VELS

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS)

(Deemed to be University Estd. u/s 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)

PALLAVARAM, CHENNAI – 600 117, INDIA

INTEGRITY • RESPONSIBILITY • TRANSPARENCY • EXCELLENCE

POLICY MANUAL ON ETHICS (CODE OF ETHICS) 2025

COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL EXCELLENCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- INTEGRITY
- RESPECT
- ACCOUNTABILITY
- TRANSPARENCY
- RESPONSIBILITY
- EXCELLENCE



UGC COMPLIANT | NEP 2020 ALIGNED | NAAC QUALITY FRAMEWORK | IQAC DRIVEN | NIRF COMPLIANT | QS QUALITY FRAMEWORK

ETHICS IN ACTION
Building Trust. Ensuring Fairness. Inspiring Excellence.

VALUES | ETHICS | EXCELLENCE
TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE

GLOBAL VISION
LOCAL RESPONSIBILITY
SUSTAINABLE IMPACT



INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS)
(Deemed to be University Estd. u/s 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)
PALLAVARAM, THALAMBUR, PERIYAPALAYAM-CHENNAI
ACCREDITED BY NAAC WITH A++ GRADE

Policy Manual on University Ethics

(Code of Ethics)

1. Ethical Pledge

All members of the VISTAS community pledge to:

"*Uphold integrity, fairness and respect in all academic, research, digital and administrative activities ; protect the dignity and rights of all persons;use knowledge, technology and AI responsibly; and contribute to the sustainable and ethical development of society*."

2.Message from the Vice-Chancellor

Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS), a NAAC A++ Category-I deemed-to-be university, is committed to promoting the highest standards of academic excellence, research integrity and institutional governance in alignment with national and global quality benchmarks. The University Ethics Committee (UEC) Policy Manual articulates our collective responsibility to uphold ethical conduct in teaching-learning, research, publications, examinations, digital learning and administration.

This policy manual has been developed with reference to regulations and guidelines of the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Department of Science & Technology (DST), Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), and emerging Responsible AI frameworks. It provides a governance framework for academic integrity, responsible research and ethical decision-making across all Schools, Departments and Centres of VISTAS.

3.Preface

Ethical conduct is the foundation of trust, reputation and social impact in higher education institutions. VISTAS recognizes that the complexity of contemporary teaching, research and digital ecosystems requires a clear, comprehensive and operational ethics framework. This University Ethics Committee (UEC) Policy Manual consolidates various ethical expectations, codes of conduct, standard operating procedures and complaint-handling mechanisms into a single reference document for all stakeholders.

The manual has been structured to be compatible with UGC's Good Academic Research Practices (GARP), UGC CARE recommendations, NAAC Criterion VII

(Institutional Values & Best Practices), AICTE Examination Reforms, NEP 2020 perspectives on quality, equity and inclusion, and ICMR/DST/CSIR ethics guidelines. It also integrates Responsible AI and Digital Ethics provisions to address emerging challenges in artificial intelligence, online learning, social media usage and data protection.

4. About VISTAS

4.1 Vision

To be a globally recognized, innovation-driven deemed-to-be university fostering excellence in teaching, research and societal engagement, grounded in ethical values and sustainable development principles.

4.2 Mission

- To provide inclusive and quality higher education across diverse disciplines.
- To nurture competent professionals with strong ethical foundations and social responsibility.
- To promote interdisciplinary research, innovation and entrepreneurship aligned with national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- To strengthen community engagement and institutional governance through transparency and accountability.

4.3 Core Values

Illustrative core values:

- Integrity and honesty in all academic and administrative activities.
- Respect for human dignity, diversity and inclusion.
- Academic freedom with responsibility, accountability and collegiality.
- Excellence in teaching, learning and research.
- Sustainability, social justice and community engagement.

4.4 Institutional Philosophy

VISTAS adopts a learner-centric, research-oriented and socially responsive philosophy that places ethics at the heart of institutional decision-making. Ethical considerations guide curriculum design, research priorities, community projects, partnerships, and digital transformations, ensuring alignment with NEP 2020, SDGs and national development agendas.

4.5 Overview

The University Policy Manual on Ethics (Code of Ethics) serves as the official institutional framework for promoting, implementing, and sustaining ethical governance across all academic, administrative, professional, and institutional activities of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS). The manual establishes a comprehensive system of ethical principles, policies, procedures, and accountability mechanisms designed to foster a culture of integrity, transparency, responsibility, fairness, inclusiveness, and excellence throughout the University.

Ethics is fundamental to the functioning of every higher education institution. As universities continue to evolve in response to technological advancements, globalization, interdisciplinary education, research innovation, and societal expectations, there is an increasing need for a structured ethical governance framework that guides decision-making and ensures responsible institutional conduct. This manual provides such a framework by integrating ethical values into teaching, learning, student development, academic administration, digital governance, community engagement, environmental sustainability, and institutional management.

The manual has been developed in alignment with the principles and recommendations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), and internationally recognized best practices that contribute to institutional excellence and QS World University

Rankings. It also reflects the University's commitment to good governance, quality assurance, stakeholder welfare, continuous improvement, and sustainable institutional development.

The primary objective of this manual is to establish a common ethical framework applicable to all members of the University community, including students, faculty members, researchers, administrative staff, officers, statutory bodies, committees, consultants, alumni, and external stakeholders. The policies contained herein provide clear guidance on acceptable professional behaviour, ethical decision-making, institutional responsibilities, conflict resolution, confidentiality, accountability, compliance, and continuous quality enhancement.

