
ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Policy Statement

JGU commits to fostering a thriving academic and research environment where all members are free to explore, express, and disseminate knowledge without fear of censorship, retaliation, or undue interference. Faculty, staff, students, and researchers are protected in their rights to teach, study, question, and pursue inquiry across all disciplines, consistent with the highest national and international standards.

Scope

This policy applies to all university personnel, faculty, adjunct instructors, students, researchers, and visiting scholars, in all modes and locations of JGU activities.

Definition of Academic Freedom

Academic freedom is the right of individuals within the university to teach, study, research, and express ideas without unreasonable restriction from law, institutional regulation, or public pressure. This encompasses the unfettered choice of research topics, publication, classroom methods, and participation in scholarly, public, or online dialogue.

Ethical and Legal Alignment

National Laws: Academic freedom is guaranteed under the Constitution of India (Article 19: freedom of speech and expression), subject to reasonable restrictions for public order, decency, and the law. UGC regulations, rights to equality (Article 14), and all Supreme Court guidelines on university autonomy inform this document.

Institutional Policies: This policy is interlinked with harassment prevention (COGSASH), non-discrimination, research integrity, anti-slavery, grievance redressal, and disciplinary codes. Academic freedom must always respect the boundaries of these protections and statutory compliance.

Academic Freedom: In Practice

Teaching and Inquiry

- I. All instructional decisions, including materials selected, pedagogical methods used, and general classroom conduct, must strictly adhere to the University's Code of Conduct and relevant institutional policies.

- II. Faculty members have the authority to choose instructional materials, teaching methods, and resources, provided these selections meet established educational standards and affirm institutional values.
- III. Instructors may introduce and facilitate the analysis and debate of contentious issues, ensuring the classroom dialogue remains balanced, respectful, and effectively fosters critical thinking skills.

Research and Publication

JGU personnel enjoy full autonomy to select topics, methodologies, and collaborators for research. No individual shall face undue restriction in scholarly publication, collaborative partnerships, or research dissemination, provided research integrity and ethical review standards are met.

For all externally funded projects, including research grants, consultancy assignments (individual and institutional), Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs), fellowships, conference grants etc., the university's research office (odr@jgu.edu.in) needs to be contacted at the initial/ pre-award stage of the application itself to ensure the requisite project documentation, timely document processing & compliance with the applicable policies & regulations.

Public Engagement

Faculty and students may participate in scholarly and public discourse, lectures, and events, exercising discretion as representatives of JGU. All public statements must respect factual accuracy, diversity of opinion, and institutional reputation.

Student Rights

Students are entitled to seek knowledge freely, participate in critical discussions, access resources, and engage with controversial subjects in a non-discriminatory environment. No student may be penalized for academic viewpoints expressed in good faith.

Cross-Policy Consistency

Harassment Policy: Academic inquiry may never be an excuse for harassment, bullying, or hostility. The policy synergizes with POSH and grievance procedures to ensure campus safety and dignity for all.

Research Integrity: Academic freedom in research is subject to institutional ethics review and compliance with JGU Research Ethics Board and national/international standards.

Non-discrimination: Equal opportunity and respect are guaranteed regardless of gender, caste, religion, sexuality, nationality, or background. Academic freedom is not a cover for hate speech, incitement, or unlawful discrimination.

Anti-slavery and Human Trafficking: No exercise of academic freedom may conflict with protections against exploitation or abuse as set forth by JGU's anti-slavery policy.

Limits to Academic Freedom

Academic freedom does not protect:

- I. Hate speech, incitement to violence, or advocacy of unlawful activity.
- II. Acts of plagiarism, misrepresentation, or breach of research or academic ethics.
- III. Violations of law, campus policies, or basic standards of respect and safety for others.
- IV. Violations are subject to institutional disciplinary procedures, including mediation, investigation, and, where necessary, legal referral.

Reporting, Dispute Resolution, and Accountability

- I. Concerns or conflicts regarding academic freedom are addressed through confidential reporting to the appropriate governing office, with a strict non-retaliation guarantee.
oag@jgu.edu.in
- II. Formal protocols exist for conflict resolution, including negotiation, mediation, and, where necessary, disciplinary action. Complaints related to academic, research, or workplace misconduct are cross-referred to the relevant committee as required.

Committee Structure and Composition

- I. The Academic Freedom Committee typically operates under the Office of Academic Governance with active input from the Office of Academic Planning, Coordination, and Interdisciplinarity.
- II. It includes senior academic leaders (Deans, faculty representatives), compliance officers, and, where appropriate, student and research representatives, ensuring diversity of expertise and perspective.
- III. The Committee is supported by and coordinates with university bodies dedicated to ethics (Research Ethics Review Board), harassment prevention (COGSASH Committee), disciplinary governance, and grievance redressal.

Roles and Responsibilities

- I. ***Policy Oversight:*** The Committee reviews, updates, and interprets the Academic Freedom Policy, in line with evolving national laws (UGC, Supreme Court guidance) and global trends.
- II. ***Safeguarding Rights:*** It investigates complaints and disputes involving alleged infringement of academic freedom, maintaining strict confidentiality and non-retaliation protections for complainants and witnesses.
- III. ***Boundary Setting:*** In partnership with ethics and disciplinary committees, it determines when academic conduct crosses into areas of harassment, discrimination, or policy violation, ensuring due process and fair outcomes.
- IV. ***Advisory function:*** The Committee advises on curriculum innovation, interdisciplinary research, participant protection, and responses to emerging academic freedom challenges in digital, in-person, and public spheres.
- V. ***Interlinkage:*** All work is coordinated with the Research Ethics Review Board for research concerns, the COGSASH and Anti-Discrimination Committees for safety, and the Grievance Redressal Committee for complaints on any academic freedom concerns.

Awareness and Training

- I. The Committee develops periodic workshops, open seminars, and awareness campaigns for faculty, staff, and students, focusing on the rights and responsibilities of academic freedom.
- II. Trainings highlight case studies, ethics scenarios, reporting options, and cross-linkages with harassment, anti-slavery, and research ethics policies, reinforcing the “spirit” of academic freedom.

Reporting and Dispute Resolution

- I. An accessible reporting protocol (online/offline forms, direct submission, or via Deans/Academic Governance Office) invites concerns or queries related to academic freedom.
- II. The Committee oversees mediation, arbitration, and, when needed, referral to higher authorities or regulatory bodies, preserving rights to due process for all parties.

Governance and Transparency

- I. Actions and annual reviews are documented and reported to university leadership; policy changes are published and communicated to the wider community.
- II. The Committee has autonomy to seek external expertise (legal, academic, policy) when required for complex or precedent-setting cases.