

Summer School 2025 on Academic Freedom in Times of War Took Place in Poznań

Student testimonials



The Summer School provided a unique space for academic dialogue on the threats to higher education in wartime and offered participants diverse perspectives, legal, political, ethical, and institutional, on the role of academia in upholding democratic values and fundamental rights.

We collected testimonials from students who participated in the summer school through an interactive, participatory platform, using a set of predefined, structured questions. A sample of the responses is presented below.

What does academic freedom mean to you?

SONYA USOVA 7/3/25 1:31PM

To me, academic freedom means being able to learn, ask questions, and share ideas without fear. It helps us think freely and grow.

IRYNA LUTSENKO 7/3/25 12:57PM

Academic freedom is the ability to teach, learn, and research without borders, guided by critical thinking, curiosity, and a strong sense of responsibility to society.

GRACEFUL OTTER 6/26/25 10:50AM

The opportunity to speak uncomfortable ideas that may not fall under the dominant narrative freely in universities.

OBSERVANT BEE 6/27/25 11:20AM

The possibility To express my self in an institutional academic setting in a free way. To study freely and also be able to critisize my university and lectors. To have the access to knowledge and the freedom to protest

What was your experience of the Free AC Summer School?

SONYA USOVA 7/3/25 1:32PM

I really enjoyed the Free AC Summer School! I learned new things, met great people from different countries, and had fun during the activities and talks. It was a cool and inspiring experience.

SUPPORTIVE CRANE 6/27/25 9:16AM

Initially I felt a bit anxious, but over time I think I managed pretty nicely, mainly because of the great team behind FreeAc and the friendships I managed to make. Really a great event!

OBSERVANT BEE 6/27/25 11:22AM

It was an amazing experience that gave me substantial knowledge of what academic freedom means and what challenges it faces, and why it is important to protect it and foster international exchange

IRYNA LUTSENKO 7/3/25 1:06PM

The Free AC Summer School was an incredible experience for me. It was full of insights, learning, and meaningful connections. I liked how it combined theory and practice. We didn't just discuss academic freedom, we applied it to real-life cases and our own projects. As a Ukrainian student, this topic felt especially personal and empowering.

What will you take home with you from the Summer School?

SONYA USOVA 7/3/25 1:32PM

I'll take home lots of good memories, new friends, and a better understanding of what academic freedom means. It also gave me more confidence to share my ideas and speak up.

OBSERVANT BEE 6/27/25 11:23AM

Motivation to stand up for academic freedom democracy and friendship

FAMOUS BOBER 6/27/25 9:18AM

The importance of protecting academic freedom as one of the key pillars of having a prosperous democracy. If I would become a high-ranking governmental official, I would definitely prioritize academic freedom with various policies, specifically during the times when a country experiences a crisis (be it an economic hardship or even a war / armed conflict).

IRYNA LUTSENKO 7/3/25 1:12PM

I'm taking home much more than just knowledge. The summer school gave me a deeper understanding of academic freedom, especially in the context of war. But what made this experience truly meaningful were the people - passionate, thoughtful and open-minded participants and speakers. I will also carry with me memories of powerful discussions, personal stories, and the sense of belonging to a community that values education, freedom, and solidarity.