The manual provides a structured approach to ethical governance through the establishment of the University Ethical Committee (Non-Research), which functions as the University's principal advisory and monitoring body for ethical matters relating to non-research academic and administrative activities. The Committee oversees policy implementation, ethical compliance, institutional monitoring, awareness programmes, capacity building, grievance review, risk management, and continuous evaluation of ethical practices across all Schools and Departments.

This manual also establishes comprehensive institutional policies relating to:

- Ethical governance and institutional leadership.
- Code of Ethics and professional conduct for faculty, students, administrators, and staff.
- Academic integrity, examination ethics, and anti-plagiarism practices.
- Student welfare, mentoring, counselling, and grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Faculty Development Programmes (FDP), Faculty Improvement Programmes (FIP), and professional ethics.
- Student upskilling, employability, innovation, entrepreneurship, internships, and career development.
- Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital technologies, cybersecurity, data privacy, and information security.

- Conflict of Interest (COI), transparency, confidentiality, and responsible decision-making.

- Gender equality, equal opportunity, diversity, inclusion, Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH), and human values.

- Laboratory safety, occupational health and safety, fire safety, biomedical waste management, disaster preparedness, and environmental protection.

- Green Campus initiatives, resource conservation, climate responsibility, and sustainable development.

- Community engagement, Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR), NSS activities, alumni engagement, and industry collaboration.

- Monitoring, internal audits, documentation, compliance verification, annual reporting, and continuous institutional improvement.

To ensure consistency in ethical decision-making, the manual prescribes standard operating procedures for ethical review, risk assessment, policy implementation, documentation, monitoring, Action Taken Reports (ATR), and periodic review. These procedures enable the University to identify ethical risks, implement preventive and corrective measures, strengthen institutional governance, and ensure compliance with statutory regulations and accreditation requirements.

Recognizing the growing role of digital transformation in higher education, the manual incorporates provisions relating to Digital Ethics, Responsible Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Data Protection, and Information Privacy. These policies promote the ethical use of emerging technologies while safeguarding the rights, privacy, dignity, and security of all stakeholders.

The manual further emphasizes the importance of continuous education and awareness by recommending periodic orientation programmes, workshops, seminars, faculty development initiatives, student awareness campaigns, leadership training, and ethics certification programmes. Such initiatives are intended to strengthen ethical competence, institutional accountability, and responsible citizenship throughout the University community.

The University recognizes that ethical governance is a dynamic and evolving process. Accordingly, this manual provides mechanisms for periodic review, stakeholder feedback, policy revision, performance monitoring, and continual improvement to ensure that institutional practices remain aligned with changing regulatory requirements, technological developments, societal expectations, and international standards of higher education.

Ultimately, this Policy Manual is intended to serve not merely as a regulatory document but as a guiding framework that supports the University's vision of becoming a globally recognized institution distinguished by academic excellence, ethical leadership, innovation, inclusiveness, sustainability, and social responsibility. Through the collective commitment of all stakeholders, the University seeks to nurture an institutional culture where ethical values guide every decision, every action, and every aspect of academic and administrative life.

4.6. Objectives

The University Policy Manual on Ethics (Code of Ethics) is designed to establish a comprehensive ethical governance framework that promotes integrity, transparency, accountability, professionalism, and responsible conduct across all academic, administrative, and institutional activities of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS). The objectives of this policy are to cultivate an ethical institutional culture that supports academic excellence, quality assurance, stakeholder confidence, and sustainable institutional development.

The specific objectives of this Policy Manual are:

1. To establish a comprehensive ethical governance framework that guides ethical decision-making, institutional accountability, and responsible conduct in all non-research academic and administrative activities.

2. To promote a culture of integrity, honesty, fairness, transparency, and professionalism among students, faculty members, administrative staff, officers, and all other stakeholders of the University.

3. To define a common Code of Ethics that outlines the expected standards of professional behaviour, ethical responsibilities, and institutional values applicable to every member of the University community.

4. To strengthen institutional governance through clearly defined ethical policies, standard operating procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and evidence-based decision-making.

5. To ensure compliance with national regulatory requirements and quality assurance frameworks, including the guidelines and recommendations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), while supporting continuous institutional improvement and international benchmarks such as the QS World University Rankings.

6. To uphold academic integrity by promoting honesty in teaching, learning, assessment, examinations, publications, and scholarly activities, while preventing plagiarism, academic misconduct, fabrication, falsification, and unethical academic practices.

7. To promote responsible leadership and institutional accountability by ensuring ethical behaviour, transparency, fairness, and impartiality in academic administration, governance, financial management, and decision-making processes.

8. To strengthen faculty development and professional excellence by encouraging continuous learning through Faculty Development Programmes (FDP), Faculty Improvement Programmes (FIP), ethical teaching practices, leadership development, and professional competency enhancement.

9. To support student development and employability by promoting ethical values, life skills, innovation, entrepreneurship, mentoring, career guidance, internships, value-added programmes, and responsible professional conduct.

10. To provide a fair, transparent, and confidential grievance redressal mechanism that enables timely resolution of ethical concerns, complaints, and institutional grievances while protecting the rights and dignity of all stakeholders.

