VELS INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS),
Velan Nagar, P.V. Vaithiyalingam Road,
Pallavaram, Chennai – 600 117.

CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR STUDENTS

The purpose of the code of conduct is to define and promote crucial ethical principles important and relevant to the organization whereby identifies and disallows aspects of behavior that summons legal liability. This code of conduct and ethics prepared for the students of Vels Institute of Science, Technology, and Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Chennai, Tamil Nadu highlights the best practices to be adopted by the students and also the worst practices to be abhorred by them as well.

1. Preamble

Vels Institute of Science, Technology, and Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Chennai, Tamil Nadu (hereinafter referred to as the 'university') outlines the standard procedures and practices for all students enrolling with the university for pursuing varied courses. All students must know that it is incumbent upon them to abide by this code of conduct and ethics (hereinafter referred to as the 'code') and the rights, and responsibilities including the restrictions flowing from it. The university's endeavor through enforcing this code is to pioneer and administer a student discipline process that is egalitarian, conscientious, powerful, expeditious, and provides a system that promotes student growth through individual and collective responsibility. All students are requested to be well conversant with this code, which can be also reviewed on the official website of the university.

2. Jurisdiction

2.1. The university shall have jurisdiction over the conduct of the students associated /enrolled with the university and take cognizance of all acts of misconduct, including incidents of ragging or otherwise which are taking place on the campus or in connection with the related activities and functions.

2.2. The university may also exercise jurisdiction over conduct which occurs off-campus violating the ideal student conduct and discipline as laid down in this policy and other regulations as if the conduct has occurred on campus, which shall include:

a) Any violations of the sexual harassment policy of the university against other students of the university.
b) Physical assault, threats of violence, or conduct that threatens the health or safety of any person including other students of the university;
c) Possession or use of weapons, explosives, or destructive devices off/on campus
d) Manufacture, sale, or distribution of prohibited articles, drugs, alcohol, etc.

e) Conduct that has a negative impact or constitutes a nuisance to members of the surrounding of the off-campus community.

The university, while determining whether or not to exercise such off-campus jurisdiction in situations enumerated herein above, the university shall consider the seriousness of the alleged offense, the risk of harm involved, whether the victim(s) are members of the campus community and/or whether the off-campus conduct is part of a series of actions, which occurred both on, and off-campus.

3. **Conduct and Ethics**

3.1. This code shall apply to all kinds of conduct of students that occur on the university premises, including in university sponsored activities, functions hosted by other recognized student organizations, and any off-campus conduct that has or may have serious consequences or adverse impact on the university's interests or reputation.

3.2. Each student must accept that,

a) He/she shall be regular and must complete his/her studies in the university.
b) He/she shall adhere to the dress code of the university.
c) He/she shall mandatorily have the minimum required attendance as prescribed by the university.
d) He/she shall not misuse electronic gadgets and cell phones during class hours.
e) In the event a student is forced to discontinue studies for any legitimate reason, such a student may be relieved from the university subject to the recommendation of the discipline committee.
f) As a result of such relieving, the student shall be required to clear the pending hostel and any other dues, and if a student had joined the university on a scholarship, the said grant should be revoked.

3.3. The university believes in promoting a safe and efficient climate by enforcing behavioral standards. All students must uphold academic Integrity, respect all persons and their rights and property and others' safety, etc.

3.4. All students must deter from indulging in any and all forms of misconduct, including partaking in any activity off-campus which can affect the university's interests and reputation substantially.

