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**Managing challenges of academic freedom in higher
education institutions during and post COVID 19
pandemics**

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Abstract

The study analysed the management of challenges of academic freedom in higher education institutions (HEIs) during and the post COVID 19 pandemics. Academic freedom in public HEIs is increasingly under threat due to the rise of populist regimes, repressive governments, and heightened polarisation based on race, religion, and political divides. This study adopted a qualitative methodology using the desktop approach based on exploratory design and a theoretical approach in developing this article. To get insights on what has so far been realized as far as academic freedom is concerned, a theoretical review was embarked on to collect data. Data was therefore collected using review of the literature and document analysis. Then the data was analysed using narratives and descriptions. It was concluded that the internationalization of higher education has enabled authoritarian states to effectively “trans nationalize” everyday forms of censorship and political repression to students and faculty both at home and abroad. It was therefore recommended that public HEIs should establish a code of conduct on foreign donations and campuses, on protecting expatriate students and faculty, and on training and support for fieldworkers to protect academic freedom in the context of internationalization.

Keywords: *Academic, Education, Freedom, Institutions, COVID 19, Challenges.*

Introduction

Public higher education has always been about shaping futures in terms of helping students grow, discover new ideas, and build careers. But the world is changing fast, and higher education institutions (HEIs) are facing more pressure than ever to keep up (Full fabric, 2025). Around the world, academic freedom in public HEIs is increasingly under threat due to the rise of populist regimes, repressive governments, and heightened polarisation based on race, religion, and political divides (Mboyonga, 2025). Reporting from the Academic Freedom Index, as well as Scholars at Risk’s annual Free to Think report, highlights concerning trends across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (United Nations, 2025). Scholars at Risk has helped to launch and further advance three independent regional coalitions for academic freedom in the Americas, Africa, and Southeast Asia (SAR network, 2025). In the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States, some public HEIs, academics, and students have faced punitive repercussions for voicing their opposition to the ongoing atrocities (Mboyonga, 2025).

Launched in August 2024 and hosted at the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD) in Accra, the Africa Coalition for Academic Freedom (ACAF) is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and ensuring respect for academic freedom in African public HEIs (SAR network, 2025). Studies focusing on Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda highlighted how political capture of public university management points to the weakening of academic freedom (Mboyonga, 2025). Academic freedom is therefore at the heart of life of public HEIs (Furstenberg, Prelec & Heathershaw, 2020). Academic freedom, however elusive, is widely championed as the foundation of a good public higher education (Dobson, 2021). Debates surrounding academic freedom and the proper way to handle relations with public universities in countries where science and research have become subject to systematic restrictions demand our attention more, especially today (Strategy Paper, 2020).

Academic freedom has many definitions and is understood differently (Altbach 2001). Academic freedom is a defensive right, and therefore one that protects scientific and teaching activities against the interference of the state and other authorities (Enders, de Boer & Weyer, 2013). In some countries such as France, academic freedom does not have a legal definition and in the event of a dispute, courts must determine the essence of this right (Poscher 2020). However, new threats to academic freedom globally have emerged because of the COVID-19 (Malley, 2021). Indeed, during the COVID era, repressive governments were using the pandemics as an excuse to suppress and silence dissident students and scholars (Seckin, 2021). What might all this mean as far as the prospects of academic freedom are concerned? (Nehring, 2021). Even if the current years have seen us emerge from the depths of the pandemic, public higher education leaders and institutions must remain alert to and guard against an entrenching of such threats to academic expression (Malley, 2021).

The case of the World Health Organisation (WHO) research team tasked with investigating the roots of the COVID-19 in Wuhan and its trouble to gain access to China served as a warning example (Saliba, 2021). Even after the COVID-19 era, academic freedoms is still getting limited as students live in a world in which an increasing fraction of their lives is digitally surveilled (Tiyambe, 2021). The main objective of the study was to find out the causes of challenges affecting academic freedoms in public HEIs and to examine the strategies for managing the challenges affecting academic freedoms in public HEIs. In line with these

objectives, the study was guided by the following research questions: What are the causes of challenges affecting academic freedoms in public HEIs and to what are the strategies that can be used to manage the challenges affecting academic freedoms in public HEIs.

