

# The fundamental values of higher education and their impact on sustainable development: challenges and possibilities

TAM event – XIV Bologna Conference, Kyiv  
7 November 2025,  
10.50-11.20 am

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# Session outline

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- ***The fundamental values process in the EHEA***
  - A remarkable positive development in Europe
  - Brief historical outline
  - What are the fundamental values of higher education in the EHEA? How do they work?
  - Promise, relevance (why is it remarkable), implementation status
- ***The EHEA fundamental values and their expected impact on sustainable development work***



# The fundamental values process/project: a remarkable development in Europe (EHEA- EU) – out of the crisis?

- Post-2016: the ***crisis of academic freedom***  
*Turkey, Hungary (CEU affair).*
- ***core of of the crisis: lack of a conceptual reference for academic freedom shared, up to date, effective.***
- ***solution:***
  - new framework(s) of reference for academic freedom;
  - new frameworks for the fundamental values of higher education



# Other European initiatives to address the crisis

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- European Parliament legislation
- European Commission guidelines
  
- Specify of the EHEA solution
  - Why not legislation?
  - How can value work?
  - Why “fundamental values”?

# EHEA fundamental values of higher education, 2018-2024 and going forward –a European Framework of Reference



- academic freedom
- institutional autonomy
- academic integrity
- students and staff participation in governance
- public responsibility *for and of* higher education

Developed by stakeholders,  
codification adopted by ministers.  
ongoing process

Values –fundamental values (not legal principles); **institutional values**

Cluster of values; **rights and responsibilities**

Shared conceptual references

Commitments; guidelines for “protection” and “promotion”

Implementation mechanism/monitoring

# **EHEA fundamental values of higher education, 2018-2024 and going forward –a European Framework of Reference**



- conceptual reference**
- codification**
- guidelines for implementation**
- monitoring**

[https://ehea.info/Download/ANNEX-1-EHEA-STATEMENTS-ON-FUNDAMENTAL-VALUES%20\(1\).pdf](https://ehea.info/Download/ANNEX-1-EHEA-STATEMENTS-ON-FUNDAMENTAL-VALUES%20(1).pdf)

**Other types of frameworks of reference: institutional, national, regional, global**

# *The EHEA fundamental values and their impact on sustainable development*

- All six EHEA fundamental values expected to have an impact on sustainable development?
- In what ways (what work): research; teaching and learning; third mission; university strategies



## Academic freedom:

- protects and requires academic work for sustainable development
- framed in the EHEA as precondition for the fulfillment of the core function of the university – production transmission and dissemination of *knowledge as a public good*




# Academic integrity:

- As a duty, rather than right, protects academic work in support of sustainable development




## University autonomy:

- As a set of institutional freedoms:
  - contributes to creating a framework (space of freedom) to work on sustainable development as an institution
  - places a responsibility on institutions themselves (not just on public authorities) to support and deliver work in this area



Student and  
staff  
participation  
in  
governance:

- 
- Helps to create buying in for work on sustainable development

# Public responsibility for higher education:

## Less direct impact?

- denotes a set of duties that public authorities must fulfill as part of their overall responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole.
- includes political, public policy, regulatory and legal obligations, including with regard to funding.
- includes the core responsibility for the proper functioning of the higher education system, for the benefit of the broader society and individual development, as well as to the members of the higher education community

# Public responsibility of higher education: most direct impact?

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- denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society
- the higher education community should ensure that the fundamental values of higher education are respected, furthered, and implemented. It should pursue truth and the production, transmission, dissemination, curation, and use of knowledge as a public good by upholding and developing the standards of teaching, learning, and research within and across academic disciplines. .
- should engage in the identification, analysis, and understanding of the problems that confront broader society and individual constituencies. The higher education community should also participate in designing solutions to these problems and provide expertise to meet these challenges, in accordance with its own standards and values.
- Major challenges of modern societies, including those relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and sustainable development more broadly, the survival of our planet, issues of war and peace, democracy, and living together cannot be met without a strong contribution by the higher education community through research, learning and teaching, societal outreach and innovation and technology transfer

# Conclusion

- The EHEA fundamental values can all contribute to stimulating and supporting work in support of sustainable development
- The only value statement that explicitly mentions this work is “Public reasonability of higher education”



# Session outline

- The place of PRfHE in the cluster of EHEA fundamental values
- What is it about?
- Implementation and monitoring

# The place of PRfHE in the cluster of EHEA fundamental values

- "Duty group" (with integrity and PRoHE), not "rights" (AF, IA, participation in governance).
- Obligation/duty for public authorities not HE communities
- New value?
- Institutional value – like the other five
- Most difficult to monitor?

