

Academic Integrity Policy

1. Preamble

Academic integrity is the basis for excellence in higher education and research. Vignan's Foundation for Science, Technology and Research (VFSTR) is committed to fostering an academic environment founded on honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, transparency, and accountability. The University expects every member of its academic community—including students, faculty, researchers, staff, visiting scholars, and collaborators—to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in teaching, learning, research, publications, examinations, evaluation, innovation, and professional engagement. This policy establishes the principles, responsibilities, standard operating procedures, and corrective measures necessary to prevent, identify, and address any breach of academic integrity while promoting a culture of ethical scholarship.

2. Objectives

- Promote a culture of ethical academic and research practices.
- Define acceptable and unacceptable academic conduct.
- Provide a transparent SOP for reporting and resolving violations.
- Ensure fair, confidential, and timely handling of complaints.
- Encourage awareness, accountability, and continuous improvement.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all students, research scholars, faculty members, administrative staff, technical staff, visiting faculty, adjunct faculty, postdoctoral fellows, consultants, collaborators, and any individual engaged in academic, research, examination, publication, consultancy, outreach, or innovation activities under the aegis of VFSTR.

4. Guiding Principles

Academic integrity requires every member of the University community to act honestly, acknowledge the intellectual contributions of others, comply with applicable laws and institutional regulations, protect confidential information, avoid conflicts of interest, and ensure that all academic outputs genuinely reflect original work and responsible scholarship.

5. Do's

- Maintain honesty in teaching, learning, examinations, research, and publications.
- Properly acknowledge all sources and intellectual contributions.
- Obtain approvals before research involving humans, animals, or sensitive data.
- Maintain accurate records and research data.

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- Use AI and digital tools responsibly with disclosure where required.
- Report suspected violations through established mechanisms.

6. Don'ts

- Do not plagiarize, fabricate, falsify, or manipulate data.
- Do not engage in contract cheating, impersonation, or unauthorized collaboration.
- Do not submit the same work multiple times without approval.
- Do not misuse confidential information or examination materials.
- Do not claim authorship without meaningful contribution.

7. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Any suspected breach of academic integrity shall be handled through a fair, impartial, confidential, and evidence-based process. Every complaint shall be examined objectively while ensuring the rights of all concerned parties.

- Receipt of complaint or detection of violation.
- Preliminary scrutiny by the Head of Department/competent authority.
- Referral to the Academic Integrity Committee, where required.
- Written notice and opportunity for the respondent to present a defence.
- Collection and examination of documentary and digital evidence.
- Committee recommendations to the competent authority.
- Communication of decision and implementation of corrective action.
- Provision for appeal within the prescribed timeline.

8. Plan of Action for Violations

Violations shall be classified according to their severity, intent, frequency, and academic impact. The University shall adopt corrective, educational, and disciplinary measures proportionate to the nature of the offence.

- Minor: counselling, warning, resubmission, academic integrity training.
- Moderate: grade penalties, examination annulment, suspension of research/publication privileges.
- Major: disciplinary proceedings, suspension/expulsion, cancellation of registration, withdrawal of publications, or other actions as per University regulations.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

Maintaining academic integrity is a shared responsibility. Students shall produce original work and comply with ethical standards. Faculty shall educate, mentor, assess fairly, and model ethical conduct. Heads of

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Departments shall ensure implementation of this policy and timely reporting of cases. The Academic Integrity Committee shall investigate allegations impartially and recommend appropriate action, while the University administration shall provide oversight, awareness programmes, and periodic review of this policy.

10. Awareness and Preventive Measures

- Regular orientation programmes and workshops.
- Mandatory plagiarism awareness and research ethics training.
- Use of plagiarism detection and other integrity tools.
- Periodic dissemination of best practices and policy updates.

11. Confidentiality and Review

All proceedings under this policy shall remain confidential and records shall be maintained securely. The policy shall be reviewed periodically to align with UGC regulations, national policies, emerging technologies including generative AI, and international best practices in academic and research integrity.



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