

Joint Statement by Nordic Universities on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy

We, the undersigned representatives of Nordic universities, affirm the fundamental importance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy for the advancement of knowledge, the promotion of democracy, and the development of our societies.

Academic Freedom is the cornerstone of higher education and research. It encompasses the right of scholars to pursue truth and knowledge without undue interference, to teach and discuss ideas freely, and to disseminate research findings without fear of censorship or reprisal. This freedom is essential for fostering critical thinking, innovation, and the robust exchange of ideas that underpin democratic societies.

Institutional Autonomy allows universities to govern themselves independently, ensuring that academic priorities are set based on scholarly merit rather than political or commercial pressures. This autonomy is crucial for maintaining the integrity and credibility of higher education institutions, enabling them to contribute effectively to societal and technological progress and address global challenges such as climate change and public health.

We are deeply concerned by the increasing pressures on academic freedom and university autonomy worldwide. Political interference, censorship, and the imposition of ideologically driven agendas threaten the very foundations of academic inquiry and the role of universities as bastions of independent thought and knowledge.

In light of these challenges, we urge universities and all stakeholders to:

Protect Academic Freedom: Safeguard the rights of scholars to conduct research, teach, and communicate their findings without external interference.

Ensure Institutional Autonomy: Respect the self-governance of universities and refrain from imposing political constraints on academic activities.

Promote International Collaboration: Support cross-border academic partnerships and the exchange of ideas, which are vital for addressing global issues and advancing human knowledge.

We commit to upholding these principles within our own institutions and to advocating for their adoption globally. By defending academic freedom and institutional autonomy, we strengthen the foundations of democracy and contribute to the sustainable development of our societies.

Icelandic Rectors' Conference

The Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions

The Council of Rectors of Finnish Universities

Universities Denmark

Universities Norway