AZERBAIJAN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Academic Freedom Policy

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1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of higher education and a prerequisite for the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and critical inquiry. As a state technical university operating within the Republic of Azerbaijan, Azerbaijan Technical University (hereinafter "AzTU") is committed to upholding academic freedom while ensuring compliance with national legislation, ethical standards, and public accountability obligations.

AzTU recognises that academic freedom enables high-quality teaching, independent research, open intellectual exchange, and meaningful engagement with society. At the same time, the University acknowledges that risks may arise where academic freedom is misunderstood, improperly restricted, or exercised without due regard to academic integrity, professional ethics, or the rights of others.

The purpose of this Academic Freedom Policy (hereinafter the "Policy") is to establish a clear institutional framework that:

- affirms academic freedom as a foundational principle of teaching, learning, research, and scholarly expression;
- defines the rights and responsibilities of academic staff, students, and researchers in exercising academic freedom;
- safeguards academic activities from improper internal or external interference;
- ensures that academic freedom is exercised responsibly, ethically, and in the public interest.

This Policy supports AzTU's mission to deliver high-quality education, promote research excellence, contribute to sustainable societal development, and strengthen its national and international standing.

This Policy is developed in accordance with:

- the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan;
- the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On Education" (No. 833-IIIQ of 19 June 2009) and other applicable laws and regulations governing higher education and academic activity;
- AzTU's Charter and internal governance instruments;
- internationally recognised principles and standards on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, including the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997), the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988, revised 2020) and the Rome Ministerial Communiqué of the European Higher Education Area (2020).

2. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy, the following terms are used to ensure a shared and consistent understanding of academic freedom at AzTU:

- **Academic Freedom:** The freedom of members of the academic community to teach, learn, research, publish, and express scholarly ideas without undue interference, subject to professional, ethical, and legal standards.
- **Freedom of Expression:** The right to express opinions and ideas in academic and scholarly contexts while respecting the rights, dignity, and safety of others and fulfilling institutional responsibilities.

- **Institutional Autonomy:** The authority of AzTU to determine academic standards, curricula, research priorities, and internal governance arrangements in accordance with applicable legislation.
- **Academic Integrity:** Commitment to honesty, rigour, transparency, and ethical conduct in teaching, learning, research, and scholarly communication.
- **Undue Interference:** Any action that improperly restricts academic activities based on non-academic, political, ideological, personal, or discriminatory considerations.

3. APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies across Azerbaijan Technical University and establishes mandatory principles governing the protection and responsible exercise of academic freedom in all academic and educational activities.

Specifically, this Policy applies to:

- academic staff and researchers;
- students;
- visiting scholars and researchers;
- individuals engaged in teaching, research, or scholarly activity under the authority of AzTU.

This Policy applies to activities conducted:

- on AzTU premises;
- through digital and online learning and research environments;
- in publications, public events, and scholarly communications;
- in collaborations with third parties where academic activities are involved.

This Policy operates alongside applicable national legislation and AzTU's internal regulations. It does not replace disciplinary, administrative, or legal procedures that may apply independently.

4. GOVERNANCE

Governance of academic freedom at AzTU is embedded within the University's established leadership and quality assurance structures to ensure accountability, consistency, and effective oversight.

- **University Council:** Approves this Policy and its revisions, provides strategic oversight, and ensures sustained institutional commitment to academic freedom in line with national legislation and international standards.
- **Sustainability Office (Policy Owner):** Coordinates implementation of this Policy, monitors systemic issues and trends related to academic freedom, supports evidence-based review processes, and reports relevant findings to appropriate governance bodies.
- **Education Department and Faculties:** Ensure that academic freedom is respected within curricula, teaching methods, assessment practices, and academic decision-making, while maintaining academic standards and quality assurance requirements.

- **Research, Development and Reputation Department:** Supports the exercise of academic freedom in research and collaboration while ensuring compliance with research ethics, integrity standards, intellectual property rules, and applicable legal requirements.
- **Students, Academic Staff, and Researchers:** Exercise academic freedom responsibly, in accordance with this Policy, professional and ethical standards, and with due respect for the rights and safety of others.
- **Escalation and Resolution Mechanisms:** Alleged infringements or misuse of academic freedom are addressed through established institutional procedures that ensure fairness, transparency, proportionality, and protection against retaliation.

5. ACADEMIC FREEDOM PRINCIPLES, RISK AREAS, AND INSTITUTIONAL STANDARDS

This section defines the core principles and institutional standards governing academic freedom at AzTU and identifies areas where safeguards are required.

5.1. Protection of Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy

AzTU affirms academic freedom as a fundamental institutional value. Academic activities must be protected from undue interference while remaining aligned with institutional autonomy, academic standards, and legal obligations.

Academic freedom supports innovation, critical inquiry, and intellectual diversity and is exercised within the framework of professional responsibility and public accountability.

5.2. High-Risk Areas and Safeguards

Risks to academic freedom may arise where discretion, authority, or external influence intersects with academic decision-making. At AzTU, particular attention is given to:

- curriculum design and assessment decisions;
- research funding, partnerships, and publication;
- student evaluation, progression, and certification;
- public engagement and scholarly expression on sensitive topics.

Institutional safeguards and oversight mechanisms are applied in these areas to prevent undue interference or misuse.

5.3. Teaching, Curriculum, and Learning

Academic staff have the freedom to design curricula, select teaching methods, and use scholarly materials consistent with approved learning outcomes and academic standards. This freedom supports pedagogical innovation and intellectual diversity while ensuring programme coherence and quality.

5.4. Research and Scholarly Activity

Researchers are free to pursue inquiry, collaborate, publish, and disseminate results without undue restriction. This freedom is exercised in compliance with research ethics, integrity standards, intellectual property requirements, and applicable law.

5.5. Freedom of Expression, Participation, and Debate

Students and staff may express academic views, engage in debate, and participate in scholarly discourse without fear of discrimination or retaliation, provided such expression respects ethical norms and the rights of others.

5.6. Responsible Exercise, Limitations, and Protection from Misuse

Academic freedom is not absolute. It does not justify harassment, discrimination, incitement, or violations of law or institutional policy. Limitations are applied only where necessary to protect academic integrity, the rights of others, and the safety of the University community.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy is implemented through integration into AzTU's academic governance, quality assurance, and research management processes. Academic freedom considerations are embedded in curriculum approval, research oversight, staff development, and student engagement practices.

Supporting regulations and guidance instruments operationalise this Policy where necessary and ensure consistent application across the University.

7. MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Monitoring ensures that academic freedom is protected and exercised responsibly across AzTU. Oversight focuses on identifying systemic risks, trends, and areas for improvement rather than managing individual cases.

Monitoring may include:

- the number and nature of academic freedom-related concerns;
- resolution timelines and outcomes;
- feedback from academic staff and students;
- integration of academic freedom considerations into institutional reviews.

Monitoring outcomes inform continuous improvement and policy review.

8. POLICY EVOLUTION

This Policy is reviewed every two years or earlier where legislative changes, institutional developments, or monitoring outcomes require revision. Reviews consider evidence, stakeholder feedback, and international best practice.

Revisions are approved through established governance processes. Procedural or operational changes are implemented through supporting instruments and do not form part of this Policy.

AZTU

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



