

Top Russian University Moves to Ban Political Speech

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Moscow's Higher School of Economics (HSE) became embroiled in several controversies involving alleged crackdowns on students' political opinions last year. **Artyom Geodakyan / TASS**

One of Russia's elite universities is considering banning its students and faculty from exercising political speech in the wake of high-profile scandals involving free speech last year, according to its newly [proposed](#) rules.

Moscow's Higher School of Economics (HSE) became embroiled in several controversies in 2019, including the [cancellation](#) of its student talk show after it invited an opposition activist and [revoking](#) a student newspaper's student-body status over a critical article. HSE political science student Yegor Zhukov also became a de-facto face of last summer's election protest movement, splitting university leadership and students into opposing camps.

Related article: [Yegor Zhukov Wants to Be Russia's President One Day](#)

“The new version of internal regulations clarifies the obligation not to make political

statements or stances not only on behalf of the entire university, but also on behalf of a range of students and HSE employees,” the university said on its website Friday.

Offenders would be forced to “delete affiliation” with HSE for breaching the new rules.

“HSE employees shouldn’t go beyond expert or analytical positions in public statements,” the proposed rules state.

Additionally, HSE wants to [revoke](#) student newspapers’ status as student organizations.

“This status creates a clash: On the one hand, a student organization is legally part of the university and HSE is fully responsible for its activities,” it wrote. “On the other hand, the university doesn’t influence student publications’ editorial policies.”

The slew of changes will be discussed at HSE’s next academic council, which the Kommersant daily [reports](#) will take place sometime next week.

The head of President Vladimir Putin’s human rights commission, Valery Fadeyev, said the suggested changes “don’t limit freedom of speech” at the prestigious university.

“A university is a professional corporation. Any corporation has its own rules,” Fadeyev [told](#) Interfax on Friday.

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