## A monitoring framework

– *fundamental values of higher education in the EHEA (implementation tool)*

VALUES	Type of monitoring and Indicators	
<b>Rights/Freedoms</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Academic freedom</u></li> <li>- Institutional autonomy</li> <li>- Participation of students and staff in university governance</li> </ul>	<i>De jure</i>	
	Protection	Outlook
	Promotion	
	<i>De facto</i>	
	Infringements	
	Threats	
	Positive developments	

VALUES	Type of monitoring and Indicators	
<b>Duties/Obligations</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Academic integrity</u></li> <li>- Public responsibility <i>for</i> higher education</li> <li>- Public responsibility <i>of</i> higher education</li> </ul>	<i>De jure</i>	
	Protection	Outlook
	Promotion	
	<i>De facto</i>	
	Fulfilment	
	Threats	
	Positive developments	

# Conceptualization and codification

# The place of PRfHE in the cluster of EHEA fundamental values

- "Duty group" (with integrity and PRoHE), not "rights" (AF, IA, participation in governance).
- Obligation/duty for public authorities not HE communities
- New value?
- Most difficult to monitor?

- Public responsibility for higher education denotes a **set of duties** that **public authorities** must fulfill **as part of their overall responsibility** for the education sector and society as a whole.
- Public responsibility for higher education is **mainly** exercised at the level of the national higher education system.
- It includes political, public policy, regulatory and legal obligations, **including with regard to funding**, and is in its details defined by each EHEA member in accordance with the principles that have been **agreed jointly through the EHEA** and other relevant contexts.

It includes the core responsibility for the proper functioning of the higher education system, for the benefit of the broader society and individual development, as well as to the members of the higher education community

While in most EHEA member states the public responsibility for higher education is mainly exercised at national level, this responsibility (or parts thereof) **may also be exercised at regional and local level.**

Increasingly, there is also a justified perception of **public responsibility for higher education being exercised at supra-national level**, also in accordance with commonly agreed principles.

- Public authorities, at their respective levels, have the primary responsibility for putting in place **supportive regulatory frameworks that enable higher education institutions to effectively pursue their educational, research and outreach missions.** Public responsibility may be exercised through legislation and other regulations but also through other means such as policies or funding.

- Public authorities should exercise this responsibility **in consultation** with the higher education community and other stakeholders.
- They should specifically ensure that legal and regulatory frameworks foster and enable institutional autonomy, academic freedom, and self-governance by the higher education community.
- Public authorities **should consult and seek input from the higher** education sector, internal university constituencies, and relevant external stakeholders regarding the configuration and substance of these frameworks.
- **They should, however, assume exclusive responsibility** to ensure that the frameworks within which higher education is conducted are put in place and function adequately, including the legal framework, the qualifications framework of the higher education system, frameworks for quality assurance, the recognition of foreign qualifications, information on higher education provision, the funding frameworks, and the frameworks for the social dimension of higher education.

- Public authorities should assume **leading responsibility** for ensuring that all qualified candidates enjoy **effective equal opportunities** to undertake and complete higher education, irrespective of their background.
- They should assume a **substantial responsibility for financing** and ensuring provision of higher education. All higher education within an education system should be provided and funded within the **framework** established by the competent public authorities, regardless of whether the provision and funding are public or private.

- Public authorities should further **all major purposes of higher education**: preparation for the labour market, preparation for life as active citizens of democratic societies, personal development, and the development and maintenance of a broad and advanced knowledge base

# Implementation

- Academic freedom: existing frameworks of reference, including legislation; institutional, national, regional, global
- Academic integrity: varying institutional, national and European frameworks of reference. What institutions are involved (QA agencies, professional associations, publishers, etc.).

