

ACADEMIC FREEDOM POLICY

Prishtinë, 2024

1. Introduction

This Policy defines UNI- Universum International College's commitment to upholding academic freedom as a core principle of higher education and scholarly life. It ensures that all members of the academic community including faculty staff, and students are free to pursue knowledge, express ideas, and engage in teaching, research, and public discussion without interference or fear of reprisal, within the bounds of professional ethics and the law.

2. Legal and Policy Framework

This Policy is founded on:

- **Law No. 04/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo**, particularly Articles relating to institutional autonomy and academic freedom (**Official Gazette of Republic of Kosovo**)

UNI- Universum International College recognises academic freedom as an essential condition for the advancement of knowledge, innovation, and the development of an open and democratic society.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- All **academic and research staff** (full-time, part-time, and visiting lecturers),
- **Students** engaged in learning academic ideas,
- And **administrative staff** where relevant to the protection of academic independence.

4. Definitions

Academic freedom refers to the **right to teach, learn, research, and publish freely** without interference, censorship, or institutional or external pressure.

It covers:

1. Freedom to determine teaching methods and course content, consistent with approved curricula.
2. Freedom to conduct research and disseminate findings.
3. Freedom to express professional opinions about the institution or society.
4. Freedom to engage in academic and public debate without discrimination or disciplinary action.
5. Freedom to choose research topics and collaborate with national or international partners.

5. Policy Statement and Principles

UNI – Universum International College is committed to:

- Academic staff and students may explore, discuss, and question ideas openly in all academic contexts.
- Teaching and research will not be influenced by political, religious, or commercial pressures.
- No one will be penalised or disadvantaged for expressing academic or scientific opinions, provided these are within ethical and professional limits.
- Institutional governance respects the autonomy of academic decision-making, curriculum design, and peer-reviewed research activities.

5.1 Research Freedom for Senior Academics

Senior academics enjoy full autonomy to define their research agendas, select methodologies, and pursue interdisciplinary or collaborative research within ethical and institutional guidelines. They are encouraged to mentor junior researchers and promote a culture of innovation and independent inquiry. Their freedom extends to publishing and publicly discussing research outcomes without interference, subject to professional and legal standards.

5.2 Research Freedom for Junior Academics

Junior academics, including early-career researchers and assistant lecturers, have the right to choose and develop research areas aligned with their expertise and interests. The institution shall support them through mentorship, access to funding opportunities, and inclusion in collaborative projects. Their research freedom is protected from undue influence or pressure from senior colleagues or administrative bodies.

5.3 Teaching Freedom for Senior Academics

Senior academics are entitled to design, teach, and assess their courses according to pedagogical best practices and disciplinary standards. They may introduce new materials, teaching methods, and critical perspectives that foster student engagement and intellectual development, provided these align with approved curricula and learning outcomes.

5.4 Teaching Freedom for Junior Academics

Junior academics are granted the freedom to contribute creatively to course delivery and curriculum development within their teaching assignments. The institution recognizes their right to propose innovative teaching approaches and materials. They shall receive pedagogical support and mentorship to ensure both academic freedom and high-quality learning experiences.

6. Responsibilities and Ethical Boundaries

While UNI - Universum International College protects academic freedom, it also expects all members of its community to exercise this freedom **responsibly**, in accordance with:

- Professional standards of scholarship and teaching,
- Institutional policies on conduct, ethics, and integrity,
- Respect for human rights, diversity, and non-discrimination,
- National laws and regulations.

Academic freedom does **not** imply the right to engage in hate speech, discrimination, or actions that compromise the dignity, safety, or rights of others.

7. Academic Freedom of Students

Students are entitled to:

- Freely express their academic views in class and research work;
- Engage in critical inquiry and open debate;
- Choose research topics, methods, and supervisors within academic standards;
- Protection from retaliation or unfair assessment for holding or expressing alternative viewpoints.

Faculty are encouraged to promote open discussion and intellectual curiosity while maintaining respectful dialogue and academic rigor.

8. Protection and Grievance Mechanisms

- Allegations of violations of academic freedom may be submitted confidentially to the **Academic Integrity Committee** or the **Wellbeing Office**, depending on the nature of the concern.
- The College shall investigate all reported cases fairly, promptly, and confidentially.
- Retaliation against individuals who raise legitimate academic freedom concerns is strictly prohibited.

9. Institutional Autonomy

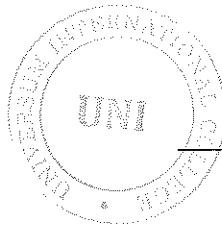
Universum College safeguards its **institutional autonomy** in matters of curriculum design, research priorities, internal governance, and partnerships. This autonomy ensures that academic decisions are made on scholarly, not political or commercial, grounds.

10. Monitoring and Review

- The Academic Council shall review this Policy annually to ensure continued alignment with legal frameworks and best international practices.
- Recommendations for improvement shall be presented to the Rector for approval and integration into institutional governance documents.

11. Approval and Implementation

This Policy is effective as of March 2024 and remains in force until further revision. It will be disseminated to all faculty, researchers, and students as part of Universum College's commitment to transparency and academic integrity and shall remain valid until revised or replaced.



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