



# BLANTYRE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

## BIU POLICY ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM

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## Definition

Academic Freedom is a fundamental concept in higher education that ensures the freedom of teachers and students to teach, study, conduct research, and express their opinions without undue interference or censorship. Blantyre International University (BIU) underscores the importance of academic freedom in its policy. Here's an overview of the key points related to academic freedom:

### Freedom of Academic Staff:

Academic staff, including professors and researchers, have the right to explore any subject that piques their intellectual interest. They can present their findings to students, colleagues, and the broader community. Additionally, they have the freedom to publish their research without external control or censorship. This freedom also extends to their teaching methods, allowing them to choose the most appropriate approach.

### Freedom of Students:

Students have the right to study topics that interest them and to develop their own conclusions and express their opinions without constraint. This ensures a nurturing environment for the development of critical thinking and independent thought.

### Historical Perspectives:

Before the foundation for academic freedom was laid by the medieval European universities, professors at universities were subject to governmental authority and were liable to be allowed to teach only what was acceptable to the government in power. The coming of Academic Freedom saw universities become legally self-governing corporations with the freedom to organize their own faculties, control admissions, and establish standards for graduation.

With the founding of the University of Berlin in 1811, the basic principles of *Lehrfreiheit* ("freedom to teach") and *Lernfreiheit* ("freedom to learn") were firmly established and became the model that inspired universities elsewhere throughout Europe and the Americas.

### Core Values of Higher Education:

In addition to academic freedom, BIU emphasizes several core values in higher education, including:

- **Institutional Autonomy:**  
Higher education institutions should have the freedom to make decisions about academic work, standards, and management.
- **Accountability:**  
There should be transparent systems for evaluating the quality and performance of higher education institutions.
- **Equitable Access:** Entry to and successful participation in higher education and the higher education profession is based on merit and without discrimination on grounds of race, gender, language or religion, or economic, cultural or social distinctions or physical disabilities, and includes active facilitation of access for



members of traditionally underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples, cultural and linguistic minorities, economically or otherwise disadvantaged groups, and those with disabilities, whose participation may offer unique experience and talent that can be of great value to the higher education sector and society generally.

■ **Social Responsibility:**

Institutions should use their freedoms to seek and impart truth according to ethical and professional standards while addressing the needs of society.

The success of higher education, including the high regard in which it is held worldwide, is explained in good measure by the observance of academic freedom. In the United States during the 1950s, for example, the state imposition of loyalty oaths threatened to blunt both the ability of institutions to select faculty of promise and the ability of faculty to teach in accordance with professional standards. Loyalty oaths were struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in words strongly supportive of academic freedom. This episode emphasizes that the consequences of the continuing struggle for institutional autonomy and faculty academic freedom bear directly on the quality of higher education.

Attention necessarily turns to accreditation, which plays a pivotal role in the public assurance of educational quality. To what extent are accrediting organizations alert to the importance of academic freedom? To what extent do their standards give adequate guidance on the subject and capture the significance of institutional decision making and the faculty's role in that process?

### **Role of the National Council for Higher Education**

The National Council for Higher Education is in the best position to champion the principle of academic freedom in the context of accreditation, stressing its fundamental meaning and essential values such as:

- a) The freedom of academic staff and students, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas, and to state controversial or unpopular opinions;
- b) The freedom of academic staff and students to engage in research;
- c) The freedom of the University and its staff to regulate the subject-matter of courses taught at the University;
- d) The freedom of the University and its staff to teach and assess students in the manner they consider best promotes learning;
- e) The freedom of the University through its Chief Executive to appoint its own staff;
- f) The need for the maintenance by the University of the Highest Ethical Standards and the need to permit public scrutiny to ensure the maintenance of those standards; and
- g) The need for accountability and proper use by the University of its Resources.

### **BIU Commitment to Academic Freedom**

In the performance of its functions, BIU will act in all respects so as to give effect to the intentions of Academic Freedom.