

**SHOOLINI  
UNIVERSITY  
SOLAN, HP**

## **Code of Ethics in Academic Research**



# **CODE OF ETHICS IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH**



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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Starting with the notion of academic freedom as the leading principle of our research, at all levels, Shoolini University (hereafter referred to as SU) is committed to promoting and maintaining high standards of integrity and accountability in the conduct of academic research and is keen to embed and endorse a culture of honesty and transparency in all its institutional activities. Undertaking this commitment, the institution emphasizes that academic freedom is a core value to be safeguarded and sustained. The University is dedicated to guaranteeing a free academic environment to conduct research, to teach, to speak and to publish, subject to the norms and standards of scholarly inquiry, without interference or penalty, wherever the search for truth, knowledge, scholarship and/or understanding may lead.

SU is a publicly financed institution whose funding enables it to provide essential research resources to its scholarly community. It requires its members to adhere to the terms and conditions governing access to such resources, be they on paper or in digital format.

SU supports the principle of Open Access and invites its members to facilitate the widespread dissemination of their published research by reporting and depositing their publications with the Institutional Repository of SU.

The University invites its members (teaching staff, fellows, research students, visiting students as well as administrative and support staff) to abide by the highest standards of integrity in their conduct of academic research and/or support of academic research activities.

The first part of this document provides recommendations on good practices in academic research at SU, the second part defines the task and composition of the SU Ethics Committee, while the third part defines academic misconduct and regulates the SU procedures for investigating such misconduct and determining appropriate sanctions.



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## **II. GOOD PRACTICE IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

### **A. Academic Freedom, Integrity and Responsibility**

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach study and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of scholars to inquire into any subject that evokes intellectual concern, to present findings, to publish data and conclusions without control or censorship and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate.

At the same time, integrity, accountability and responsibility in conducting academic research form the cornerstone of any academic enterprise and violations of widely-recognized academic research standards represent serious offences to the entire academic community at the University and are considered injurious for its credibility and authority as an institution that promotes excellence in academic research in India.

Academic integrity requires that academic research follows elevated professional standards, including appropriate research design and framework, adheres to high levels of research ethics and abides by the requirements set out by professional and regulatory research guidance and research ethics frameworks issued in appropriate areas.

#### **Principles and Values of Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is defined in terms of the commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, legality and dissemination.

  
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**Honesty:** An academic community should advance the quest for truth, knowledge, scholarship and understanding by requiring intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching and research.

**Trust:** An academic community should foster a climate of mutual trust to encourage the free exchange of ideas and enable all to reach their highest potential.

**Fairness:** An academic community should seek to ensure fairness in institutional standards, practices and procedures as well as fairness in interactions between members of the community.

**Respect:** An academic community should promote respect among students, staff and faculty: respect for self, for others, for scholarship and research, for the educational process and intellectual heritage.

**Responsibility:** An academic community should uphold high standards of conduct in learning, teaching and research by requiring shared responsibility for promoting academic integrity among all members of the community.

**Legality:** An academic community should observe valid legal norms related to the conduct and publication of research particularly in relations to copyright, the intellectual property rights of third parties, the terms and conditions regulating access to research resources and the laws of libel.

**Communication:** An academic community should seek to make the results of its research as widely and as freely available as possible.

## B. Institutional Responsibilities

The Dean Academic Affairs, the Dean, Research and Development, the Heads and Deans of Departments, together with the teaching staff, are responsible for promoting and endorsing a transparent academic environment conducive to the application of high professional and ethical criteria of good practice for academic research. Professors are expected to create and sustain a climate of mutual co-operation that facilitates the open exchange of ideas and the development of academic research skills. They are also expected to ensure the provision of appropriate supervision and direction for researchers in accordance with the nature of the individual academic discipline and associated mode of research.

  
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Shoolini University Institute is committed to the provision of appropriate direction of research and supervision for researchers. Supervisors are expected to adhere to the Code of Practice for Postgraduate and Doctoral Supervision at SU, which delineates the supervisory relationship, the assessment of research progress, and the procedures to resolve problems in the supervisory relationship.

### **C. Training (doctoral researchers and support staff)**

The Academic Departments should ensure that all researchers undertake appropriate training in research design, methodology, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping, data protection and publication, appropriate use of licensed research resources, and respect for the intellectual property rights of third parties. The University is also committed to preparing its administrative and support staff involved in record-keeping and the implementation of SU Data Protection Policy and expects them to fully respect the principles and rules of the Code of Ethics in Academic Research.