11. To promote equality, diversity, inclusion, and respect for human dignity by encouraging gender equality, equal opportunity, prevention of discrimination, prevention of sexual harassment (POSH), accessibility, and inclusive educational practices.

12. To ensure responsible use of digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) by establishing ethical guidelines relating to cybersecurity, information security, data privacy, digital governance, AI-assisted learning, and responsible use of emerging technologies.

13. To strengthen environmental responsibility and sustainable development by promoting Green Campus initiatives, energy conservation, water conservation, waste management, climate responsibility, biodiversity protection, and environmentally sustainable institutional practices.

14. To enhance institutional safety and wellbeing by promoting laboratory safety, occupational health and safety, fire safety, emergency preparedness, biomedical waste management, counselling services, mental health support, and student welfare initiatives.

15. To encourage community engagement and institutional social responsibility through extension activities, National Service Scheme (NSS) programmes, outreach initiatives, alumni engagement, industry collaboration, and socially responsible institutional practices.

16. To establish an effective system for ethical monitoring and compliance through periodic reviews, audits, inspections, Action Taken Reports (ATR), documentation, risk assessment, and continuous evaluation of institutional practices.

17. To promote awareness and capacity building by organizing orientation programmes, workshops, seminars, faculty development initiatives, ethics awareness campaigns, and continuous professional education on ethical issues relevant to higher education.

18. To support evidence-based quality enhancement by maintaining systematic documentation, institutional records, compliance reports, and best practices that facilitate accreditation, statutory inspections, quality audits, and institutional benchmarking.

19. To strengthen stakeholder confidence by ensuring that all institutional activities are conducted with fairness, transparency, confidentiality, accountability, and respect for ethical principles.

20. To foster a culture of continuous improvement through periodic review of ethical policies, stakeholder feedback, policy revisions, and implementation of corrective and preventive actions that contribute to institutional excellence, innovation, sustainability, and global competitiveness.

4.7 Institutional Commitment

Through this Policy Manual, VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) reaffirms its commitment to maintaining the highest standards of ethical governance, academic integrity, professional conduct, and social responsibility. The University recognizes that ethical values are fundamental to achieving excellence in teaching, learning, administration, innovation, research support, community engagement, and institutional leadership. By adhering to these objectives, the University aims to create a safe, inclusive, transparent, and accountable academic environment that prepares responsible graduates and contributes meaningfully to society while advancing its national and international standing.

4.8 Scope

The University Policy Manual on Ethics (Code of Ethics) establishes a comprehensive framework for promoting ethical governance, professional integrity, transparency, accountability, fairness, and responsible conduct across all academic, administrative, and institutional activities of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS). The scope of this policy extends to every member of the University community and covers all non-research activities undertaken within the University and its affiliated campuses, centres, and administrative units.

This Policy Manual serves as the guiding document for ethical behaviour, institutional governance, and decision-making, ensuring that all stakeholders uphold the University's values while complying with applicable statutory regulations, quality assurance requirements, and national and international best practices.

4.9. Applicability

This Policy Manual applies to all stakeholders associated with the University, including but not limited to:

- Members of the Board of Management, Academic Council, statutory authorities, and other University committees.
- Members of the University Ethical Committee (Non-Research).
- Faculty members, Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Adjunct Faculty, Visiting Faculty, and Guest Faculty.
- Administrative officers, non-teaching staff, technical staff, laboratory personnel, and contractual employees.
- Undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, doctoral, and post-doctoral students.
- Research scholars, where activities relate to institutional ethics outside the scope of research ethics.
- Consultants, advisors, experts, external examiners, auditors, and resource persons associated with the University.
- Alumni participating in academic, mentoring, consultancy, entrepreneurship, or institutional development activities.
- Industry partners, collaborating institutions, service providers, vendors, contractors, and other external stakeholders engaged in University-related activities.

Every individual associated with the University is expected to understand, comply with, and promote the ethical standards outlined in this Policy Manual.

5. Institutional Scope

The provisions of this Policy Manual shall apply to all academic, administrative, and support units of the University, including:

- All Schools, Departments, Centres, and Institutes.
- Administrative Offices and University Governance Bodies.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC).

- Examination Cell.
- Human Resource and Administration.
- Finance and Accounts.
- Library and Learning Resource Centre.
- Information Technology Services.
- Student Affairs and Student Support Services.
- Placement and Career Development Cell.
- Entrepreneurship Development Cell.
- Innovation and Incubation Centres.
- Alumni Relations Cell.
- NSS, NCC, YRC, and other extension units.
- Equal Opportunity Cell.
- Internal Committee (POSH).
- Anti-Ragging Committee.
- Grievance Redressal Cell.
- Safety, Security, and Environmental Management Units.
- All University-approved academic, training, and outreach programmes.

6. Functional Scope

This Policy Manual governs ethical conduct in all non-research institutional activities, including:

6.1 Academic Activities

- Teaching and learning processes.
- Curriculum planning and implementation.
- Classroom management.
- Student assessment and evaluation.
- Examination processes.
- Academic advising and mentoring.
- Faculty development programmes.
- Student development initiatives.
- Academic administration.
- Academic collaborations and partnerships.

6.2. Administrative Activities

- Institutional governance.
- Policy formulation and implementation.
- Human resource management.
- Financial management.
- Procurement and resource utilization.
- Documentation and record management.
- Committee functioning.
- Decision-making processes.
- Institutional communication.

- Strategic planning and quality assurance.

