



**Title:** Freedom of Speech Policy

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**Version:** 1.1

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**Effective Date:** February 2025

**Approval Authority:** Board of Trustees

**Document Owner:** University President

**Review:** The policy is subject to a periodic review every 4 years or in a shorter cycle as per amendments of university policies

**1. Purpose**

This policy aims to uphold and promote the principles of freedom of speech within the university community, recognizing its role in nurturing intellectual inquiry, critical thinking, and the discovery of knowledge. By articulating the rights and responsibilities associated with free expression, this policy seeks to create an environment where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and debated openly, respectfully, and within the bounds of the law.

**2. Scope**

This document applies to all staff, students, affiliates, and visitors, both on and off campus, including digital platforms.

**3. Acronyms**

<b>GU</b>	Gulf University
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources

**4. Definitions**

**Academic freedom:** Academic freedom is the conviction that the freedom of inquiry by faculty members is essential to the mission of the academy as well as the principles of academia, and that scholars should have freedom to teach or communicate ideas or facts (including those that are inconvenient to external political groups or to authorities) without being targeted for repression, job loss, or imprisonment.

**Freedom of expression:** Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.

**Harassment:** Harassment covers a wide range of behaviors of an offensive nature. It is commonly understood as behavior that demeans, humiliates, and intimidates a person, and it is characteristically identified by its unlikelihood in terms of social and moral reasonableness.

**Bullying:** Bullying is the use of force, coercion, hurtful teasing, comments, or threats, in order to abuse, aggressively dominate, or intimidate one or more others. The behavior is often repeated and habitual.

**Student:** Any person currently studying in the university in any undergraduate or

postgraduate program. Those who completed the study is excluded in this definition. If the status shows suspended/withdrawal for temporary period for the person s/he is included within this definition.

**Violence:** Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or psychological harm.

## 5. Policy Statement

- 5.1 The university is committed to safeguarding the right to freedom of speech, ensuring that all individuals can express their ideas and opinions without fear of censorship or retaliation, provided such expression does not violate Bahraini law, university regulations, political beliefs and sentiments of people.
- 5.2 While encouraging transparent communication, the university encourages all members to engage in discussions respectfully, acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and perspectives within the community.
- 5.3 GU is committed to non-tolerance principle if speech and freedom of expression is misused to spread hatred, violence, or discriminate against individuals or groups based on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or other protected characteristics.
- 5.4 GU ensures that freedom of expression is protected within the boundaries of the law; however, any actions that are illegal or violate legal standards shall not be permitted by the university.
- 5.5 GU encourages faculty members to have the right to explore, discuss, and present scholarly opinions and findings without undue restriction, fostering an environment of academic inquiry and debate. This freedom is balanced with the responsibility to maintain professional standards and respect for others' rights.
- 5.6 GU commits to support students building the skills needed to think critically about new ideas, equipping them to navigate the challenges they may encounter both during their studies and in their future careers.
- 5.7 GU is committed to allow activity/event organizers using university premises to be responsible in upholding freedom of speech, maintain order and academic integrity, and do not result in property damage or any violation of the law.

## 6. Policy Principles

- 6.1 The exercise of free speech requires responsible behavior of every individual. Individuals are expected to consider the impact of their expressions on others and the university community, striving to foster a climate of mutual respect and understanding.
- 6.2 Freedom of speech in this context is not limited to academic freedom only. It also includes voice raised against any staff or student about any form of misconduct, sexual harassment, bullying, intimidating behavior.
- 6.3 While robust debate is encouraged, personal attacks, threats, and coercive behavior are unacceptable and will be addressed promptly. Any kind of intimidation and harassment shall be taken seriously.
- 6.4 The university shall not be obliged to give opportunity to every single individual to express their opinion.
- 6.5 Upholding academic freedom doesn't imply that all opinions or perspectives hold equal value; some may not withstand academic evaluation. Ideally, all ideas should be open to critical questioning and subject to challenge through logical reasoning and supporting evidence.
- 6.6 The university as an institution shall not take positions on public controversies, allowing individual members the freedom to express their own views without implying institutional endorsement.
- 6.7 Any restrictions on speech or disciplinary actions taken within the scope of this policy shall be conducted with fairness, transparency, and due process, ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to respond to allegations and seek redress.

## 7. Responsibilities

### **Academic and administrative staff are responsible for:**

- appropriate implementation of this policy.

### **Heads of Departments are responsible for:**

- ensuring that all faculty members are fully informed of this policy.
- appropriate implementation of this policy.

### **Students are responsible for:**

- appropriate implementation of this policy.

### **University Policy Development and Review Committee is responsible for:**

- systematic review of the effectiveness of this policy.

## 8. Related Policies

- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy
- Anti-slavery Policy
- HR Policy

## 9. Related References and Standards

<b>BQA</b>	Institutional Reviews Handbook
<b>HEC</b>	Academic Regulations and Resolutions