# Monitoring

- Almost no prior/existing experiences and tools.
- Difficult to monitor, different in nature from the other values
- Different type of conceptualization and codification

## A monitoring framework

– *fundamental values of higher education in the EHEA (implementation tool)*

VALUES	Type of monitoring and Indicators	
<b>Rights/Freedoms</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Academic freedom</u></li> <li>- Institutional autonomy</li> <li>- Participation of students and staff in university governance</li> </ul>	<i>De jure</i>	
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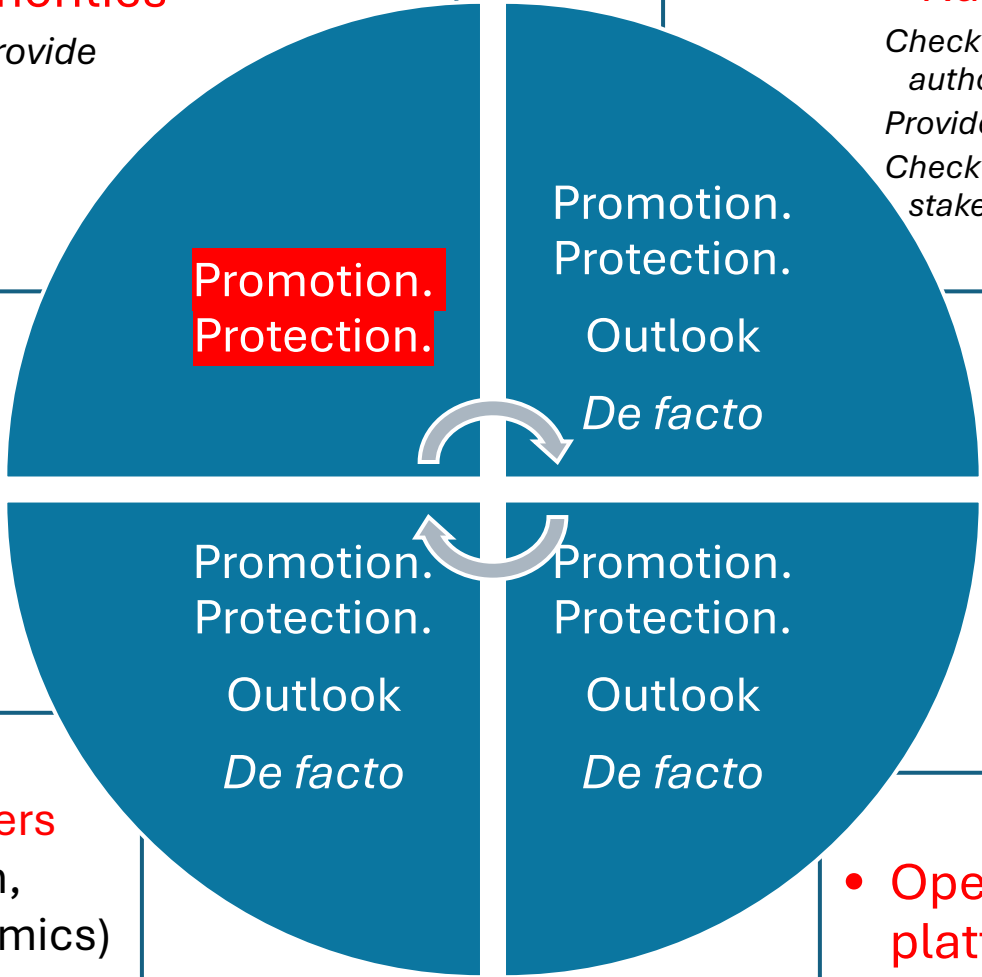
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	Positive developments	

# Sources of data for all values

Data from other reports/, evaluations, or monitoring exercises

- **Public authorities**  
*Self-reporting; provide system level information.*

- **National experts**  
*Check input from public authorities.  
Provide expert input.  
Check input provided by stakeholders.*



- **Small sample of national stakeholders**  
(e.g., student union, trade union, academics)

- **Open platform**

*Check input from authorities and experts.  
Provide bottom-up/stakeholders input.*

# Difficulties

- New/recent value (address through outlook?)

