

# The Erfurt Declaration on University Autonomy

## "Towards the Responsible University of the Twenty-first Century"

Erfurt, March 1996

Erfurt University Colloquium

*"Autonomy and external control –  
the university in search of the golden mean"*

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### I.

1. **The state must respect academic freedom and academic autonomy.** For this purpose academic freedom is defined as the freedom of academics, within the law, to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions; academic autonomy is defined as the ability of academic institutions to decide for themselves how they will perform the tasks set for and agreed by them or which they have set for themselves.
2. **The university must conduct itself as a responsible and cohesive community, not an anarchistic or irresponsible association.** The university is under an obligation to so structure itself that decisions are capable of being reached after full consultation but with a mini-

mum of delay, and that agreed actions are implemented fully and conscientiously, at minimum cost. As a community of scholars and students, the university will accept corporate responsibility for actions taken with its authority and in its name.

## II.

- 3. The state must allow the university to regulate its own quality and standards.** For this purpose quality is defined as the working philosophy which the university employs to achieve the goals it has set for itself, including the maintenance of academic standards; such standards are defined as the explicit levels of attainment needed to obtain particular academic qualifications and other assessed outcomes.
- 4. The university must guarantee transparency of process and public accountability in discharging this self-regulation.** Every procedure which the university has in place to monitor standards and ensure quality must be open to public scrutiny and comment, and the university must agree to be answerable, in the public domain, for the manner in which it carries out such monitoring and quality assurance.

## III.

- 5. The state must provide stable funding for the university.** It is entirely for the state to decide how much financial provision it will make to the university, and for what purposes, consonant with the provisions of the Declaration. However, such provision should be offered in a manner which minimises significant fluctuations from year to year, thus permitting the university to undertake a reasonable level of forward planning.
- 6. The university must use its best endeavours to diversify its sources of financial support.** Both in its own interests and in the interests of the state, the university is obligated to make the widest possible search for sources of funding, and to minimise over-dependency on any one financial source.

## IV.

- 7. The state must permit the university to carry out its historic scholarly and cultural functions.** University communities are one of the most important agencies for the preservation and transmission of intellectual and cultural values; accordingly, the university must be free to undertake such preservation and transmission irrespective of the views of the state government.
- 8. The university must be responsive to the needs of society, including wealth creation.** Universities have and must discharge their obligations towards the national societies of which they are an integral part, and from which they derive long-term and immediate benefits; accordingly, the university must play a central part in the identification of social and economic needs, and in helping to meet these needs insofar as it is able.

## V.

- 9. The state must liberalise the structure and the working of the university to allow it carry out its international functions.** Universities have international as well as national functions and obligations; accordingly, the state must so order its relationship with the university as to enable the university to carry out these international activities.
- 10. The university must discharge its obligations towards the well-being of mankind as a whole.** It must recognise that the impact and effect of its activities extend beyond the boundaries of the state of which it is a part; accordingly, it must take active steps to identify and address these international obligations.