6.3.Student Support Services

The policy applies to all student-centric services including:

- Mentoring and counselling.
- Student grievance redressal.
- Career guidance.
- Placement support.
- Student welfare programmes.
- Scholarships and financial assistance.
- Internship facilitation.
- Skill development initiatives.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation support.
- Equal opportunity and inclusive education.

6.4.Professional Conduct

The Policy Manual governs ethical behaviour relating to:

- Professional relationships.
- Workplace conduct.
- Respectful communication.
- Confidentiality.
- Conflict of interest.

- Responsible leadership.
- Accountability.
- Transparency.
- Teamwork.
- Respect for diversity and inclusiveness.

6.5.Digital Governance

The policy also extends to:

- Responsible use of Information Technology.
- Digital communication.
- Cybersecurity.
- Data protection.
- Privacy and confidentiality.
- Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Digital learning platforms.
- Online examinations.
- Learning Management Systems (LMS).
- Institutional digital resources.

6.6.Campus Safety and Environmental Responsibility

The scope includes ethical practices related to:

- Laboratory safety.

- Fire safety.
- Electrical safety.
- Occupational health and safety.
- Biomedical waste management.
- Disaster preparedness.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Green Campus initiatives.
- Resource conservation.
- Waste management.
- Climate responsibility.

6.7.Community Engagement

The Policy Manual also governs ethical practices associated with:

- National Service Scheme (NSS).
- Extension activities.
- Community outreach programmes.
- Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR).
- Alumni engagement.
- Industry collaboration.
- Social welfare initiatives.
- Public awareness programmes.

- Volunteer services.

8.Ethical Governance Areas

The University Ethical Committee shall oversee ethical governance relating to:

- Institutional ethics and governance.
- Academic integrity.
- Professional ethics.
- Student welfare and wellbeing.
- Faculty ethics.
- Administrative ethics.
- Digital ethics.
- Artificial Intelligence governance.
- Data privacy and cybersecurity.
- Gender equality and equal opportunity.
- Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH).
- Human values and inclusiveness.
- Environmental ethics.
- Institutional social responsibility.
- Transparency and accountability.
- Ethical leadership.
- Continuous quality improvement.

9. Exclusions

While this Policy Manual provides a comprehensive framework for ethical governance in non-research activities, the following matters shall be governed by their respective institutional policies or statutory committees:

- Biomedical, clinical, animal, and human participant research requiring Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) approval.
- Research misconduct investigations handled by the Office of Research Integrity or Research Ethics Committee.
- Financial audits conducted under statutory financial regulations.
- Service rules and disciplinary proceedings governed by University service regulations.
- Legal matters falling within the jurisdiction of courts or statutory authorities.
- Matters specifically governed by UGC, PCI, AICTE, BCI, NMC, AIU, Government of India, or State Government regulations where separate statutory procedures are prescribed.

10. Alignment with National and International Frameworks

This Policy Manual has been developed to support institutional excellence and is aligned with the principles, recommendations, and quality indicators of:

- University Grants Commission (UGC)
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- National and international best practices in higher education governance
- Principles supporting the QS World University Rankings, including governance, academic reputation, stakeholder engagement, sustainability, ethics, and institutional quality.

Institutional Commitment

The University recognizes that ethical governance is a shared responsibility. Every stakeholder is expected to uphold the principles outlined in this Policy Manual and actively contribute to creating an academic environment characterized by integrity, fairness, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, professionalism, respect for human dignity, environmental responsibility, and continuous quality improvement. The scope of this manual is therefore intended not only to regulate institutional conduct but also to foster an enduring culture of ethical excellence that supports the University's mission, vision, and long-term strategic goals.

Committee Composition

Constitution of the University Ethical Committee (Non-Research)

The University Ethical Committee (Non-Research) is constituted by the Competent Authority of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) to provide strategic direction, oversight, and guidance on ethical governance in all non-research academic and administrative activities of the University. The Committee functions as an institutional advisory and monitoring body to promote ethical values, integrity, transparency, accountability, fairness, inclusiveness, and responsible decision-making.

The Committee adopts a multidisciplinary approach by bringing together senior academic leaders, administrative officers, faculty representatives, external experts, and other stakeholders. This diverse composition ensures balanced decision-making, objective evaluation of ethical issues, and effective implementation of institutional policies.

The constitution of the Committee is designed to support ethical governance, quality assurance, stakeholder welfare, institutional compliance, and continuous improvement in alignment with national regulatory requirements and global best practices.

Composition of the Committee

The University Ethical Committee (Non-Research) shall consist of the following members:

Sl. No.	Position	Role
1	Vice-Chancellor (FAC)	Patron
2	Registrar	Chairperson
3	Professor, Department of Management Studies	Member Secretary
4	Controller of Examinations	Nodal Officer
5	Dean, School of Legal Studies	Member
6	Finance Officer	Member
7	Director, School of Life Sciences	Member
8	Associate Professor & Head, School of Engineering	Member
9	Assistant Professor, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences	Member
10	Founder, Nobel Trust	External Expert
11	Founder, Victoria Dental Care	External Expert

The Chairperson may invite subject experts, Heads of Departments, legal professionals, industry experts, quality assurance specialists, healthcare professionals, or any other individual possessing relevant expertise as Special Invitees whenever their participation is required for deliberation on specific agenda items. Such invitees shall participate in discussions but shall not possess voting rights unless specifically authorized by the Competent Authority.