### **D. Publication Practice and Authorship, Notification, Archiving and Depositing Copies of Research Publications with the Institutional Repository (IR)**

Shoolini University encourages the publication and dissemination of results of high quality research. It also expects that researchers will engage in the process of publishing and dissemination of their work responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of any such dissemination in the wider media.

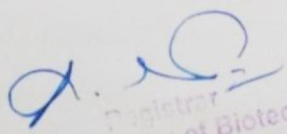
Results should be published in a form appropriate to the academic discipline. The University requires that all individuals listed as authors accept responsibility for

  
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the contents of the publication and can identify their contribution to it. Authors should have participated sufficiently in the research to take public responsibility for the content.

The University does not recognize the practice of honorary authorship.

  
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### **III. THE ETHICS COMMITTEE**

#### **A. Tasks of the Ethics Committee**

- to provide advice and guidance to the SU academic community on all matters pertaining to academic research ethics
- to advise the Academic Council on compliance with the 'Code of Ethics in Academic Research' of the various academic activities at the SU
- to provide guidance and academic support to scholars on ethical issues in respect of teaching, research and other academic activities. On an entirely voluntary basis, researchers may ask the Ethics Committee for consultation on ethical aspects of their research.
- to confirm to external parties on behalf of the SU compliance with ethical standards in respect of research projects undertaken by scholars at the SU. The Committee is only convened at the explicit request of scholars needing an assessment of the ethical dimensions of a research project.
- to advise the Executive Committee and the Academic Council of any policies that may be required in relation to accepting funds from particular sponsors of research
- to act as an investigative/consultative body for any disputed matter concerning research ethics and conduct
- to make recommendations to the internal SU Disciplinary Committee on what action, if any, should be taken as a result of the investigations.

  
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## **B. Appointment and Composition of the Ethics Committee**

The Ethics Committee is appointed by the Academic Council upon nomination by the Vice Chancellor.

The Committee shall be composed of six voting members:

- The Dean of Academic Affairs
- The Dean of Research and Development
- One faculty member from each faculty
- One researcher (nominated by the Reps for a two-year term)
- One post-doc or Research Associate
- The Legal advisor and the Data Protection Officer as advisor(s) to the Committee with voice but no vote

The nomination of faculty members of the Committee should endeavour to cover all the disciplines of SU, counting also the disciplines covered by the Deans.

The members' mandate is for two years – renewable once.

In case of conflict of interests, members of the Ethics Committee shall be temporarily replaced by substitutes nominated by the Vice-Chancellor.

The Chair is approved by consensus among members and has a casting vote.

  
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**Defamation:** Failure to observe relevant legal norms governing libel and slander.

**Misinterpretation:** The deliberate attempt to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others, whether or not for personal gain or enhancement.

**Personation:** The situation where someone other than the person who has submitted any academic work has prepared (parts of) the work;

**Fabrication and Fraud:** The falsification or invention of qualifications, data, information or citations in any formal academic exercise.

**Sabotage:** Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes stealing or cutting pages out of library books or otherwise damaging them; or wilfully disrupting the experiments of others; or endangering institutional access to licensed research resources by wilfully failing to observe their terms and conditions.

**Professorial misconduct:** Professorial acts that are arbitrary, biased or exploitative.

**Denying access to information or material:** To deny others access arbitrarily to scholarly resources or to deliberately and groundlessly impede their progress.

**Misconduct in formal examinations:** Includes having access, or attempting to gain access during an examination, to any books, memoranda, notes, unauthorised electronic devices or any other material, except such as may have been supplied by the invigilator or authorised by the Academic Department. It also includes aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate or any other communication and conversations that could have an impact on the examination results.

## **B. Identifying levels of violations of good academic practice:**

Two levels of violations of good academic practice can be distinguished.

  
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## 1. Minor Violations:

Minor violations may occur because of inexperience or lack of knowledge of the principles of academic integrity and are often characterised by the absence of dishonest intent on the part of the person committing the violation. They may result from:

a. weak procedures and methods which may jeopardise the integrity of the research but are not undertaken deliberately or recklessly


b. weaknesses which present no major risks to either subjects or policies which they may influence

On the whole, these minor violations can be seen as failings which may reflect only poor, rather than unacceptable practices and therefore mainly require further training and development rather than any formal disciplinary action.

Examples of minor violations include:

- Minor plagiarism defined as a small amount of paraphrasing, quotation or use of diagrams, charts etc. without adequate citation. Minor plagiarism may result from poor scholarship (i.e. when a student, through inexperience or carelessness, fails to reference appropriately or adequately identify the source of the material which they use).
- inaccurate claims to experience, qualifications or contributions in a context where the person committing the violation cannot expect major benefits (such as winning a competition for a prize or job)
- inaccurate representation of findings without deliberate distortion
- lack of diligence in declaring relevant conflicts of interest

Such violations may present no risks to subjects, the wider community or the environment, but they may warrant some penalty or sanction at institutional level.

