Duhok Polytechnic University

Academic Freedom and Research Autonomy Policy

Policy information	
Policy number	DPU-POL-AC-14
Policy category	Academic and Research
Version	1.1
Policy owner	Vice Presidency for Scientific Affairs and Postgraduate Studies
Responsible office	Directorate of Research and Development, with the Academic Freedom Committee
Approving authority	University Council
Approval date	30/06/2024
Effective date	30/06/2024
Last review date	30/06/2025
Next review date	30/06/2027
Related policies	Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (DPU-POL-AD-10); DPU research ethics regulations
SDG alignment	SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure)

1. Policy statement

Duhok Polytechnic University (DPU) believes that academic freedom is essential to innovation, critical thinking and social progress. DPU affirms its commitment to an environment where academic freedom is not only respected but actively protected, so that its academic staff, researchers and students can explore ideas, challenge assumptions and share their work with the wider community, free from fear of censorship, retaliation or institutional pressure. This freedom is exercised responsibly, within ethical and professional standards and the laws in force.

2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- define academic freedom and research autonomy at DPU
- protect the right of scholars to choose their research topics and methods and to publish and share their findings
- protect researchers from political, commercial or other undue interference
- provide clear channels for reporting and addressing infringements of academic freedom
- set out the responsibilities that accompany academic freedom
- monitor and report publicly on academic freedom at DPU

3. Scope

This policy applies to all full-time and part-time academic staff; postgraduate and undergraduate students engaged in research; research fellows, visiting scholars and research assistants; and the administrative bodies that govern or review research activity. It covers teaching, research, public engagement and scholarly communication in all forms, at all DPU colleges, institutes and centres.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Academic freedom	The right to explore, teach, discuss and publish scholarly work without external or internal interference, provided it complies with ethical and legal standards
Research autonomy	The ability of scholars to select their research focus, methodology, collaborators and communication channels, independent of institutional or political influence
Public dissemination	Sharing research findings with academic peers and the general public through journals, books, conferences, media appearances or digital platforms
Infringement	Any action that obstructs academic freedom, such as suppressing research, retaliating against a scholar, or tampering with publication processes

5. Policy provisions

5.1 Rights of academic staff, researchers and students

DPU supports the right of every scholar in its community to:

- conduct research on topics of their own choosing and select their methods and collaborators
- teach and discuss their subject freely within the agreed curriculum
- express scholarly opinions, including views that are unpopular or challenge dominant narratives
- publish and share findings openly with peers and the public, provided they adhere to ethical and professional standards

5.2 Responsibilities

Academic freedom comes with responsibilities. All members must ensure that their work:

- meets accepted ethical standards and DPU research ethics requirements
- respects the dignity and rights of others
- does not intentionally spread misinformation or cause harm
- is published in reputable, peer-reviewed outlets, avoiding predatory or purely commercial journals

5.3 Protection from interference

- DPU protects researchers from political, commercial or other undue interference in the choice, conduct and publication of their research.
- Research ethics review evaluates proposals for ethical integrity only and must not be used to restrict legitimate research topics or findings.
- No staff member or student may be penalised, disadvantaged or retaliated against for the lawful exercise of academic freedom.

5.4 Academic Freedom Committee

- DPU establishes an independent Academic Freedom Committee, made up of senior academics from different colleges and institutes and a student representative, to oversee this policy.

- The committee investigates reported infringements neutrally and confidentially and makes recommendations to the University President and Council.

5.5 Reporting infringements

- Staff and students may report any infringement or undue pressure to the Academic Freedom Committee or directly to the Office of the University President.
- Reports are handled confidentially, and those who report in good faith are protected from retaliation.

5.6 Training, dialogue and recognition

- Research ethics and integrity, including academic freedom, are included in staff development and postgraduate training.
- DPU holds regular academic freedom forums or panels for staff and students.
- DPU recognises and rewards impactful research and scholarly contributions.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
University Council	Approves the policy and reviews the annual academic freedom report
Vice Presidency for Scientific Affairs and Postgraduate Studies	Owns the policy; communicates it and ensures its visibility across academic units
Academic Freedom Committee	Oversees the policy; investigates reported infringements; recommends action
Directorate of Research and Development	Prepares the annual academic freedom and research autonomy report
Deans and department heads	Foster a culture of respect, openness and support for academic freedom
Ethics and research committees	Evaluate research proposals for ethical integrity while preserving researcher autonomy
Academic staff, researchers and students	Exercise their freedom responsibly and report any infringement or pressure

7. Compliance and enforcement

- Any deliberate obstruction of academic freedom, including suppression of research, retaliation or tampering with publication processes, is investigated by the Academic Freedom Committee.
- Depending on severity, sanctions may include warnings, administrative action or disciplinary measures under university regulations.

8. Monitoring and reporting

1. The Directorate of Research and Development prepares an annual Academic Freedom and Research Autonomy Report.
2. The report monitors indicators including the number and quality of publications, complaints filed and their outcomes, and survey results on the perceived level of academic freedom among staff and students.
3. The report is reviewed by the University Council and published on the DPU website.

9. Related documents

- Constitution of the Republic of Iraq (2005), Article 38 (freedom of expression)
- UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel (1997)
- United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- DPU research ethics regulations and Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy (DPU-POL-AD-10)

10. Policy review

The policy is reviewed every two years, or earlier if relevant laws or regulations change.

11. Version history

Version	Date	Description	Approved by
1.0	30/06/2024	First approval	University Council
1.1	30/06/2025	Revised	University Council

12. Approval

Approved by the University Council of Duhok Polytechnic University, created on 30/06/2024, and revised on 30/06/2025.