## Monitor this: (!!!)

- Public authorities should further **all major purposes of higher education**: preparation for the labour market, preparation for life as active citizens of democratic societies, personal development, and the development and maintenance of a broad and advanced knowledge base

# Academic freedom and Academic integrity: the EHEA Dimension

TAM event – XIV Bologna  
Conference, Kyiv  
7 November 2025,  
13.30 am – 14.00 pm

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# Session outline

- AF and AI – types of values
- Their place in the cluster
- Framing/definition of each separately and in relation to each other
- Implementation and monitoring

# AF and AI – what types of values; place in the cluster

Academic freedom	Academic integrity
Right/freedom	Duty/limitation
Old (oldest) value	New or old?
Fundamental value	Less fundamental value?
Under assault globally (Afi)	Also globally under assault? (attacks against science)
Individual right	Individual and institutional obligation?
Intimately related	
Also directly related to IA ( autonomy a precondition for academic freedom?)	More directly related to responsibility
Part of a cluster, need to be considered, implemented and monitored together as a whole	

# Definition and framing: AF (2020)

[https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique\\_Annex\\_I.pdf](https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_I.pdf)



Academic freedom is an indispensable aspect of **quality learning, teaching and research** in higher education **as well as of democracy**.

It is a **necessary condition** for higher education institutions to produce and transmit knowledge as a **public good** for the benefit of society.

It guarantees **academics and students** the freedom of thought and inquiry to advance knowledge through research and to exchange openly, as well as the freedom to communicate the results of research within and outside of the framework of academic institutions and programmes

A distinct, **fundamental democratic right** in part grounded in the right to education, and shares elements with freedom of thought, opinion and expression.

Academic freedom must be **framed by rigorous scientific and professional standards (INTEGRITY)**, respect for the rights of others, ethical conduct and the awareness of the impact of research on humans and their environment. It is crucial in order to advance the **standards of academic disciplines** and fields of enquiry. As such, academic freedom protects not only individual scholarship and expression but also the free functioning of academic institutions in democratic societies.

**Institutional autonomy** is constitutive for academic freedom.

Academic freedom designates the freedom of the academic community - including academic staff and students - in respect of research, teaching and learning and, more broadly, the dissemination of research and teaching outcomes both within and outside the higher education sector. In essence the concept ensures that the academic community may engage in research, teaching, learning and communication in society without fear of reprisal.

Academic freedom is also **an essential element of democracy**. Societies cannot be genuinely democratic without honouring academic freedom and institutional autonomy. At the same time, the fundamental values of the EHEA cannot be fully realised except in democratic societies.

Academic freedom is **similar to freedom of expression (DIFFERENT THAN FREEDOM OF SPEECH!)** and is both informed by the standards of academic disciplines and provides the condition for challenging these standards based on the results of research.

The concept, although seemingly simple, is in reality **highly complex**, and intricately related to other fundamental values such as institutional autonomy and public responsibility for and of higher education.

Academic freedom is a **universal value** rooted in the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

Its core tenets cannot be understood and interpreted differently in different national contexts or types of higher education institution.

But academic freedom **is not an absolute value**, and its exercise is shaped by the institutions in which we work and the societies in which we live. Thus the range of conduct and boundaries of enquiry and expression which academic freedom protects are often a source of debate.

Academic freedom can be understood to comprise **the freedom to learn, to teach and to research**, with each of these freedoms entailing the freedom to think, to question, and to share ideas, both inside and outside the higher education sector.

The **freedom to teach** can only be realised concretely in combination with public and social responsibility and institutional autonomy.

**Public authorities** have the responsibility to ensure that relevant higher education programmes are offered to citizens, while **autonomous higher education institutions** assume a large responsibility for research underpinning programmes, and for how programmes are taught. **Academic staff** also exercise a strong responsibility in setting the curriculum and programme components, and developing the teaching methods employed.

**Higher education governance** also has an impact on the freedoms to learn, teach and research, and should be organised consciously in ways that respect academic freedom. Different governance models co-exist in Europe with academic staff and students differently represented in governing and decision-making bodies. Participation in governing bodies may favour the teaching and research missions of the institution and may reflect the goal of broader societal engagement.

Whatever the particular model, **academic staff and students should participate meaningfully in decision-making processes** and have the right to express their views on their institution's policies and priorities **without fear of reprisals**.

Values are inter-connected, and the freedom to teach also raises the question of who is to be taught and is thus intimately linked to the **freedom to learn**. In turn these values relate to equitable access, with a range of issues on criteria and conditions for access to higher education needing to be addressed through societal dialogue and administrative procedures.

Questions need to be asked about who is doing the teaching and research, and the kind of decision making process in place for academic staff recruitment and retention. It is essential to ensure that academic staff benefit from sufficiently secure employment conditions to be able to exercise academic freedom.