Guiding Principles for Committee Composition

The composition of the Committee has been designed to ensure:

- Multidisciplinary representation from academic and administrative units.
- Independent and objective decision-making.
- Inclusion of internal and external expertise.
- Fair representation of institutional stakeholders.
- Transparency and accountability in governance.
- Professional competence and ethical leadership.
- Compliance with statutory and institutional regulations.
- Continuous quality improvement through collaborative governance.

Tenure of the Committee

1. The Committee shall ordinarily function for a period of two academic years or until reconstituted by the Competent Authority.
2. Members may be reappointed based on institutional requirements, performance, and recommendations of the University administration.
3. In the event of resignation, retirement, transfer, or inability of a member to continue, the Competent Authority may nominate a replacement for the remaining tenure.
4. The University reserves the right to modify the composition of the Committee whenever necessary to meet statutory requirements or institutional priorities.

Quorum

The quorum for every meeting shall consist of:

- One-third of the total Committee strength or five members, whichever is higher.

- The presence of the Chairperson (or nominee) and the Member Secretary shall normally be required for conducting the meeting.
- In the absence of the Chairperson, a senior member nominated by the Chairperson may preside over the meeting.
- If the required quorum is not available, the meeting shall be adjourned and reconvened on a later date.

Frequency of Meetings

The University Ethical Committee shall ordinarily meet:

- At least once every month during the academic year.
- Additional meetings may be convened whenever urgent ethical matters require immediate consideration.
- Emergency meetings may be conducted with the approval of the Chairperson.

Roles and Responsibilities of Committee Members

Patron

The Patron shall:

- Provide strategic leadership and institutional guidance.
- Support implementation of ethical governance initiatives.
- Encourage adoption of best practices in ethics and quality assurance.
- Review major policy recommendations whenever necessary.
- Promote ethical culture across the University.

Chairperson

The Chairperson shall:

- Preside over Committee meetings.
- Approve agendas and meeting schedules.
- Ensure impartial, transparent, and evidence-based decision-making.
- Guide implementation of ethical policies and Committee resolutions.
- Monitor compliance with institutional regulations and statutory requirements.
- Review Action Taken Reports (ATR) and annual Committee reports.
- Represent the Committee before University authorities whenever required.

Member Secretary

The Member Secretary shall:

- Coordinate all Committee activities.
- Issue meeting notices, agendas, and circulars.
- Organize monthly Committee meetings.
- Prepare and record Minutes of Meetings.
- Maintain all official records and documentation.
- Monitor implementation of Committee decisions.
- Prepare Action Taken Reports (ATR).
- Coordinate with Schools, Departments, and administrative units.
- Prepare annual reports and compliance documentation.

Nodal Officer

The Nodal Officer shall:

- Facilitate coordination among academic and administrative departments.
- Monitor implementation of Committee recommendations.
- Review institutional compliance with ethical policies.
- Coordinate follow-up actions and progress reports.
- Assist during quality audits and institutional inspections.
- Submit periodic compliance reports to the Committee.

Internal Members

Internal Members shall:

- Participate actively in Committee meetings.
- Review agenda items objectively.
- Recommend policy improvements.
- Promote ethical practices within their Schools and Departments.
- Monitor implementation of Committee decisions.
- Participate in inspections, awareness programmes, workshops, and institutional reviews.
- Support institutional quality enhancement initiatives.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding Committee proceedings.

External Experts

External Experts shall:

- Provide independent professional opinions.
- Advise the Committee on ethical governance and institutional best practices.

- Ensure fairness, transparency, and objectivity in Committee deliberations.
- Recommend improvements based on national and international standards.
- Contribute specialized knowledge relevant to Committee discussions.

Collective Responsibilities of the Committee

The University Ethical Committee shall collectively:

- Promote ethical governance throughout the University.
- Review institutional policies relating to ethics and professional conduct.
- Promote Faculty Development Programmes (FDP) and Faculty Improvement Programmes (FIP).
- Encourage student upskilling, employability, entrepreneurship, innovation, and lifelong learning.
- Review Class Committee Meetings, Mentor–Mentee activities, and student academic progress.
- Monitor Online Grievance Redressal Systems and student support services.
- Promote laboratory safety, occupational health and safety, fire safety, biomedical waste management, and emergency preparedness.
- Strengthen academic integrity, examination ethics, responsible assessment practices, and anti-plagiarism initiatives.
- Promote gender equality, equal opportunity, diversity, inclusion, and prevention of sexual harassment (POSH).
- Review digital ethics, cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence governance, information security, and data privacy practices.
- Encourage environmental sustainability, Green Campus initiatives, resource conservation, and climate responsibility.

- Promote community engagement, NSS activities, institutional social responsibility, alumni engagement, and industry collaboration.
- Monitor institutional quality enhancement initiatives in collaboration with IQAC.
- Support institutional preparedness for accreditation, rankings, statutory inspections, and quality audits.
- Review ethical concerns, recommend corrective and preventive actions, and monitor implementation through periodic Action Taken Reports (ATR).
- Foster a culture of integrity, transparency, accountability, professionalism, and continuous improvement across all Schools and Departments.

Institutional Alignment

The composition and functioning of the University Ethical Committee have been designed to support institutional excellence by aligning with the principles and quality expectations of:

- University Grants Commission (UGC)
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- National and international best practices in ethical governance
- Institutional strategies contributing to the QS World University Rankings

The Committee functions as a central mechanism for promoting ethical governance, strengthening institutional quality, ensuring regulatory compliance, and fostering a culture of integrity and excellence throughout the University.

