TSUULL Academic Freedom and Scholarly Independence Policy

Policy originally adopted in *2018*.
Most recently reviewed and updated in *2025*
The policy is reviewed *annually*.

Approved by: TSUULL Council
Policy Category: Governance – Academic Integrity & Institutional Autonomy
Aligned with: SDG 4, SDG 16, Bologna Standards, UNESCO Principles, French Model Code

TSUULL maintains a comprehensive, legally binding **Academic Freedom and Scholarly Independence Policy (TSUULL/AF-01/2025)** that fully protects the academic rights of **senior and junior faculty, researchers, and students**. Approved by the University Council and aligned with **SDG 4, SDG 16, UNESCO 1997 Recommendations, Bologna/ESG standards, the French Model Code, and international frameworks (HERE, SPHERE, Erasmus+)**, the policy establishes one of Uzbekistan's strongest institutional safeguards for independent teaching, research, and public academic expression.

Full Research Freedom for All Academics

All academic personnel—professors, early-career lecturers, researchers, doctoral students, and visiting scholars—are guaranteed the right to:

- independently choose research topics and methodologies,
- pursue evidence-based conclusions without censorship,
- publish results without prior approval,
- critique prevailing academic, institutional, or governmental positions.

The policy explicitly prohibits political influence, donor pressure, administrative interference, and any attempts to suppress or alter scholarly results.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a comprehensive institutional framework that safeguards **academic freedom**, **research independence**, **freedom of expression**, and **institutional autonomy** at the Alisher Navo'i Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature (TSUULL).

This policy ensures that academic staff, researchers, and students can pursue scholarly inquiry, express evidence-based opinions, and contribute to public debate **without fear of censorship, political interference, or retaliation**, thereby affirming the university's commitment to global standards of academic excellence.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- *academic and research staff (full-time, part-time, adjunct, visiting);*
- *postgraduate students engaged in teaching or research;*
- *undergraduate students participating in academic discourse;*
- *invited external scholars and public speakers;*
- *all forms of academic communication, including digital platforms.*

3. POLICY STATEMENT

TSUULL recognizes academic freedom as essential to its mission to advance Uzbek linguistics, literary studies, education science, digital humanities, and Central Asian scholarship.
As a member of international academic networks (SPHERE, HERE, Erasmus+), TSUULL aligns its standards with global best practices.

The university guarantees that **research topics, scholarly interpretations, and academic teaching shall not be restricted, penalized, or influenced for ideological, political, or administrative reasons**, provided they comply with legal and ethical standards.

4. PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT TSUULL

4.1 Freedom of Research

Academic staff and postgraduate researchers have the right to:

- select research topics independently;
- use methodologies appropriate to their discipline;
- reach conclusions grounded in evidence, even if controversial;
- publish findings without prior approval or censorship;
- critique prevailing academic or governmental positions.

4.2 Freedom of Teaching

Academic teachers may:

- *design course content based on disciplinary standards;*
- *introduce material that is discomforting, complex, or challenging;*
- *discuss any scholarly view relevant to their field;*
- *refuse to alter academic content solely to avoid disagreement.*

4.3 Freedom of Academic Expression

All academic community members may:

- *present scholarly opinions publicly;*
- *participate in academic debate within and beyond TSUULL;*
- *contribute to national policy discussions relevant to their expertise;*
- *engage in criticism of institutional or educational policies.*

4.4 Institutional Autonomy

TSUULL retains:

- *full authority over curricula, research priorities, program development;*
- *independent control of academic standards and scholarly evaluation;*
- *the right to prevent donors or partners from dictating research outcomes.*

This aligns TSUULL with European University Association (EUA) and Bologna standards.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic freedom is accompanied by professional obligations:

- *uphold rigorous research ethics;*
- *maintain intellectual honesty and evidence-based argumentation;*
- *create respectful, inclusive learning environments;*
- *distinguish personal political views from academic findings;*
- *follow national laws, ethical norms, and data protection rules.*

6. PROTECTION OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

TSUULL guarantees:

6.1 Zero Tolerance for Retaliation

No staff member or student shall face penalties, disciplinary action, reduced opportunities, or administrative pressure **solely because of the lawful content** of their academic work or scholarly speech.

