaching, learning, or research activities.

Section 4. Rights of Students

- Students have the right to express, discuss, and explore diverse ideas freely.
- They are entitled to fair treatment based on the principle of equality in the educational process.
- Students have the right to express academic opinions without fear of academic penalty, provided their conduct remains respectful and consistent with academic standards.

Section 5. Rights of Teachers in the Classroom

- Teachers have the right to present subjects freely and encourage independent thinking among students.
- They are free to choose teaching methods and assessment techniques, provided they align with educational objectives.
- Teachers have the right to teach without undue interference from external or non-academic bodies.

Section 6. Faculty as Citizens

- Faculty members, like all citizens, enjoy freedom of expression and other civil rights in their personal lives.
- When expressing personal opinions, they are responsible for clarifying that they do not represent the university.
- Faculty members may participate in public discourse, including media and academic forums, provided they clarify when their views are personal and not institutional.

Section 7. Right to Research

Faculty and researchers have the right to conduct research within the framework of academic freedom, which includes:

- Independent Research: Researchers should pursue studies aligned with their interests and professional fields, generating new knowledge.
- Search for Truth: Researchers must continue seeking knowledge without censorship or limitations.
- Scientific Ethics: Researchers must adhere to ethical guidelines, ensure accuracy, and present data objectively.
- Dissemination of Research: Findings should be openly shared, discussed, and presented in relevant forums.
- Protection from Interference: Researchers should be protected from non-scientific external influences.
- Research activities must remain independent from donor or sponsor influence, ensuring academic integrity and objectivity.

Section 8. Intellectual Debate

Intellectual debate is a core component of academic freedom and the university environment. The free exchange of ideas and critical discussions fosters academic and intellectual growth. Key principles include:

- Open Discussions: Intellectual debates and discussions should be encouraged across the university.
- Respect for Diversity: Participants must respect differing views and foster mutual understanding.
- Critical Thinking: Students and faculty should develop critical thinking skills, question existing beliefs, and propose new ideas scientifically.
- Scientific Advancement: Discussions should contribute to scientific knowledge and education.
- Civility: Participants must remain respectful and avoid personal attacks or aggressive behavior.
- The university shall ensure a safe academic environment where differing viewpoints can be expressed without intimidation, discrimination, or retaliation.

Section 9. Promotion of Academic Freedom

- This policy and UNEC's commitment to academic freedom will be communicated to all members of the university community at the beginning of each academic year.
- The university will provide resources, materials, and events (such as conferences, seminars, and lecture series) to promote academic freedom.

- Annual workshops and training sessions on academic freedom will be organized for academic leaders and faculty.
- Designated university bodies shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation and promotion of academic freedom principles.

Section 10. Matters Relating to Academic Freedom

Issues related to academic freedom will be discussed and resolved within UNEC's governance structures, such as the Scientific Council and Faculty Scientific Councils. These bodies will consider all perspectives to ensure fair outcomes.

All decisions regarding academic freedom shall be made based on fairness, evidence, and institutional regulations, ensuring impartiality and academic integrity.

Section 11. Matters Relating to Academic Freedom

In cases of alleged violations of academic freedom, UNEC will follow a transparent and objective process:

- **Filing Complaints:** Complaints can be submitted to relevant departments, such as the Quality Assurance Office or the Academic Committee, in written or electronic form.
- **Investigation:** Complaints will be assessed based on their relevance to academic freedom, teaching independence, and related issues.
- **Investigations** should be completed within a reasonable timeframe to ensure timely resolution of concerns.

Section 12. Confidentiality

All procedures related to academic freedom will respect confidentiality. Parties involved must maintain discretion throughout the process, ensuring that information is only shared with relevant individuals.

All records related to complaints and investigations shall be securely stored and accessible only to authorized individuals.

Section 13. Procedure for Student

- Filing Complaints: Students who feel penalized or treated unfairly due to their views may submit written complaints concerning their educational rights or academic freedom.
- Investigation: Complaints will be fairly and objectively investigated by relevant university bodies.
- Disciplinary Actions: If a violation is confirmed, appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken.
- Appeals: Students can appeal decisions through the appropriate university channels.
- Students submitting complaints shall be protected from retaliation or discrimination.

Section 14. Future Actions

UNEC is committed to ongoing initiatives to support academic freedom, including:

- Awareness Programs: Regular training and seminars for students and staff on the importance of academic freedom.
- Policy Review: Continuous evaluation and updating of policies to align with international standards.
- Feedback Mechanisms: Platforms for feedback from the university community to improve policies.
- Transparency: Ensuring the outcomes of investigations are communicated openly to foster trust and accountability.
- This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure alignment with international academic standards and evolving educational practices.

By implementing this policy, UNEC reaffirms its dedication to creating a free, fair, and inclusive academic environment that upholds the principles of academic freedom and intellectual exploration.

UNEC is committed to upholding academic freedom as a fundamental pillar of institutional excellence, democratic values, and global academic engagement.