Academic staff should never suffer threats, dismissal, or other sanctions in relation to the content of their research, teaching or stated professional views. **NOT EVEN WHEN INTEGRITY IS NOT THERE?**

The **freedom to research** includes the right, consistent with professional standards of the respective discipline, to determine: what shall (or shall not) be researched; how it shall be researched; who shall research, with whom and for what purpose research shall be pursued; the methods by which, and avenues through which, research findings shall be disseminated.

**Research requires financing** – which may come from both public and private sources – and in many cases also requires careful consideration of ethical issues.

# Definition and framing: Academic Integrity (2024)

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## TIRANA EHEA MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

29 - 30 MAY 2024

Annex 1 to the Tirana Communiqué

## EHEA STATEMENTS ON FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

**Academic integrity** denotes a set of behaviours and attitudes in the academic community internalizing and furthering compliance with ethical and professional principles and standards in learning, teaching, research, governance, outreach and any other tasks related to the missions of higher education.

The duties and rights associated with the fulfilment and protection of academic integrity apply to **all members of the academic community**, who should develop a shared understanding of the concept and be guided by it. This also requires the engagement and development of a **culture of collegiality and solidarity**, in particular **support and encouragement of early career researchers**

Ensuring that the **academic community observes ethical standards** in higher education, academic integrity **underpins societal trust** in higher education and research.

It is essential to the legitimation and reputation of higher education and to enable the academic community to **inform the public debate on the results, standards and methods of academic research with authenticity and intellectual rigour.**

Academic integrity plays a major role in ensuring the quality of all types of activity in higher education. It is central **in building trust between higher education systems**, which is crucial for all forms of international cooperation and mobility.

Academic integrity includes but is not limited to **honesty, transparency, fairness, trust, responsibility, respect and courage.** These qualities underpin **an ethical and professional** approach in all areas of activities of the academic community, conducted inside or outside the higher education institution.

Academic integrity needs to be actively promoted within and across higher education and lead to the development of a **culture of integrity, ethics and transparency from the earliest stages of education and research training.**

Public authorities, higher education institutions and the academic community share the responsibility for providing framework conditions that foster academic integrity.

This involves establishing transparent regulations, standards and guidelines to be implemented at the level of higher education institutions and providing for independent bodies to monitor the implementation.

**The frameworks, the measures and the associated sanctions should be proportionate to the intended aim and any violations committed**

To ensure appropriate and fit for purpose processes **at institutional and programme level**, the reference to the academic integrity policies in learning and teaching, research, in administrative procedures and in **institutional governance should be included in quality assurance procedures**, and be reviewed by the appropriate internal and external bodies in line with European and national frameworks, including the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESGs).

Special attention needs to be paid to ensure **academic integrity** in the context of emerging digital technologies, such as the use of artificial intelligence, as well as in the handling of data.

**Public authorities** together with the **academic community** should adopt recommendations on good educational practice, therein creating and periodically reviewing frameworks and guidelines to ensure they keep pace with developments and, when necessary, setting standards and limits for its use.

Public authorities should establish adequate frameworks and also cooperate at international level, such as within the framework of the Council of Europe, in order to counter and as far as possible eliminate **diploma mills, contract cheating** practices and other forms of organised misconduct and corruption including in the administrative processes and institutional governance of the academic institutions.

Institutions should consider developing **codes of ethics** describing issues of integrity and transparency in easily understandable language.

These codes of ethics should be **co-created** with students, academic and administrative staff and should describe the ethical principles, types of individual and organised misconduct, be it in teaching, learning, research or administration, and the appropriate and differentiated measures to take, including sanctions.

The codes of ethics should also identify the **university bodies** responsible for support and guidance in case of violations. To ensure consistency between academic and legal measures, the cases of **misconduct which lie outside of the remit of academic sanctions** should be described.

Higher education institutions should actively **promote awareness (EDUCATION)** of the codes of ethics and other relevant standards among target groups. To this end, higher education institutions are responsible for providing staff with relevant training.

Academic staff have a special responsibility in adhering to and promoting academic integrity, setting an example from which students can learn.

Teachers are responsible for creating a safe learning environment for students where a healthy error and quality culture is developed that recognises that making and identifying shortcomings and errors is an integral part of quality learning, teaching and research.

Administrative staff and institutional leaders should ensure fairness and transparency in their work.

While it needs to be acknowledged that due to their nature **students** are members of the academic community still in training, **they nonetheless have the same obligation to promote and respect academic integrity as other members of this community.**

For academic integrity to be successfully fostered, it is important not only to pursue and redress academic misconduct, but also to create an environment that **prevents** it and that nourishes integrity.