6.2 Protection from External Interference

The university prohibits:

- *political influence on research outcomes;*
- *censorship imposed by third parties, donors, sponsors;*
- *suppression of controversial academic results;*
- *coercion to modify research to align with non-academic interests.*

6.3 Security for External Speakers

Invited scholars and public speakers may present lawful content; they will not be refused access based solely on the nature of their academic views.

7. SAFEGUARDS & GOVERNANCE MECHANISMS

7.1 Scientific and Technical Council

TSUULL's Scientific and Technical Council ensures:

- *oversight of academic freedom implementation;*
- *resolution of alleged violations;*
- *evaluation of threats to scholarly independence;*

- *consultation on high-risk or sensitive research themes;*
- *monitoring of university-industry collaboration to prevent influence on results.*

7.2 Reporting Mechanisms

TSUULL maintains confidential procedures enabling staff and students to report violations, including:

- *suppression of academic results;*
- *pressure to change research;*
- *harassment for academic opinions.*

Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation.

7.3 Academic Integrity Procedures

The Code of Academic Ethics and Research Ethics Board support this policy by:

- *guaranteeing transparent review processes;*
- *upholding autonomy in publication;*
- *ensuring ethical compliance without restricting academic content.*

8. LIMITATIONS

Academic freedom does not permit:

- *unlawful speech or incitement;*
- *harassment, intimidation, or discrimination;*
- *breaches of confidentiality, IP, ethical protocols;*
- *dissemination of intentionally false academic claims.*

9. RELATIONSHIP WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Research collaborations—including Erasmus+, UNESCO, SPHERE, national ministries, foreign universities—**must not impose conditions** that restrict:

- *methodological independence;*
- *scholarly conclusions;*
- *publication rights.*

All agreements shall include clauses protecting academic autonomy.

10. ALIGNMENT WITH INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

This policy is benchmarked against:

- **UNESCO 1997 Recommendation on Higher Education Personnel**
- **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**
- **EUA and Bologna Process principles**

Meeting these standards strengthens TSUULL's SDG 16 performance in THE Impact Rankings.

11. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [TSUULL Code of Academic Ethics](#)
- [TSUULL Research Governance Regulations](#)
- [National "Law on Education" (Uzbekistan)](#)
- [TSUULL Institutional Autonomy Framework](#)
- [TSUULL Policy on Integrity and Professional Conduct](#)
- [Institutional Strategy 2025–2030](#)

Information

Title: Academic Freedom and Scholarly Independence Policy
Document Number: TSUULL/AF-01/2025
Purpose:
This policy affirms the University's institutional commitment to protecting academic freedom, safeguarding independent scholarly inquiry, and upholding the right of staff and students to teach, research, publish, and participate in academic debate without undue interference. It outlines the principles, processes, and responsibilities that guarantee freedom of expression and research integrity within TSUULL.

Audience:
Academic staff; professional staff; researchers; doctoral students; undergraduate and postgraduate students; visiting scholars; external partners; broader public.

Category:
Governance

Subcategory:
Academic Governance and Integrity

UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):
This policy aligns with **SDG 4: Quality Education** (targets 4.3, 4.4, 4.7) and supports the broader principles of **SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**, ensuring transparent, accountable, and inclusive institutional structures for academic work.