  
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## 2. Major Violations:

Major violations are breaches of academic integrity that are more serious in nature or that affect a more significant aspect or portion of the academic work compared with minor violations. Key examples are:

- a. Deliberate, reckless or grossly negligent conduct which would clearly pose a significant risk in one form or another to the integrity of the research.
- b. Conduct that may pose risks to subjects, the wider community, the environment, or to the research reputation of the institution and research in general.

### c. Major plagiarism defined as:

- extensive paraphrasing or quoting without proper citation of the source;
- lifting directly from a text or other academic source without reference;
- the use of papers (or parts thereof) from essay banks, either downloaded from the internet or obtained from other sources;
- presenting another's designs or concepts as one's own;
- continued instances of what was initially regarded as minor plagiarism despite warnings having been given.

Other examples of major violations are:

1. the wilful destruction of data (except where required by the legitimate data provider or where norms of privacy might otherwise be endangered)
2. fabrication or falsification of data
3. falsification of ownership
4. defamation
5. systematic abuse of the terms and conditions of licensed research resources
6. other systematic violation of the intellectual property rights of third parties

SU is committed to fully investigate serious violations of academic misconduct by any academic member of the SU community.

## C. Procedures for Investigation of Research Misconduct

### 1. Instigation of proceedings



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Any person may submit a complaint about academic misconduct to the Vice-Chancellor. Such complaints need to be supported by sufficient evidence. The SU VC will decide whether the allegation is serious enough to warrant an investigation by the Ethics Committee. If the allegation concerns a PhD researcher or postdoctoral fellow, the VC may also delegate this task to the Dean of Academic Affairs.

The initiator of the allegation shall be asked to set out in writing the basis of the allegation.


The Ethics Committee may carry out:

- a preliminary investigation to ascertain whether there is sufficient substance to the allegation as to warrant a more thorough investigation;
- a formal inquiry which may include the consultation or involvement of external experts when needed.

The Library coordinator has the right to investigate any suspected abuse of institutionally licensed research resources and to suspend any user from continued access to all resources, digital or paper, pending a full investigation. The Library coordinator will also register a complaint with the Ethics Committee when appropriate.

## 2. Investigation

Where possible, the investigation will include examination of all relevant documentation, including, but not limited to: relevant research data, laboratory notebooks, computer files, other materials, proposals, publications, correspondence, and memoranda.

  
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The Chair of the Ethics Committee may invite internal or external experts who are not involved in the disputed matter and who are not members of the Committee to attend meetings. They may be heard or participate in discussions but have no vote.

Interviews shall be conducted with the complainant and the respondent. Other individuals involved in making the allegations and individuals who might have information regarding key aspects of the allegations may also be heard by the Committee.

The respondent has the right to be assisted or represented by a member of the SU community of his/her own choice.

Details of the allegations and the investigation will be made available only to the Ethics Committee. All individuals interviewed during the investigation will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the investigation.

### 3. Investigation report and recommendations

The Ethics Committee will produce a report stating: the procedures under which the formal investigation was conducted; how and, where appropriate, from whom information was obtained; the findings of the committee and the basis for these; a summary of the views of the respondent; and a description of any recommendations made by the committee.

The respondent will receive a copy of the investigation report and have an opportunity to comment on it. Comments may be submitted to the Ethics Committee and will be attached as an addendum to the investigation report.

If disciplinary actions are recommended, the Ethics Committee will communicate the findings of the investigation to Vice-Chancellor and his decision on any such issue is final.

Based on the investigation report and recommendations of the Ethics Committee, the Vice-Chancellor may decide on sanctions (when considered appropriate).

  
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The respondent has a right of appeal, against the decision and/or sanctions made by the Disciplinary Committee as specified in the Disciplinary Regulations.

#### D. Sanctions

Sanctions, as recommended by the Ethics Committee and as decided by the Disciplinary and/or Disciplinary Appeals Committee, may include (but are not limited to):

1. resubmission of an assignment or academic work
2. a failing grade for the examination or specific assigned exercise; or a failing grade for the course as a whole, depending on the importance of the work to the overall course grade
3. a letter of reprimand, issued by the chair of the Disciplinary Committee, which may or may not be recorded on the scholar's file
4. suspension from the programme
5. suspension of grant/contract

Any sanctions, or decisions not to resort to them, are without prejudice to the academic assessment of a researcher's paper by the Department in question, and to the decisions by the committee.

  
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