3.5. The various forms of misconduct include:

a) Any act of discrimination (physical or verbal conduct) based on an individual's gender, caste, race, religion or religious beliefs, colour, region, language, disability, or sexual orientation, marital or family status, physical or mental disability, gender identity, etc.
b) Intentionally damaging or destroying university property or property of other students and/or faculty members.
c) Any disruptive activity in a classroom or in an event sponsored by the university.
d) Unable to produce the identity card, issued by the university, or refusing to produce it on demand by campus security guards.
e) Participating in activities including:
    i. Organizing meetings and processions without permission from the university.
    ii. Accepting membership of religious or terrorist groups banned by the government of India.
    iii. Unauthorized possession, carrying or use of any weapon, ammunition, explosives, or potential weapons, fireworks, contrary to law or policy.
    iv. Unauthorized possession or use of harmful chemicals and banned drugs.
    v. Smoking on the campus of the university.
    vi. Possessing, consuming, distributing, and selling of alcohol in the university and/or throwing empty bottles on the campus.
    vii. Parking a vehicle in a no-parking zone or in an area earmarked for parking another type of vehicle.
    viii. Rash driving on the campus that may cause any inconvenience to others.
    ix. Not disclosing a pre-existing health condition, either physical or psychological, to the Registrar which may cause hindrance to the academic progress.
    x. Theft or unauthorized access to others resources.
    xi. Engaging in disorderly, lewd, or indecent conduct, including, but not limited to, creating unreasonable noise, pushing and shoving; inciting or participating in a riot or group disruption at the university.

3.6. Students are expected not to interact, on behalf of the university, with media representatives or invite media persons onto the campus without the university authorities permission.

3.7. Students cannot provide audio and video clippings of any activity on the campus to media without prior permission.

3.8. Students are expected to use social media carefully and responsibly, meaning that that they cannot post derogatory comments about other individuals from the university on the social media or indulging in any such related activities having grave ramifications on the reputation of the university.

3.9. Theft or abuse of the university computers and other electronic resources such as computer and electronic communications facilities, systems, and services which includes unauthorized entry, use, tamper, etc. of university property or facilities, private residences of staff/professors etc. offices, classrooms, computers networks, and other restricted facilities and interference with the work of others is punishable.

3.10. Damage to, or destruction of, any property of the university, or any property of others on the university premises.

3.11. Making a video/audio recording, taking photographs, or streaming audio/video of any person in a location where the person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, without that person's knowledge and express consent.

3.12. Indulging in any form of harassment which is defined as conduct that is severe and objectively, motivated based on a person's race, color, national or ethnic origin, citizenship, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, marital status, ancestry, physical or mental disability, medical condition.

3.13 Where a First Information Report (FIR) is registered against a student in connection with an alleged offence of such a nature that it brings, or is likely to bring, disrepute to the Institution or adversely affects its reputation, discipline, or academic environment, the Institution reserves the right to initiate disciplinary proceedings. Based on the gravity of the allegations, the nature of the offence, and the outcome of such proceedings, the student may be suspended or expelled from the Institution, in accordance with the applicable rules.

4. Disciplinary procedure

If there is a case against a student for a possible breach of code of conduct, then a standing investigating committee will be formed to recommend a suitable disciplinary action who shall inquire into the alleged violation and accordingly suggest the action to be taken against the said student. The committee may meet with the student to ascertain the misconduct and suggest one or more of the following disciplinary actions based on the nature of the misconduct,

4.1. **Warning:** Indicating that the action of the said delinquent student was in violation of the code and any further acts of misconduct shall result in severe disciplinary action.

4.2. **Restrictions**: Reprimanding and restricting access to various facilities on the campus

for a specified period of time.

4.3. **Community service:** For a specified period of time to be extended if need be. However, any future misconduct along with failure to comply with any conditions imposed may lead to severe disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion.

4.4. **Suspension:** A student may be suspended for a specified period of time which will entail prohibition on participating in student related activities, classes, programs etc. Additionally, the student will be forbidden to use various university facilities unless permission is obtained from the competent authority. Suspension may also follow by possible dismissal, along with the following additional penalties.

4.5. **Expulsion:** Expulsion of a student from the university permanently. Indicating prohibition from entering the university premises or participating in any student related activities or campus residences etc.

