



Sohar University Policy on Academic Freedom

Version	1.0
Policy Code/Category	SU – AC - 038
Purpose	To affirm and protect academic freedom as a core principle of Sohar University's teaching, research, and public engagement
File Location	SharePoint (and any other locations necessary)
Related Documents	Ethics and Biosafety Policy /Academic Integrity Policy
Policy Owner	DVC-AA
Approved by	Academic Board
Approval date	Oct. 2025
Review date	Oct. 2028

Policy History

Version	Approved Date	Approved by	Circulation Date	Brief Description [Short text only]
1.0	Oct. 2025	AB	Oct.2025	Establishes the principles and safeguards of academic freedom in line with Oman Vision 2040 and international standards.

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Overview

This Policy on Academic Freedom was specifically developed to promote knowledge-based, innovative, and inclusive education, uphold the rights and duties of academic freedom, ensure quality education and strong institutions and emphasise institutional autonomy and independence of academic expression.

The policy is aligned with:

- Oman Vision 2040
- UNESCO Recommendation (1997) on the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel
- UN SDG 4 & SDG 16

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to affirm and protect academic freedom as a core principle of Sohar University's teaching, learning, research, and public engagement. Academic freedom ensures that Faculty members, researchers, and students can pursue truth, innovation, and discovery without undue interference, while maintaining a commitment to ethical responsibility, cultural respect, and academic integrity.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All academic staff, researchers, visiting scholars and students at Sohar University.
- All forms of academic activity, including teaching, research, publication, public communication, and collaboration.

Policy Objectives

- To safeguard the freedom of teaching, learning, and research within the bounds of law, ethics, and cultural respect.
- To encourage a climate of intellectual diversity, creativity, and evidence-based inquiry.
- To ensure that scholars can share and disseminate their research findings openly and responsibly.
- To reinforce the University's commitment to independent scholarship and institutional autonomy in academic decision-making.

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Principles of Academic Freedom

Freedom of Research

- Academic staff and researchers have the right to choose the subject, scope, and methodology of their research.
- They may collaborate with national and international scholars, publish results freely, and participate in professional associations.
- Research must be conducted in accordance with:
 - Ethical standards of scholarship and research integrity.
 - National regulations governing sensitive, cultural, or security-related topics.
 - Institutional review and funding guidelines.

Freedom of Teaching

- Academic staff have the right to teach, discuss, and present scholarly opinions relevant to their discipline without fear of censorship or reprisal.
- Teaching shall be guided by professional competence, objectivity, and respect for the cultural and religious values of Oman.
- Academic staff should encourage critical thinking, dialogue, and evidence-based reasoning among students.

Freedom of Learning

- Students have the right to learn, question, and express academic views freely and responsibly within the framework of ethical and respectful discourse.
- The University shall ensure that students are encouraged to explore diverse viewpoints, engage critically with knowledge, and participate actively in scholarly and public discussions without undue restriction.

Freedom of Expression and Public Engagement

- Academic staff, researchers and students are free to speak, write, and publish in their areas of expertise through academic and public channels.
- When expressing personal views outside official University duties, academic staff should clarify that such opinions are personal and do not represent the University's position.
- The University supports responsible public communication that enhances knowledge dissemination and societal benefit.

Freedom in Institutional Research and Development

- All Faculties, department and centres have the right to set their academic priorities and research agendas in line with institutional strategy and Oman Vision 2040.
- Sohar University commits to providing an environment that encourages multidisciplinary collaboration, innovation, and intellectual diversity.

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Responsibilities Accompanying Academic Freedom

While Sohar University safeguards academic freedom, it also expects that:

- Academic staff, researchers and students uphold academic integrity, truthfulness, and evidence-based scholarship.
- No academic activity should promote hate, discrimination, defamation, or material contrary to Omani law and cultural values.
- All members of the University respect confidentiality, ethical standards, and national sensitivity when engaging in research or public commentary.
- Academic freedom is exercised in a manner that promotes mutual respect, intellectual humility, and constructive discourse.
- Postgraduate students, in particular, are encouraged to engage critically and respectfully with diverse perspectives, to contribute to scholarly dialogue, and to uphold the principles of academic integrity and responsible research practices.

Institutional Commitments

Sohar University commits to:

- Protect academic staff, researchers and students from undue interference, discrimination, or disciplinary action resulting from legitimate academic expression.
- Provide fair and transparent research funding, evaluation, and publication support mechanisms.
- Encourage open dialogue and exchange of ideas through seminars, conferences, and collaborative networks.
- Ensure that academic decision-making (curriculum, research direction, evaluation) remains autonomous and free from political or external bias.
- Embed academic freedom as a principle within all institutional policies, charters, and codes of conduct.

Dispute Resolution and Safeguards

- Any individual who believes their academic freedom has been violated may submit a written complaint to the University Ethics and Biosafety Committee (UEBC)
- The UEBC shall:
 - Review the complaint confidentially and impartially.
 - Recommend remedial measures or corrective action as per the Ethics and Biosafety Policy
 - Ensure that the complainant faces no retaliation or academic disadvantage for raising a concern in good faith.

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Implementation and Monitoring

- The Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs shall oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Faculties and other relevant entities shall coordinate awareness sessions and workshops to promote understanding of academic freedom, ethical research, and responsible communication among staff, researchers and students.
- The Directorate of Research and Innovation shall ensure that all research proposals adhere to both ethical standards and freedom of inquiry principles as outlined in the Ethics and Biosafety Policy.
- Annual Academic Freedom Reports will be prepared and reviewed by the Academic Board summarising:
 - Academic freedom indicators and challenges.
 - Actions taken to safeguard autonomy and free inquiry.
 - Recommendations for future improvements.

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