Guiding Ethical Principles

Introduction

Ethical principles form the foundation of effective governance, academic excellence, responsible leadership, and institutional credibility. VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering an environment where ethical values guide every academic, administrative, and professional activity. These principles serve as the cornerstone for decision-making, policy implementation, stakeholder engagement, and institutional development.

The University recognizes that ethical governance extends beyond regulatory compliance. It reflects a commitment to honesty, fairness, transparency, accountability, respect for human dignity, social responsibility, sustainability, and continuous improvement. These guiding principles are intended to promote a culture of trust, professionalism, inclusiveness, and excellence across the University.

All members of the University community—including students, faculty, administrators, staff, committee members, consultants, alumni, collaborators, and service providers—shall uphold these principles in the discharge of their responsibilities.

Core Ethical Principles

Integrity

Integrity is the foundation of ethical behaviour and institutional excellence. Every member of the University shall act honestly, truthfully, and responsibly in all academic, administrative, and professional activities.

The University is committed to:

- Promoting honesty in teaching, learning, assessment, and administration.
- Preventing fraud, plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation.
- Ensuring authenticity of academic and institutional records.
- Maintaining professional credibility in all official communications.

- Encouraging ethical leadership and responsible decision-making.

Transparency

Transparency promotes openness, trust, and confidence among stakeholders. Institutional decisions shall be made through fair, documented, and evidence-based processes.

The University shall:

- Ensure transparency in governance and administration.
- Maintain proper documentation of decisions and actions.
- Communicate policies and procedures clearly.
- Facilitate access to information in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Promote openness in academic and administrative processes.

Accountability

Every member of the University is accountable for their actions, decisions, and responsibilities.

The University shall:

- Clearly define institutional roles and responsibilities.
- Monitor implementation of policies and procedures.
- Establish systems for performance evaluation.
- Encourage responsible use of institutional resources.
- Take corrective actions wherever ethical violations occur.

Fairness and Equity

The University is committed to ensuring impartiality, equality, and justice in all institutional processes.

Accordingly, the University shall:

- Treat all stakeholders fairly without discrimination.
- Ensure equal opportunities for learning and professional growth.
- Promote merit-based academic and administrative practices.
- Eliminate bias in recruitment, assessment, promotions, and student evaluation.
- Encourage inclusive participation in institutional activities.

Respect for Human Dignity

Every individual deserves respect, courtesy, and dignity irrespective of gender, religion, caste, language, nationality, disability, socioeconomic background, or personal beliefs.

The University shall:

- Promote respectful communication.
- Foster an inclusive learning environment.
- Prevent harassment, bullying, discrimination, and intimidation.
- Protect individual rights and personal dignity.
- Encourage mutual respect among all stakeholders.

Inclusiveness and Diversity

The University values diversity as an essential component of academic excellence.

The institution shall:

- Promote equal opportunity.
- Support inclusive education.
- Encourage participation of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

- Ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities.
- Respect cultural, linguistic, and social diversity.

Professionalism

Professional conduct shall characterize all academic and administrative activities.

Members of the University shall:

- Perform duties competently and responsibly.
- Maintain discipline and decorum.
- Respect institutional policies.
- Demonstrate commitment to excellence.
- Avoid behaviour that could damage the University's reputation.

Confidentiality

Sensitive institutional information shall be handled responsibly.

The University shall:

- Protect confidential records.
- Safeguard personal information.
- Maintain privacy during grievance investigations.
- Respect confidentiality of Committee proceedings.
- Ensure secure handling of institutional data.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to higher education.

The University shall promote:

- Honesty in examinations.
- Ethical teaching and learning.
- Original academic work.
- Responsible assessment practices.
- Prevention of plagiarism and academic misconduct.

Responsibility and Stewardship

All stakeholders are responsible for protecting the University's resources and reputation.

The University encourages:

- Responsible use of financial resources.
- Protection of institutional property.
- Sustainable utilization of infrastructure.
- Ethical leadership.
- Long-term institutional development.

Social Responsibility

The University recognizes its responsibility towards society.

Accordingly, the institution shall promote:

- Community engagement.
- National Service Scheme (NSS) activities.
- Extension programmes.
- Volunteerism.
- Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR).

- Sustainable development initiatives.

Environmental Responsibility

The University is committed to protecting the environment through sustainable institutional practices.

The University shall:

- Promote Green Campus initiatives.
- Encourage energy conservation.
- Support water conservation.
- Reduce waste generation.
- Promote recycling and responsible waste management.
- Encourage climate-conscious institutional practices.

Digital Responsibility

With increasing digital transformation, ethical use of technology is essential.

The University shall promote:

- Responsible use of Information Technology.
- Cybersecurity awareness.
- Data privacy and protection.
- Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence.
- Ethical online communication.
- Secure digital governance.

Conflict of Interest

Institutional decisions shall always prioritize the University's interests.

Members shall:

- Disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- Avoid situations that compromise impartiality.
- Refrain from participating in decisions where personal interests exist.
- Maintain fairness and objectivity.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

All University activities shall comply with applicable laws, statutory regulations, and institutional policies.

