

East European University

Research Independence and Academic Freedom Policy

I. Purpose

1. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure, protect, and strengthen academic freedom and research independence at East European University, in accordance with institutional responsibility, quality assurance, and adherence to ethical standards.
2. The Policy establishes the principles and mechanisms through which the University ensures:
 - the freedom of academic personnel, researchers, and students in the processes of teaching, research, expression, and academic discussion;
 - the protection of research activities from unlawful, unethical, or unprofessional interference.

II. Scope of Application

1. The Policy applies to the University's:
 - academic and invited personnel;
 - researchers;
 - doctoral, master's, and bachelor's students - within the framework of their academic and research activities;
 - administrative personnel - to the extent their activities relate to academic or research processes.
2. The Policy applies to all educational, research, and academic activities conducted within the University, including:
 - internally and externally funded research;
 - cooperation with international and local partners.

III. Legal Basis

The Policy is based on:

- international principles of academic freedom, including recognized norms on university autonomy and research independence;
- standards and guiding principles for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG);
- the values of the Bologna Process;
- the legislation of Georgia, the University's Charter, and internal regulatory acts.

IV. Key Definitions

1. **Academic freedom** - the right of members of the academic community to freely study, teach, publish, discuss, and disseminate knowledge while adhering to professional and ethical standards.
2. **Research independence** - the freedom of the research process, methodology, data analysis, and results from any improper influence.
3. **Improper influence** - any pressure, instruction, or influence that actually or potentially aims to alter the content, results, or conclusions of research or teaching.

V. Core Principles

The University recognizes and protects the following principles:

- institutional protection of academic freedom and university autonomy;
- independence and objectivity of research activities;
- academic responsibility and adherence to ethical standards;
- transparency and accountability;
- pluralism in academic discussion and diversity of opinions.

VI. Academic Freedom

1. Academic personnel have the right to:
 - independently determine the content of courses, select effective teaching methods (e.g., discussion, project-based learning), and define research strategies;
 - participate in academic debates and express professional opinions;
 - publish research results without censorship or pressure.
2. Academic freedom is exercised in compliance with academic integrity, research ethics, and applicable legislation.

VII. Ensuring Research Independence

1. The University ensures that:

- the source of research funding does not influence research results or create conflicts of interest;
 - donors, sponsors, and partners have no right to interfere in the content, methodology, or conclusions of research;
 - the publication of research results is not restricted for unlawful or unethical reasons.
2. Any agreement on research funding must include guarantees for the protection of research independence.

VIII. Prohibited Interference

The following is prohibited:

- exerting pressure on academic or research activities through administrative, financial, political, or other direct or indirect influence;
- punishing or discriminating against academic personnel because of their academic positions or research results;
- demanding the alteration, concealment, or distortion of research results.

IX. Protection and Response

1. In cases of possible violation of academic freedom or research independence, any person has the right to appeal to:
 - the Dean of the Faculty;
 - the Quality Assurance Service;
 - the Research Ethics Committee (if necessary).
2. The University ensures:
 - confidentiality of information;
 - protection against retaliation in cases of good-faith reports.

X. Monitoring and Reporting

1. Compliance with the Policy is monitored by the Quality Assurance Service.
2. Monitoring results may be reflected in:
 - internal quality reports;
 - institutional self-assessment documents.

XI. Violations and Sanctions

1. Violations of the Policy entail liability in accordance with applicable legislation and the University's internal regulations.

2. Sanctions must be proportionate, fair, and transparent.

XII. Policy Review

1. The Policy is subject to periodic review, but at least once every three years.
2. Amendments are approved by the University's Representative Council.
3. The updated version is published on the University's website.

XIII. Entry into Force

1. This Policy enters into force on the date of its approval by the Representative Council.