



Research Independence and Academic Freedom Policy

PREAMBLE & STATEMENT OF INTENT

JSS Academy of Higher Education & Research (JSS AHER) is dedicated to advancing human knowledge, healthcare, life sciences, and interdisciplinary innovation. The institution recognizes that the pursuit of truth, ethical scientific discovery, and robust educational delivery require an environment where researchers, faculty members, and scholars can inquire, criticize, innovate, publish, and present without fear of censorship, administrative reprisal, or unwarranted external pressure.

This policy affirms JSS AHER's commitment to safeguarding Academic Freedom and Research Independence while establishing essential boundaries to ensure that freedom is exercised with scientific integrity and honest attribution.

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- **Safeguard Inquiry:** Ensure academic staff, researchers, and students can pursue knowledge, formulate hypotheses, and publish findings free from administrative censorship, political pressure, or ideological constraint.
- **Protect Methodological Autonomy:** Guarantee the autonomy of Principal Investigators (PIs) and scholars in choosing research topics, designing methodologies, interpreting data, and drawing evidence-based conclusions.
- **Prevent Commercial & Third-Party Interference:** Establish strict boundaries for sponsored research, grants, and donor agreements to prevent external entities from suppressing or altering research outcomes.

- **Protect Public & Extramural Expression:** Safeguard the rights of faculty and scholars to engage in public debate and express personal academic views without fear of institutional retaliation.
- **Maintain Intellectual Honesty:** Ensure that academic freedom is paired with authentic representation, prohibiting the masking or false claiming of third-party intellectual property ("innovation-washing").

2. SCOPE

This policy applies across all Constituent Colleges, University Departments, Research Centers, and Centers of Excellence of JSS AHER. It covers all academic staff, clinical researchers, adjunct faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and students engaged in research, teaching, publication, public commentary, and scientific dissemination.

3. CORE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

3.1 Freedom of Scientific & Academic Inquiry

Researchers hold the absolute right to select research topics, construct hypotheses, select appropriate methodologies, and draw conclusions grounded strictly in scientific evidence and scholarly merit.

3.2 Unrestricted Publication & Dissemination

Faculty and researchers hold the right to publish, present, and discuss their findings in peer-reviewed journals, academic conferences, and public forums without prior institutional censorship or veto, provided the work meets accepted scientific and ethical standards.

3.3 Freedom in Pedagogy & Instruction

Educators are entitled to freedom in the classroom to discuss their subject matter, present diverse scientific viewpoints, and cultivate critical thinking, operating within approved academic curricula and professional standards.

3.4 Extramural Expression & Public Commentary

Faculty and researchers have the right to speak, write, and express their personal views in public debate, news media, and digital platforms without fear of administrative reprisal or institutional discipline.

Disclaimer Requirement: When expressing personal views publicly on topics outside their specific academic expertise or commenting on public policy, scholars must clarify that they are speaking in their personal capacity and that their views do not represent the official stance of JSS AHER.

4. RESEARCH INDEPENDENCE & EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES

4.1 Autonomy in Sponsored Research

External sponsors, funding agencies, and corporate partners may define the broad scope or objectives of funded research; however, the Principal Investigator (PI) retains sole authority over experimental execution, statistical analysis, data interpretation, and final reporting.

4.2 Prohibition of Suppression & Censorship Clauses

JSS AHER will not enter into any research agreement, contract, or grant that gives an external sponsor or donor the right to censor, alter, or permanently suppress research findings, negative results, or unfavourable data.

4.3 Pre-Publication Review Limits

Sponsored research agreements may allow a limited pre-publication review period—**not to exceed 60 days**—solely for the purpose of protecting patentable intellectual property or trade secrets. Sponsors do not hold the right to alter scientific findings during this review. If a sponsor fails to initiate IP protection within this window, full publication rights revert unconditionally to the researcher and University.

4.4 Independence from Financial Conflicts of Interest

Research design, data collection, and reporting must remain uninfluenced by personal financial interests. PIs and research teams must disclose financial interests, and sponsored contracts shall strictly prohibit compensation structures tied to a specific research outcome or positive result.

5. RESPONSIBLE EXERCISE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Academic freedom is inseparable from research integrity. The protection afforded by this policy does not extend to academic malpractice or intentional misrepresentation.

- **Authentic Attribution:** Researchers must accurately represent their contributions. Presenting commercial off-the-shelf technologies, open-source code bases, or Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) components as proprietary JSS AHER innovations ("innovation-washing") constitutes a violation of institutional integrity.
- **Data Authenticity:** Researchers must maintain accessible raw data, experimental logbooks, and ethical clearances to substantiate all published or presented claims.

6. PROTECTION AGAINST RETALIATION (WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION)

No member of the JSS AHER community shall suffer administrative reprisal, tenure/promotion denial, termination, or academic penalization for:

1. Publishing controversial, non-mainstream, or socially sensitive scientific findings derived from sound methodology.
2. Exercising their rights to academic freedom under this policy.
3. Reporting, in good faith, suspected academic censorship, commercial interference, or research misconduct by senior personnel or external sponsors.

7. GRIEVANCE, RESOLUTION & IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Grievance Redressal Mechanism

Any researcher or faculty member who believes their academic freedom has been infringed upon, censored, or compromised by administrative action, external pressure, or sponsor interference may submit a grievance to the **Academic Freedom & Research Integrity Ombudsman (AFRIO)**.

The Ombudsman shall convene an independent 3-member academic panel to investigate the matter and submit a report directly to the Vice-Chancellor within **30 days** for binding resolution.

7.2 Administrative Implementation

Implementation and compliance monitoring of this policy shall be supported by standard operational clearance mechanisms, digital declarations, and research management portal workflows administered by the Office of the Registrar and the Dean (Research).

8. DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:

This policy will come into immediate effect 01.01.2025

9. DATE OF REVISION:

01.01.2027




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