4.6. Ineligibility to reapply for admission to the university for a period of three years, and

4.7. Withholding the grade card or certificate for the courses studied or work carried out.

5. Appeal

If the delinquent student is aggrieved by the imposition of any of the aforementioned penalties, he/she may appeal to the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor may decide on one of the following:

5.1. Accept the recommendation of the committee and impose the punishment as suggested by the committee or modify and impose any of the punishments a as stipulated in this code which is commensurate with the gravity of the proved misconduct, or

5.2. Refer the case back to the investigating committee for reconsideration. In any case the Vice-Chancellor's decision is final and binding in all the cases where there is a possible misconduct by a student.

6. Academic Integrity

As a premier university, the university values academic integrity. It is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic itegrity encompasses honesty and responsibility, and awareness relating to ethical standards for the conduct of research and scholarship. The university believes that in all academic work, others' ideas and contributions must be appropriately acknowledged. Academic integrity is essential for the university's success, and its research missions, and hence, violations of academic integrity constitute a serious offense.

6.1. **Scope and Purpose**

a) This policy on academic integrity, which forms an integral part of the code, applies to all students at the university and are required to adhere to the said policy. The purpose of the policy is twofold:
   i. To clarify the principles of academic integrity, and
   ii. To provide examples of dishonest conduct and violations of academic integrity.

NOTE: These examples are only illustrative, NOT exhaustive.

b) Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the university and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the university community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

c) The principles of academic integrity require that a student,
   i. Properly acknowledges and cites use of the ideas, results, material or words of others.
   ii. Properly acknowledges all contributors to a given piece of work.
   iii. Makes sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
   iv. Obtains all data or results by ethical means and reports them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
   v. Treats all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitates academic dishonesty by others nor obstructs their academic progress.

6.2. Violations of this policy include, but are not limited to:

a) Plagiarism means the use of material, ideas, figures, code or data as one's own, without appropriately acknowledging the original source. This may involve submission of material, verbatim or paraphrased, that is authored by another person or published earlier by oneself.

Examples of plagiarism include:

   i. Reproducing, in whole or part, text/sentences from a report, book, thesis, publication or the internet.

ii. Reproducing one's own previously published data, illustrations, figures, images, or someone else's data, etc.

iii. Taking material from class-notes or incorporating material from the internet graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other non-textual material from other sources into one's class reports, presentations, manuscripts, research papers or thesis without proper attribution.

iv. Self plagiarism which constitutes copying verbatim from one's own earlier published work in a journal or conference proceedings without appropriate citations.

v. Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.

vi. Paraphrasing or changing an author's words or style without citation.

b) Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

i. Copying during examinations, and copying of homework assignments, term papers, theses or manuscripts.

ii. Allowing or facilitating copying, or writing a report or taking the examination for someone else.

iii. Using unauthorized material, copying, collaborating when not authorized, and purchasing or borrowing papers or material from various sources.

iv. Fabricating (making up) or falsifying (manipulating) data and reporting them in thesis and publications.

v. Creating sources, or citations that do not exist.

vi. Altering previously evaluated and re-submitting the work for re-evaluation.

vii. Signing another student's name on an assignment, report, research paper, thesis or attendance sheet.

c) **Conflict of Interest:** A clash of personal or private interests with professional activities can lead to a potential conflict of interest, in diverse activities such as teaching, research, publication, working on committees, research funding and consultancy. It is necessary to protect actual professional independence, objectivity and commitment, and also to avoid an appearance of any impropriety arising from conflicts of interest.

Conflict of interest is not restricted to personal financial gain; it extends to a large gamut of professional academic activities including peer reviewing, serving on

various committees, which may, for example, oversee funding or give recognition, as well as influencing public policy.

To promote transparency and enhance credibility, potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed in writing to appropriate authorities, so that a considered decision can be made on a case-by-case basis. Some additional information is available also in the section below dealing with resources.