Literature review

The impact of COVID 19 on academic freedom by public HEIs

At a time when the COVID 19 pandemics has changed academic life beyond recognition for many public higher education institutions globally, challenges of academic freedom are starting to be experienced as academicians teach and present research papers using online platforms such as webinars, zoom meetings, google meetings, teleconferencing, teams, video conferencing, and skype (Nehring, 2021). As the COVID 19 crisis deepened around 2020 and 2021, the measures and regulations in place increased inequality regarding local and regional conditions, they put many jobs at risk, and they profoundly threatened academic freedom and institutional autonomy (Seckin, 2021). Important international centres of scholarship had closed their borders and reopened them only selectively, to specific groups of travellers, or not at all.

Therefore, for example, two academic systems that were major recipients of international students, in Australia and in China, had maintained closed borders, stranding large student populations abroad for a long and yet uncertain period. Mobility restrictions had obviously been necessary to curb the spread of the COVID-19 and, prospectively, halt the pandemic. It is not my intention to question any of this. However, the question offers itself to what extent were these restrictions dropped once the severity of the pandemic lessened. The most dramatic and best-known example was the tragic case of Chinese ophthalmologist Li Wenliang. He was questioned by police and accused of ‘making false comments’ after he warned about the new deadly SARS virus through his social media account. He caught the virus and died on 6 February 2020 at 34 years old.

The challenges of academic freedom by public HEIs due to COVID 19

During and after the COVID 19 era, several governments such as the Chinese government targeted scholars who criticised the country’s strategy to tackle and suppress the virus. Another example is from the

US: Rebekah Jones, a data scientist at the Department of Health in Florida, who was fired because she refused to manipulate the official data about the COVID 19 (Seckin, 2021). That is why the Swedish government said it would strengthen laws on academic freedom after a leading Swedish academic announced that he was quitting his work on the COVID-19 (Torjesen, 2021). The COVID 19 highlighted the problems connected to the freedom of research, that is the right to disseminate the knowledge obtained by scientific inquiry or to communicate the results of one's research. A case in point is that of the Chinese scientists or medical professionals and journalists, who were silenced or censored by the Chinese government because of publishing information about the COVID-19 (Sevgi, 2020).

Academic freedom in times of the COVID-19, posed to the academy about its role and responsibility in a time of an unprecedented (for this generation) global crisis (IHA, 2020). Differences of opinion about the best approaches of fighting the COVID-19 prompted concerns among faculty members about how policies regarding academic freedom at the public university should be applied and about Stanford's relationship to the Hoover Institution (Chesley, 2020). Indeed, the COVID 19 revealed new vulnerabilities in academic freedom as new versions of old pressures emerged amid campus closures and budget cuts (Lau, 2020).

Additionally, the COVID-19 global health pandemic exposed the ways in which women's academic work is systematically rendered invisible (Moodley & Gouws, 2020). For over twenty years, internationalization has been a driving force for change in the academy (Strategy Paper, 2020). The phenomenon of the "internationalization" of HEIs in terms of the increasing quantity and quality of international partnerships and transnational ties in research, education, and associated activities is a broadly positive force (Furstenberg, Prelec & Heathershaw, 2020). The targeting of academicians and researchers in public HEIs from other countries such as those of Europe by the Chinese state in March 2021 during the era of the COVID 19 pandemics, gave rise to much discussion about the impact of the internationalisation of HE on academic freedom (Hughes, 2021).

International experience of challenges of academic freedom by public HEIs.

Around the world, academic freedom in public HEIs is increasingly under threat due to the rise of populist regimes (Mboyonga, 2025).

Worryingly, academic freedom and its close relative find themselves increasingly at risk across several countries around the globe especially in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa (European University Association, 2025). Reporting from the Academic Freedom Index, highlights concerning trends across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East (United Nations, 2025). Scholars at Risk, has helped to launch and further advance three independent regional coalitions for academic freedom in the Americas, Africa, and Southeast Asia (SAR network, 2025). In the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States, some public universities, academics, and students have faced punitive repercussions for voicing their opposition to the ongoing atrocities (Mboyonga, 2025).