**Public authorities** should ensure that all organisational, cultural, legislative, financial and other measures promote a healthy working environment and error culture, while avoiding regulatory loopholes that allow impunity for academic misconduct

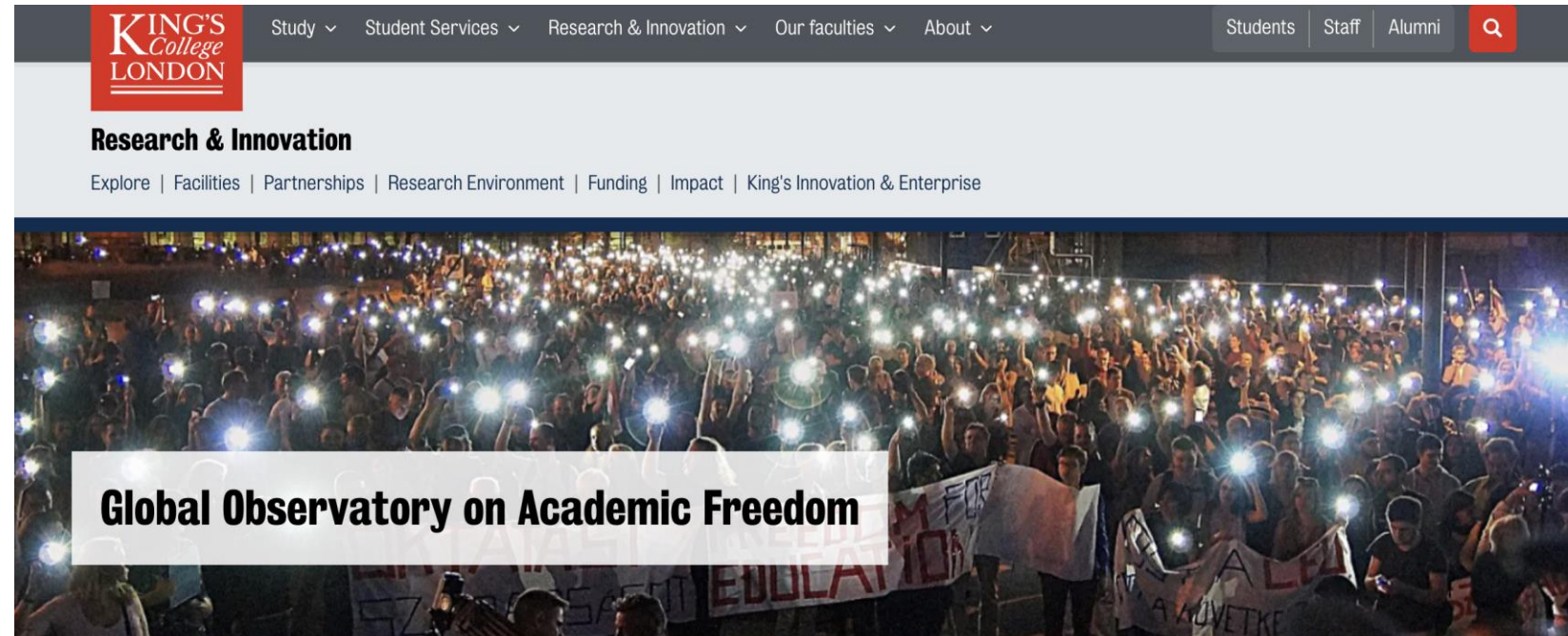
This includes ensuring **adequate and sustainable funding** for higher education and creating administrative frameworks that promote collaboration over competition and quality over quantity in academic outputs.

Higher education institutions should empower the academic community **through proper training**, adequate guidance and support for their academic community to develop their understanding of academic integrity and the skills and competences required to apply it.

Thank you!

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<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/global-observatory-on-academic-freedom>



The Global Observatory on Academic Freedom (GOAF) is an autonomous research project hosted by the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's College London.

### What we do

GOAF aims to conduct rigorous, innovative, and practically relevant research that responds to the needs of rethinking the concept of academic freedom, which is facing a crisis around the world.

New developments in academe, societies, national politics, and geopolitics pose new challenges to academic freedom, theoretical as much as empirical. GOAF stimulates debate on the understanding and