6.3. Guidelines for academic conduct are provided below to guard against negligence as well as deliberate dishonesty:

a) Use proper methodology for experiments and computational work. Accurately describe and compile data.

b) Carefully record and save primary and secondary data such as original pictures, instrument data readouts, laboratory notebooks, and computer folders. There should be minimal digital manipulation of images/photos; the original version should be saved for later scrutiny, if required, and the changes made should be clearly described.

c) Ensure robust reproducibility and statistical analysis of experiments and simulations. It is important to be truthful about the data and not to omit some data points to make an impressive figure (commonly known as “cherry picking”).

d) Laboratory notes must be well maintained in bound notebooks with printed page numbers to enable checking later during publications or patenting. The date should be indicated on each page.

e) Write clearly in your own words. It is necessary to resist the temptation to “copy and paste” from the internet or other sources for class assignments, manuscripts, and thesis.

f) Give due credit to previous reports, methods, computer programs, etc. with appropriate citations. Material taken from your own published work should also be cited; as mentioned above, it will be considered self-plagiarism otherwise.

6.4. **Individual and Collective Responsibility:** The responsibility varies with the role one plays.

a) **Student roles:** Before submitting a thesis (PG or PhD) to the department, the student is responsible for checking the thesis for plagiarism using software that is available on the web (see resources below). In addition, the student should undertake that he/she is aware of the academic guidelines of the university, has checked the document for plagiarism, and that the thesis is original work. A web

check does not necessarily rule out plagiarism. If a student observes or becomes aware of any violations of the academic integrity policy, he/she is strongly encouraged to report the misconduct in a timely manner.

b) **Faculty roles:** Faculty members should ensure that proper methods are followed for experiments, computations, and theoretical developments and that data are properly recorded and saved for future reference. In addition, they should review manuscripts and theses carefully. Faculty members are also responsible for ensuring personal compliance with the above broad issues relating to academic integrity. Faculty members are expected to inform students of the university's academic integrity policy within their specific courses, to ensure minimal academic dishonesty, and to respond appropriately and timely to violations of academic integrity.

c) **University roles:** A breach of academic integrity is a serious offence with long lasting consequences for both the individual and the university, and this can lead to various sanctions. In the case of a student, the first violation of academic breach will lead to a warning and/or an "F" course grade. A repeat offence, if deemed sufficiently serious, could lead to expulsion. It is recommended that faculty bring any academic violations to the notice of the department chairperson. Upon receipt of reports of scientific misconduct, the Vice-Chancellor may appoint a committee to investigate the matter and suggest appropriate measures on a case-by-case basis.

7. **Anti-Ragging**

The university has a coherent and an effective anti-ragging policy in place which is based on the 'UGC regulation on curbing the menace of ragging in higher educational institutions, 2009 and its subsequent amendments [hereinafter referred to as the 'UGC Regulations']'. The UGC regulations have been framed in view of the directions issued by the Hon'ble supreme court of India to prevent and prohibit ragging in all Indian educational institutions and universities. The said UGC regulations shall apply mutatis mutandis to the university and the students are requested kindly to adhere.

7.1. Ragging constitutes one or more of the following acts:

a) Any conduct by any student or students whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness any student.

b) Indulging in rowdy or undisciplined activities by any student or students which

causes or is likely to cause annoyance, hardship, physical or psychological harm or to raise fear or apprehension thereof in any other student.

c) Asking any student to do any act which such student will not in the ordinary course do and which has the effect of causing or generating a sense of shame, or torment or embarrassment so as to adversely affect the physique or psyche of such a student.
d) Any act by a senior student that prevents, disrupts or disturbs the regular academic activity of any student.
e) Exploiting the services of a student for completing the academic tasks assigned to an individual or a group of students.
f) Any act of financial extortion or forceful expenditure burden put on a student by other students.
g) Any act of physical abuse including all variants of it: sexual abuse, stripping, forcing obscene and lewd acts, gestures, causing bodily harm or any other danger to health or person.
h) Any act or abuse by spoken words, emails, post, public insults which would also include deriving perverted pleasure, vicarious or sadistic thrill from actively or passively participating in the discomfiture to any other student.
i) Any act that affects the mental health and self-confidence of any other student with or without an intent to derive a sadistic pleasure or showing off power, authority or superiority by a student over any other student.