The Africa Coalition for Academic Freedom (ACAF) is dedicated to promoting, protecting, and ensuring respect for academic freedom in African public HEIs (SAR network, 2025). Studies focusing on Cameroon highlighted how political capture of public university management points to the weakening of academic freedom (Mboyonga, 2025). As in many parts of the world, the transition to democracy in Africa has, unfortunately, not succeeded in safeguarding academic freedom (Full fabric, 2025). Recently, the conflict in Gaza has underscored the fragile state of academic freedom, especially in public universities in the global North (Mboyonga, 2025).

The topic has generated strong public interest due to prominent developments in the more recent past, including the alleged murder of an Italian doctoral student by security forces in Egypt, and the exodus of at-risk scholars from Turkey (Strategy Paper, 2020). International collaboration had been “positive in helping public universities and academics across the world cooperate” (Higgins, 2020). Even academic freedom in democratic countries also faces threats from populist movements and politicians in those countries (Strategy Paper, 2020).

Persecution of academicians and researchers in public HEIs

A recent report by the University and College Union (UCU) in the United Kingdom (UK) highlights that the major elements of academic freedom are in decline. In certain countries, scholars and students are frequently persecuted, arrested, or tortured for their academic work, research, and publications (Furstenberg, Prelec & Heathershaw, 2020). Belarus has seen the largest declines in academic freedom levels (Good Lobby Profs, 2020). Also, there are many cases of local academicians and

researchers in several countries of Central Asia being harassed (Heathershaw, 2021).

In fact, one of the researchers by the names of Dr. Stella Nyanzi that was working with Institute of social Research at Makerere University in Uganda, lost her job for undertaking a research project to publish her scholarly work that seemed controversial to the work of the ruling government (UN Human rights, 2021). In almost every region of the world, academics face imprisonment and sometimes even death for the issues they pursue (UN Human rights, 2021).

The need for funding has forced many major public universities to collaborate with governments in authoritarian states (Kinser, K. 2015). For example, academicians and researchers who work at UK overseas campuses in UAE, China and other authoritarian states frequently report censorship and education which is technocratic rather than promoting critical thinking (Heathershaw, 2021).

Scholars and foreign students suffer from restrictions in the production of academic conduct and content, with sometimes vicious retaliations. There have been cases of students experiencing intimidation (Adele, 2018). Restrictions on academic freedom are also found in the practice of research and data collection. This may take the form of depriving academic critics of their personal liberty and individual freedoms or banning those scholarly activities that are not aligned with the regime's vision. Scholars have been attacked, killed, detained, or prosecuted conducting fieldwork.

Legislative and regulative challenges associated with academic freedom in public HEIs

There has been evidence of the surveillance of students from Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan and China and expert academics in the UK admitting that their research is constrained due to the threat of retaliation (Heathershaw, 2021). Some countries' domestic legal systems "fail to protect" academic freedom (Higgins, 2020). China's recent imposition of sanctions on academicians and researchers from other countries is the most recent and dramatic illustration of how procedures for protecting academic freedom from an earlier age are no longer fit for purpose (Hughes, 2021).

If this can be achieved, then the internationalisation of public education and research in the UK can be overwhelmingly positive for all those involved (Higgins, 2020). Internationalisation has also produced

new risks, especially in the context of engagement, exchange and collaboration in the areas of teaching, research and consultancy especially with in non-democratic countries (Good Lobby Profs, 2020). The degree of change was revealed in a joint study by the Policy Institute at King's College, London and the Harvard Kennedy (Hughes, 2021). Some countries' domestic legal systems "fail to protect" academic freedom (Higgins, 2020). One of the Academic Freedoms Index indicators is the level of governmental engagement in controlling and restricting academia (Good Lobby Profs, 2020).

Internationalisation and academic freedom by public HEIs

Concern regarding internationalization and academic freedom involves pressure from foreign governments, upon whose funding UK public universities may depend via overseas students or research partnerships (Sally, 2019). For example, there was a 100-fold increase in donations from the Middle East to the University of Oxford from 2001 to 2014 (Heathershaw, 2021). In May 2018, Matthew Hedges, a British doctoral student from Durham University, who was in the UAE for a two-week research trip, was arrested at Dubai International Airport on suspicion of spying on behalf of the British government (Hedges, 2018). Attacks on academic freedom corrode the pillars of democratic life, scientific progress, human development, and the right of all human beings to freedom of opinion and expression (UN Human Rights, 2021).

