

Academic Freedom and Integrity Policy

1. Policy Statement

Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies (GNI) affirms that **academic freedom and integrity** are fundamental to the advancement of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, and the realization of its mission as a post-secondary institution.

Academic freedom enables faculty, researchers, and students to engage in **open inquiry, critical thinking, and responsible expression** without institutional censorship or fear of reprisal.

Academic integrity ensures that this freedom is exercised **honestly, ethically, and respectfully**, preserving the trust upon which all scholarship depends.

GNI upholds these principles as essential to maintaining intellectual independence, scholarly excellence, and public confidence in the institution's teaching, research, and governance.

2. Purpose

This policy establishes the principles, rights, and responsibilities governing **academic freedom and integrity** at GNI. It affirms the Institute's commitment to creating a learning and research environment that:

- Protects the right of faculty, researchers, and academic staff to pursue, create, and disseminate knowledge freely;
- Ensures that all academic decisions and evaluations are made **free from political, commercial, religious, or ideological interference**;
- Integrates academic freedom and ethical conduct as core components of institutional quality assurance; and
- Aligns with the **Degree Quality Assessment Board (DQAB)** standards and the **Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills (PSEFS)** expectations for academic governance in British Columbia.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the GNI academic community, including:

- Faculty, instructors, and academic administrators;
- Researchers, visiting scholars, and post-doctoral fellows; and
- Students engaged in scholarly, teaching, or research activities under GNI's auspices.

It applies to all forms of academic expression—teaching, research, publication, artistic work, and public commentary—where the individual acts in a professional or scholarly capacity.

4. Definitions

Academic Freedom is the right of qualified members of the academic community to pursue knowledge, conduct research, and express findings or opinions without institutional interference, subject to the standards of professional ethics and scholarly integrity.

Academic Integrity refers to the commitment to truth, honesty, fairness, respect, and accountability in teaching, research, and public communication. Integrity ensures that academic freedom is exercised responsibly, with due regard for the rights and reputations of others.

5. Principles of Academic Freedom

Members of the GNI academic community have the right to:

1. **Investigate, question, and evaluate** ideas within their disciplines and across fields of study;
2. **Teach and discuss** their subject matter according to recognized scholarly standards;
3. **Publish, present, and disseminate** research findings, including controversial or unpopular viewpoints;
4. **Participate in academic governance**, consistent with institutional procedures and their areas of expertise; and
5. **Engage in public discourse** as citizens and scholars, provided they make clear when their views are personal and not official institutional positions.

Academic freedom must always be exercised **with integrity, accuracy, fairness, and respect** for others.

6. Institutional Commitment

GNI commits to:

- Protecting faculty and researchers from **internal or external pressures**—administrative, political, religious, social, or financial—that could compromise independent judgment;

- Ensuring that hiring, promotion, and performance evaluations are **based solely on scholarly and professional merit**;
- Maintaining transparent academic governance through the **Academic Council** and its committees, including the **Academic Freedom Committee (AFC)**;
- Upholding **open dialogue and critical debate** across diverse perspectives; and
- Embodying its founding ethos of *Sarbat da Bhala* (the welfare of all) through inclusive, respectful, and evidence-based discourse.

7. Responsibilities Accompanying Academic Freedom and Integrity

Academic freedom carries **corresponding ethical and professional obligations**. Faculty, researchers, and academic staff must:

- Exercise academic freedom **honestly, responsibly, and with scholarly rigor**;
- Respect the rights, dignity, and academic freedoms of others;
- Avoid personal bias, misrepresentation, or conflict of interest in research and teaching;
- Accurately attribute sources and contributions;
- Comply with Canadian law, including the **Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**, and all institutional policies;
- Maintain confidentiality where applicable (e.g., research data, student information); and
- Promote a collegial, inclusive, and safe learning environment.

Academic freedom does **not** protect conduct that constitutes discrimination, harassment, hate speech, or breach of confidentiality.

8. Encouragement of Diverse Perspectives

GNI believes that exposure to diverse ideas and critical dialogue enhances learning, creativity, and global understanding.

Faculty and staff are encouraged to:

- Create **inclusive classrooms and research environments** where differing opinions are welcomed and debated respectfully;
- Explore intellectual diversity, interdisciplinarity, and cross-cultural scholarship; and
- Engage students and colleagues in conversations that foster empathy, analytical reasoning, and civic responsibility.

9. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is inseparable from academic freedom.

All members of the GNI academic community are expected to:

- Demonstrate **honesty and transparency** in research, publication, and communication;

- Avoid plagiarism, falsification, or fabrication of research results;
- Disclose conflicts of interest and funding sources;
- Uphold ethical standards consistent with GNI's **Research Ethics and Integrity Policy (ADM-018)**; and
- Report breaches of academic integrity to the appropriate institutional authority.

Integrity violations are addressed under GNI's disciplinary and ethics procedures.

10. Procedures for Addressing Alleged Infringements

1. **Right to File a Concern:**
Any faculty member, researcher, or student who believes their academic freedom or integrity has been compromised may file a written complaint with the Academic Freedom Committee (AFC) through the Office of the Vice-President, Academic & Quality Assurance (VPAQA).
2. **Preliminary Review:**
The VPAQA or designate shall assess the complaint for jurisdiction and completeness within 10 business days.
3. **Investigation:**
The AFC shall conduct a fair and impartial review within **30 business days**, gathering relevant evidence and submissions from involved parties.
4. **Findings and Remedies:**
The AFC shall issue a written decision and, where appropriate, recommend corrective or preventive measures to the Academic Council or Board of Directors.
5. **Confidentiality and Protection from Retaliation:**
All proceedings shall remain confidential. No individual shall face retaliation for raising a good-faith concern regarding academic freedom or integrity.

11. Academic Freedom, Integrity, and Institutional Accountability

Academic freedom exists within the framework of institutional integrity and public trust. Faculty and researchers are free to express their scholarly opinions but must ensure that:

- Their statements are accurate, evidence-based, and professionally informed;
- They clearly distinguish personal opinions from official institutional positions when speaking publicly; and
- Their exercise of academic freedom aligns with GNI's policies on **ethics, integrity, and professional conduct**.

12. Policy Administration and Review

- The **Vice-President, Academic & Quality Assurance (VPAQA)** is responsible for implementing, monitoring, and promoting awareness of this policy.

- The **Academic Council** shall review the policy every three (3) years, or sooner if required by DQAB, PTIB, or legislative changes.
- Amendments must be approved by the **Board of Directors** upon recommendation of the **Academic Council**.

13. Related Policies and References

- ADM-004 Institutional Quality Assurance Policy
- ADM-018 Research Ethics and Integrity Policy
- ADM-026 Privacy and Data Protection Policy
- SP-016 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
- SP-011 Student Conduct and Discipline Policy
- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (BC)
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)