7.2. **Anti-Ragging Committee**

The anti-ragging committee, as constituted by the Vice-Chancellor and headed by student affairs advisors shall examine all complaints of anti-ragging and come out with recommendation based on the nature of the incident. The committee shall be headed by student affairs advisors, and can have as its members, the deans, student counselors, faculty advisors, chairperson of the concerned department.

7.3. Anti-Ragging Squad

To render assistance to students, an anti-Ragging Squad, which is a smaller body, has also been constituted consisting of various members of the campus community. The said squad shall keep a vigil on ragging incidents taking place in the community and undertake patrolling functions. Students may note that the squad is active and alert at all times and are empowered to inspect places of potential ragging, and also make surprise raids in hostels and other hotspots in the university. The squad can also investigate incidents of ragging and make recommendations to the anti-ragging committee and shall work under

the guidance of the anti-ragging committee.

7.4. A student found guilty by the committee will attract one or more of the following punishments, as imposed by the anti-ragging committee:

a) Suspension from attending classes and academic privileges.
b) Withholding/ withdrawing scholarship/ fellowship and other benefits.
c) Debarring from appearing in any test/ examination or other evaluation process.
d) Withholding results.
e) Debarring from undertaking any collaborative work or attending national or international conferences/symposia/meeting to present his/her research work.
f) Suspension/ expulsion from the hostels and mess.
g) Cancellation of admission.
h) Expulsion from the university and consequent debarring from admission to any other university for a specified period.
i) In cases where the persons committing or abetting the act of ragging are not identified, the university shall resort to collective punishment.
j) If need be, in view of the intensity of the act of ragging committed, a first information report (FIR) shall be filed by the university with the local police authorities.

The anti-ragging committee of the university shall take appropriate decision, including imposition of punishment, depending on the facts and circumstances of each incident of ragging and nature and gravity of the incident of ragging.

7.5. An appeal against the any of the orders of punishment enumerated hereinabove shall lie to the Vice-Chancellor.

8. **Sexual Harassment**

The university policy on prevention and prohibition of sexual harassment at workplace, shall also apply to the students of the university. students should note that sexual misconduct or harassment encompasses a range of conduct, including but not limited to sexual assault, unwanted touching or persistent unwelcome comments, e-mails, or pictures of an insulting or degrading sexual nature, which may constitute harassment, which shall depend of the circumstances of each case.

9. Student Grievance Procedure

Any student of the university aggrieved by any acts of sexual harassment, misconduct

or ragging as defined and summarised hereinabove can approach the student grievance redressal cell at the university. Further, any student who is aware of any violations must report the same to the cell. The cell shall consist of members as appointed by the Vice-Chancellor. Said grievance must be in writing and should be made within 60 days from the day of the alleged violation. The cell shall take cognizance of the grievance and inform the committee formed to enforce this code or the internal complaints committee, in cases of any sexual harassment complaints.

10. **Student Participation in Governance**

As students are members of the university campus, they have a substantial interest in the governance of the university. The code, ethics, policies, and the varied procedures laid down herein intends that the principle of student involvement in governance in both administrative and academic areas is essential and it is pivotal that students must be, at all junctures, be encouraged to put forth their views and advice, for an informed decision making. Student participation is encouraged and must be strengthened through the involvement of students in all levels. Therefore, all students who are a part of the university and who are going to be enrolled in the university are advised to uphold the policy and inform the university of any violations and assist individually and collectively to improve the quality and effectiveness of this code and appended policies.

11. Amendment

The university shall amend any provision contained in this code prospectively. No amendment shall be deemed effective unless approved by the board of management of the university by a resolution.

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