The internationalization and commercialization of universities have increased the outsourcing of higher education abroad. A positive trend, the opening of campuses overseas has raised several controversies due to the choice of host countries, which have oftentimes coincided with states oppressing civil liberties and human rights (Hedges, 2018). According to data compiled by the Cross-Border Education Research Team (C-BERT), as of 2017, 9 UK overseas campuses are based in China, 6 in Malaysia, and 11 in Middle Eastern countries. The establishment of these branches is, in many cases, financially subsidized by the foreign government.

Yet sometimes this support comes with restrictions on subjects to be taught or researched (Cross-Border Education Research Team, 2017). In addition, the casualisation of academic work and an opportunistic approach to building global ties have made academic actors within liberal democracies more vulnerable and sometimes less willing to stand up for academic freedom and integrity. Yet, some members of the recently

established Academic Freedom and Internationalisation Working Group (AFIWG) in the UK, feel that the challenges posed by academic internationalisation must be dealt with without delay and, indeed, that the COVID 19 pandemics has magnified some of these challenges, for example, by making us more dependent on online interaction.

Methods and materials

This study adopted a qualitative methodology using the desktop approach based on exploratory design and a theoretical approach in developing this article. According to Steward (1984), a theoretical approach can be used in instances where empirical study is not possible. To get insights on what has so far been realized as far as academic freedom in higher education institutions are concerned, a theoretical review was embarked on to collect data. Data was therefore collected through the review of literature and a number analysis of various documents on challenges of Academic Freedom by HEIs during and after the COVID 19 pandemics from different parts of the world (Ezeani, 2009).

The various documents reviewed included Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom, AAUP Academic Freedom, Academic Freedom and Tenure, Academic Freedom and Textbook Choice, Academic Freedom FAQs, Academic Freedom in Curriculum, Statement on Academic Freedom, Academic Freedom Statement, Academic Freedom and the Modern University, Define Academic Freedom in Title, Equity and Anti-racism in Academic Freedom and White Paper on Academic Freedom (Academic Senate for California, 2025).

Then the data was analysed using narratives and descriptions of the various challenges associated with academic freedom by HEIs. To ensure dependability, the study collected data from reports of reputable peer reviewed scholarly journal articles, bibliographies, conference papers and published reports on academic freedom in HEIs (Glenn, 2013). From first contact documents, additional articles and documents were identified and reviewed. The secondary sources used mainly included reports, articles and news items on academic freedom in HEIs. In carrying out the study, the ethical principles were strictly followed (Bhandari, 2021).

Results

Causes of challenges of academic freedom in public HEIs during and the post COVID 19

The dilemma that public HEIs now face is shown by the fact that Newcastle University is now in the position of proclaiming its resolve to protect a member of staff targeted with sanctions by the same government that has located a Confucius Institute on its campus (Hughes, 2021). Such risks can be exacerbated by some forms of transnational collaboration that lead to dependencies, including foreign funding arrangements and research and education partnerships (Higgins, 2020). Therefore, HEIs could respond in several ways. Denial, such as that by the Chair of Million Plus group of universities, Bill Rammell, in his evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) of the House of Commons in 2019 is no longer tenable.

New threats to academic freedom globally have emerged because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to physically distanced teaching, learning and examinations and virtual offerings or remote collaborations online, according to just published global data and analysis (Malley, 2021). Academic freedom and institutional autonomy for HEIs have always been at risk, especially under authoritarian regimes. But today, repressive governments are using the COVID 19 pandemics as an excuse to suppress and silence dissident students and scholars (Seckin, 2021).

In the 1997 recommendation concerning the status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel, signed by all countries included in this study, academic freedom is equated with “the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies” (Stachowiak, 2021).

The rights of freedom of expression, opinion and belief as well as the right to education and academic freedom are protected by international human rights instruments to which Belarus is a party and has a legal obligation to comply with (Good Lobby Profs, 2020). Academic freedom is a defensive right, and therefore one that protects scientific and teaching activities against the interference of the state and other authorities, including university and faculty authorities. This important

aspect of academic freedom is often taken up in the literature (Enders, de Boer & Weyer, 2013).

The application of academic freedom may lead to a violation of other individual or institutional rights. The collision between two or more rights is settled by constitutional courts and international tribunals by applying the principle of proportionality (Brems & Lavrysen, 2015). In recent literature, there is a growing interest in the merits and detriments of the principle of proportionality. This aspect has not been sufficiently analysed in literature. Secondly, in some countries such as France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain, academic freedom does not have a legal definition and in the event of a dispute, courts have to determine the essence of this right (Poscher 2020).