The University shall ensure compliance with:

- UGC Regulations.
- NEP 2020.
- NAAC Quality Indicators.
- NIRF Framework.
- IQAC Quality Processes.
- Government regulations.
- University Statutes and Ordinances.

Ethical Decision-Making

Every institutional decision shall be guided by the following questions:

- Is the decision lawful?

- Is it fair and unbiased?
- Is it consistent with University policies?
- Does it respect stakeholder rights?
- Is it transparent and accountable?
- Does it protect institutional integrity?
- Does it contribute to academic excellence?
- Does it support the University's vision and mission?

When ethical dilemmas arise, members shall seek guidance from the University Ethical Committee before implementing decisions.

5.4 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to embedding these guiding ethical principles into every aspect of University life. The institution believes that ethical governance is a shared responsibility and that every stakeholder contributes to building a culture of trust, excellence, innovation, inclusiveness, and social responsibility.

These guiding principles provide the foundation for all institutional policies, procedures, academic activities, administrative decisions, quality assurance initiatives, and stakeholder interactions. By adhering to these principles, the University seeks to strengthen public confidence, support continuous improvement, enhance institutional quality, and achieve excellence in teaching, learning, governance, and community engagement while contributing to national development and global recognition through frameworks such as UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and the QS World University Rankings.

6. Code of Ethics

6.1 Introduction

The Code of Ethics establishes the fundamental standards of ethical conduct expected from every member of the University community. It reflects the institutional commitment of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) to uphold the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, accountability, transparency, fairness, respect, and social responsibility in all academic and administrative activities.

The Code serves as a guiding framework for ethical behaviour and decision-making. It promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect, inclusiveness, and excellence while ensuring compliance with applicable laws, statutory regulations, institutional policies, and quality assurance frameworks. Every stakeholder is expected to understand, adopt, and demonstrate these ethical principles in their day-to-day responsibilities.

The University recognizes that ethical conduct is essential for achieving academic excellence, institutional credibility, stakeholder confidence, and sustainable development. Accordingly, all members of the University shall conduct themselves in a manner that protects the reputation, values, and mission of the institution.

6.2 Purpose of the Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics aims to:

- Promote ethical behaviour across all academic and administrative functions.
- Establish common standards of professional conduct.
- Encourage integrity, honesty, accountability, and transparency.
- Foster mutual respect, inclusiveness, and equality.
- Support responsible leadership and good governance.
- Protect the rights and dignity of all stakeholders.
- Strengthen institutional quality and public confidence.

- Encourage continuous improvement and ethical decision-making.

6.3 Applicability

This Code of Ethics applies to:

- Members of the University Ethical Committee.
- Members of statutory bodies and University authorities.
- Faculty members.
- Administrative officers.
- Non-teaching staff.
- Technical and laboratory staff.
- Students.
- Research scholars in non-research institutional activities.
- Consultants and advisors.
- Alumni participating in University activities.
- Visiting faculty and guest lecturers.
- Vendors, contractors, and service providers while working on University premises.

Every stakeholder shall comply with this Code while representing or engaging with the University.

6.4 Core Ethical Values

Every member of the University shall uphold the following values:

Integrity

Act honestly and truthfully in all academic, administrative, and professional responsibilities.

Accountability

Accept responsibility for decisions, actions, and outcomes while performing assigned duties.

Transparency

Ensure openness, fairness, and proper documentation in institutional processes and decision-making.

Respect

Treat every individual with dignity, courtesy, empathy, and professionalism.

Fairness

Provide equal opportunities and make unbiased decisions without discrimination or favouritism.

Excellence

Strive for continuous improvement in teaching, learning, administration, innovation, and service.

Inclusiveness

Respect diversity and promote an environment where everyone feels valued and supported.

Sustainability

Promote responsible use of resources and support environmentally sustainable practices.

6.5 Ethical Standards of Conduct

All stakeholders shall:

- Perform duties honestly and diligently.

- Maintain professionalism in all interactions.
- Respect institutional policies and regulations.
- Safeguard the University's reputation.
- Use University resources responsibly and only for official purposes.
- Avoid misuse of authority or institutional resources.
- Maintain confidentiality of sensitive information.
- Report unethical practices through appropriate channels.
- Cooperate with institutional reviews, audits, and investigations.
- Promote ethical awareness among colleagues and students.

6.6 Academic Ethics

The University is committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic integrity. Accordingly, stakeholders shall:

- Promote honesty in teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Avoid plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, impersonation, and academic misconduct.
- Ensure fairness in examinations and evaluation.
- Respect intellectual property rights.
- Encourage original thinking, creativity, and innovation.
- Maintain confidentiality of examination-related information.
- Assess students objectively and impartially.

6.7 Professional Behaviour

Members of the University community shall:

- Demonstrate courtesy and professionalism.
- Communicate respectfully.
- Maintain appropriate workplace behaviour.
- Avoid harassment, intimidation, bullying, and abusive conduct.
- Respect cultural, religious, and social diversity.
- Foster teamwork and collaboration.
- Resolve conflicts constructively.

6.8 Conflict of Interest

Members shall avoid situations where personal interests interfere with institutional responsibilities.

Every stakeholder shall:

- Disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- Refrain from participating in decisions where impartiality may be compromised.
- Avoid accepting gifts, favours, or benefits that could influence professional judgement.
- Ensure that institutional decisions are based solely on merit, fairness, and transparency.