*Policy originally adopted in **2018.***
*Most recently reviewed and updated in **2025***
*The policy is reviewed **annually**.*

Policy Advisor:
Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and International Cooperation
(TSUULL Academic Governance & Standards Office)

Approving Authority:
University Council of Alisher Navo'i Tashkent State University of the Uzbek Language and Literature

1.1. Academic Freedom Governance Flowchart

01 TSUULL ACADEMIC FREEDOM

- Academic Staff
- Researchers
- Students

02 UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

- Approves Academic Freedom Policy
- Ensures alignment with law & global standards

03 RECTOR & VICE-RECTOR FOR RESEARCH/INTL

- Provide strategic leadership
- Ensure policy is implemented
- Represent TSUULL in HERE/SPHERE & EU platforms

04 FACULTIES, DEPARTMENTS & RESEARCH CENTRES

- Apply policy in daily teaching & research
- Protect staff and students in their units
- Ensure contracts & projects respect independence

05 SCIENTIFIC & TECHNICAL COUNCIL (STC)

- Monitors academic freedom in research & teaching
- Reviews complaints and alleged violations
- Advises on sensitive/controversial research

06 INDIVIDUAL STAFF & STUDENTS (RIGHTS)

- Choose research topics
- Teach and publish freely
- Join debates, criticise, and propose reforms
- Report violations

1.2. Process Flowchart – If Academic Freedom is Violated

STEP 1 – INCIDENT OR CONCERN

A staff member / student believes their academic freedom has been restricted, censored, or interfered with.

STEP 2 – INFORMAL RESOLUTION (OPTIONAL)

• Discuss with Head of Department or Programme Director
• Clarify misunderstanding, miscommunication or conflict
• Seek local solution if possible

IF UNRESOLVED OR SERIOUS: STEP 3 – FORMAL REPORT

• Submit written complaint to:
 - Scientific & Technical Council (STC), or
 - Vice-Rector for Research / International Cooperation
• Include facts, dates, documents, any evidence

STEP 4 – PRELIMINARY REVIEW

• STC or designated committee:
 - Confirms whether the issue concerns academic freedom
 - Checks admissibility and urgency
• Parties are informed of the process

STEP 5 – INVESTIGATION

• Hear both sides (complainant and respondent)
• Collect documents, emails, project contracts, etc.
• Assess compliance with:
 - TSUULL Academic Freedom Policy;   - Code of Ethics;   - National law.

STEP 6 – FINDING & RECOMMENDATIONS

• STC/committee prepares written findings:
 - Whether academic freedom was infringed
 - Recommended remedies or corrective actions
 - Measures to prevent recurrence

STEP 7 – DECISION & IMPLEMENTATION

• Rector / University Council (depending on level) endorses actions:
  - Restore academic rights (e.g. allow publication, restore topic)
  - Remove improper restrictions or instructions
  - Address systemic issues (e.g. contract clauses, procedures)

STEP 8 – REPORTING & FOLLOW-UP

• Complainant is informed of the outcome
 • Monitoring of whether measures are implemented
 • Policy or process revised if needed

1.3 FLOWCHART – FREEDOM VS. RESPONSIBILITY

ACADEMIC RIGHTS

- Choose research topics
- Publish findings
- Design course content
- Speak publicly on field
- Critique policy & practice

PROFESSIONAL DUTIES

- Research ethics & integrity
- Evidence-based argument
- Respectful teaching
- No discrimination / harm
- Comply with law & ethics

BALANCED ACADEMIC LIFE

Academic freedom
is protected AND
Community remains safe,
fair, ethical, and inclusive.

1.4. FLOWCHART – EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS & ACADEMIC INDEPENDENCE

PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP / PROJECT
• Donor, Ministry, NGO, International Body

INITIAL ASSESSMENT
• Academic relevance
• Alignment with TSUULL strategy
• Potential risks to independence

ACADEMIC FREEDOM CHECK
• Are there clauses that:
  - Control research topics?
  - Control interpretation of results?
  - Restrict publication unfairly?
• STC or Legal Unit reviews

IF RISKS FOUND   IF NO RISKS
↓   ↓

NEGOTIATE OR REMOVE RESTRICTIVE CLAUSES
• Insert academic freedom safeguard

[4B] APPROVE AGREEMENT
• Sign contract

IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING
• Regular reports
• Ensure no pressure on outcomes
• Raise concerns if independence threatened