Strategies for managing the challenges affecting academic freedom by HEIs

To effectively manage the challenges affecting academic freedom in HEIs, there is need to focus on developing robust policies, fostering open communication, and promoting a culture of respect for intellectual diversity.

This includes clearly defining academic freedom, establishing channels for addressing violations, and ensuring that institutional autonomy doesn't infringe upon individual rights. From the review of scholarly works by Pedro, Katy, Joe and Gabe (2023), the following strategies to manage challenges associated with academic freedom by HEIs have been suggested:

Know your landscape: Find out what is happening in your state and on your campus. How prevalent are local threats to academic freedom by HEIs and where do they come from? Remember that not all faculty face these challenges equally.

Know your rights, allies and resources: Educate yourself and your colleagues on the multifaceted issue of academic freedom by HEIs and understand your rights as faculty members. Follow the informed public debates led by the AAUP on Academe and the Journal of Academic Freedom and the growing body of publications associated with the new field of Critical University Studies.

Examine your institution's stated policies; study your HEIs' principles and procedures to gauge its commitment to academic freedom.

If those do not exist, university senates, local AAUP chapters and professional unions offer useful examples you can draw from.

Know your plan: You always need to prepare and give yourself the time and space to devise a plan. In an acute crisis, there is little room to think or breathe, so sketching out what your steps could or should be is crucial. This might fall to individual faculty to create their own plans, but it can also be a collective activity for your communities, departments and institutions.

Deal with social media attacks: If you are a scholar with a public profile, rely on field experts to help you deal with social media attacks and online harassment. The Faculty First Responders, a team that monitors faculty harassment and provides faculty under attack with support, has created a robust website with a prep kit for academics and resources for administrators.

Discuss syllabi and learning objectives: For those with classroom-oriented duties, discuss syllabi and learning objectives and how they are tied to standardised programme requirements, rubrics and standards of assessment and the communication of expectations and ideas.

Find countless online resources for teaching: You can also find countless online resources for teaching “hot-button topics”, explaining your research to those unfamiliar with its nuances and creating inclusive teaching spaces that allow for academic freedom to be supported for all. Specifically, from the review of documents by Mustafa, (2022), findings indicate that, to safeguard academic freedom in HEIs, proactive strategies and measures need to be implemented which include the following:

Developing and implementing policies and guidelines: One key strategy is the development and implementation of robust institutional policies and guidelines for academic freedom in HEIs that explicitly uphold academic freedom as a core value.

Secondly, the review of documents of Full Fabric, (2025), strategies for safeguarding academic freedom in HEIs, include the following:

Establishing clear policies on academic freedom; Public universities in different parts of the world should establish clear policies on academic freedom in HEIs that promote free expression while fostering an inclusive environment.

Engaging in open conversations; Engaging in open conversations with students, faculty, and policymakers can help institutions navigate these challenges effectively; Diversifying funding sources through industry partnerships, alumni donations, and operational efficiencies can help universities become more resilient.

From the review of scholarly works by Pedro, Katy, Joe and Gabe (2023), the following strategies to manage challenges associated with academic freedom have been suggested:

Know your landscape: Find out what is happening in your state and on your campus. How prevalent are local threats to academic freedom and where do they come from? Remember that not all faculty face these challenges equally.

Discussion of results

Results from literature and documents review indicated that there are several factors and strategies responsible for managing challenges of academic freedom in HEIs during and the post COVID 19 Pandemics. This finding agrees with scholars such as Malley (2021) who opine that new threats to academic freedom globally have emerged because of the COVID-19 pandemics and the shift to physically distanced teaching, learning and examinations and virtual offerings or remote collaborations online, according to just-published global data and analysis. This finding is in line with agencies such as Full fabric (2025) that assert that HEIs are facing more pressure than ever to adapt to a new reality academic freedom.

Secondly, this finding agrees with scholars such as Mboyonga (2025) who opine that around the world, academic freedom in HEIs is increasingly under threat due to the rise of populist regimes, repressive governments, and heightened polarisation based on race, religion, and political divides. Thirdly, this finding supports the works of international institutions such as United Nations (2025) which believe that reporting from the Academic Freedom Index, as well as Scholars at Risk's annual Free to Think report, highlights concerning trends across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Also, this finding supplements the works of researchers such as SAR network (2025) who conjure that scholars at Risk has helped to launch and further advance three independent regional coalitions for academic freedom in the Americas, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In addition, this

finding complements the works of scholars such as Mboyonga (2025) who suggest that in the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States, some HEIs, academics, and students have faced punitive repercussions for voicing their opposition to the ongoing atrocities. More to that, this finding is in line with researches such as Furstenberg, Prelec and Heathershaw (2020) who postulate that academic freedom is therefore at the heart of life of HEIs.

It forms the fundamental basis for disseminating knowledge and fostering independent thinking of students and staff members; it also allows for self-governance and academic job security to ensure independence. On top of that, this finding agrees with scholars such as Dobson (2021) who suggest that academic freedom however elusive, is widely championed as the foundation of a good higher education. Academic freedom is held up as vital, to borrow from Hannah Arendt, in speaking ‘truth to power’, and axiomatic in the pursuit of the public, or common good. More broadly, it is understood as being vital for ensuring a healthy functioning democracy, and as an antidote to the contemporary dis-ease of post truth politics,

Finally, this finding supports the results from several documents such as the Strategy Paper (2020) which emphasize that the debates surrounding academic freedom and the proper way to handle relations with universities in countries where science and research have become subject to systematic restrictions demand our attention more, especially today. Lastly, this finding supplements the works of scholars such as Enders, de Boer and Weyer (2013) who believe that academic freedom is a defensive right, and therefore one that protects scientific and teaching activities against the interference of the state and other authorities, including university and faculty authorities.

This important aspect of academic freedom is often taken up in the literature. Finally, these findings complement the works of scholars such as Poscher (2020) who conjure that in some countries such as France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and Spain, academic freedom in Higher Education Institutions does not have a legal definition and in the event of a dispute, courts have to determine the essence of this right.

Conclusion and recommendations

Academic freedom, and therefore the possibility of intellectual dissent, represent challenges to the authoritarian structure during and after the

COVID 19 Pandemics. Hence, ideas and movements that might compromise the regime, within the nation state as well as abroad, are subject to repression. According to such logic, the state must constantly reaffirm its dominant position by penetrating spaces of critical thinking within and beyond its territorial borders. The risk to academic freedom, however, is not solely from such states. As remarked by several of the UK respondents, risks “emanate mostly from within, rather than from without”. They are created and enhanced by market mechanisms that generate unregulated competition between universities over the funding they offer. Furthermore, the foreign policy establishments of some governments have come to identify certain research as a security threat and have begun to impose limits on international partnerships.

As the observations above demonstrate, the internationalization of higher education has enabled authoritarian states to effectively “trans nationalize” everyday forms of censorship and political repression to students and faculty both at home and abroad especially during and after the COVID 19 Pandemics. Many of these forms of influence appear to be indirect, in that they derive from fear of direct measures against oneself or one’s family. These include fear of the loss of the right to travel, of the right to host students, or of the likelihood of receiving donations. Evidence on this under-studied topic remains scattered. However, what is clear is the value for an authoritarian regime to exercise influence outside its national territories.

There is therefore need for both developed and developing countries to come up with codes of conduct that have minimum standards for HEIs to use in protecting the academic freedom of their Academicians and researchers at home and abroad and be transparent and accountable to their members. Regarding protecting their staff and students overseas, HEIs need to evaluate academic freedom and the risks associated with its absence, as when planning fieldwork and field trips abroad, and make available enhanced travel insurance to cover politically motivated or arbitrary detention by state authorities.

On campuses at home, HEIs need to ensure that academic freedom requirements, including personal data protection for these members of the academic community, are incorporated within all Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with state scholarship programmes. Vice-chancellors and their gifts committees must make all MoUs and summary information on all foreign donations’ public. The way to protect academic freedom is for HEIs to be held to account by their academics

and students. Universities and colleges need to ensure that remote teaching software platforms they employ protect the privacy of students and faculty and minimize data collection, particularly with identifying features and safeguard intellectual property created, stored, recorded, or conveyed on platforms, including from commercial exploitation by the platform provider or third parties.

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