6.9 Confidentiality and Data Protection

Members shall:

- Protect confidential institutional information.
- Maintain privacy of student and employee records.
- Ensure secure handling of electronic and physical documents.
- Use personal data only for authorized purposes.
- Comply with applicable data protection and information security policies.

6.10 Digital Ethics and Responsible Use of Technology

The University promotes responsible digital citizenship.

Members shall:

- Use digital technologies ethically and responsibly.
- Protect institutional information systems.
- Maintain cybersecurity awareness.
- Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) responsibly in accordance with University policies.
- Respect copyright and software licensing requirements.
- Avoid misuse of social media that could harm the University's reputation.

6.11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University shall provide an environment that:

- Respects human dignity.
- Promotes gender equality.

- Prevents discrimination based on gender, caste, religion, ethnicity, language, disability, age, or socioeconomic background.
- Supports equal opportunity for education, employment, and professional growth.
- Encourages inclusive participation in academic and institutional activities.

6.12 Environmental Responsibility

Every member of the University shall contribute to environmental sustainability by:

- Conserving energy and water.
- Reducing waste generation.
- Supporting recycling initiatives.
- Maintaining a clean and green campus.
- Participating in environmental awareness programmes.
- Promoting sustainable practices in everyday activities.

6.13 Community and Social Responsibility

The University encourages all stakeholders to:

- Participate in community outreach programmes.
- Support National Service Scheme (NSS) and extension activities.
- Promote health, education, environmental protection, and social welfare.
- Demonstrate compassion, empathy, and responsible citizenship.
- Contribute positively to society through ethical leadership and service.

6.14 Compliance and Reporting

Every stakeholder has a responsibility to:

- Comply with this Code of Ethics.
- Report suspected ethical violations through appropriate institutional mechanisms.
- Cooperate with investigations conducted by authorized committees.
- Respect decisions taken by competent authorities.
- Implement corrective actions wherever required.

No person shall be subjected to retaliation for reporting genuine ethical concerns in good faith.

6.15 Violations of the Code

Violations of this Code may include, but are not limited to:

- Academic dishonesty.
- Plagiarism or intellectual property infringement.
- Fraud, falsification, or misrepresentation.
- Harassment or discrimination.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Conflict of interest without disclosure.
- Misuse of University resources.
- Abuse of authority.

- Cyber misconduct or unauthorized access to digital systems.
- Any conduct that adversely affects the reputation or functioning of the University.

Alleged violations shall be reviewed in accordance with the University's established procedures, ensuring fairness, confidentiality, due process, and appropriate corrective or disciplinary action where necessary.

6.16 Implementation and Review

The University Ethical Committee (Non-Research) shall oversee the implementation of this Code of Ethics. The Committee shall:

- Conduct awareness and orientation programmes.
- Monitor compliance across Schools and Departments.
- Review ethical issues and recommend corrective actions.
- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Code.
- Recommend revisions based on changes in statutory requirements, institutional priorities, technological developments, and stakeholder feedback.

6.17 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering an ethical, inclusive, transparent, and accountable academic environment where integrity guides every decision and action. The University expects every stakeholder to uphold the principles outlined in this Code of Ethics and contribute to a culture of professionalism, mutual respect, academic excellence, innovation, sustainability, and social responsibility.

By adhering to this Code, the University strengthens its commitment to quality education, ethical governance, continuous improvement, and institutional excellence in alignment with

the expectations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and internationally recognized quality standards that support the QS World University Rankings.

7. Code of Conduct for Faculty Members

7.1 Introduction

Faculty members play a pivotal role in shaping the academic environment, fostering intellectual growth, promoting ethical values, and advancing the mission of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS). As educators, mentors, researchers, and institutional leaders, faculty members are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional integrity, academic excellence, ethical behaviour, and social responsibility.

This Code of Conduct establishes the ethical and professional standards expected of all faculty members and provides guidance for responsible conduct in teaching, learning, student engagement, academic administration, institutional governance, professional relationships, and community service.

The provisions of this Code apply to all Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Adjunct Faculty, Visiting Faculty, Guest Faculty, and any individual engaged in teaching or academic activities on behalf of the University.

7.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Faculty Code of Conduct are to:

- Promote ethical teaching and professional excellence.
- Uphold academic integrity and institutional values.
- Foster a student-centred learning environment.
- Encourage continuous professional development.
- Strengthen institutional governance and accountability.

- Promote fairness, transparency, and inclusiveness.
- Support innovation, interdisciplinary learning, and lifelong education.
- Enhance institutional quality in alignment with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and QS quality frameworks.

7.3 Professional Responsibilities

Faculty members shall:

- Perform their academic responsibilities with honesty, competence, and dedication.
- Maintain the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.
- Demonstrate punctuality, discipline, and accountability in all official duties.
- Prepare and deliver curriculum effectively using appropriate teaching methodologies.
- Continuously update their subject knowledge and teaching skills.
- Encourage critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and problem-solving among students.
- Support the University's Vision, Mission, Core Values, and strategic objectives.

7.4 Teaching and Learning Responsibilities

Faculty members shall:

- Deliver high-quality teaching that is learner-centred, inclusive, and outcome-based.
- Prepare lesson plans, course files, and teaching materials in accordance with University requirements.
- Complete the prescribed syllabus within the scheduled academic calendar.

- Adopt innovative teaching methods, blended learning, and digital learning technologies where appropriate.
- Encourage active participation, collaborative learning, and experiential education.
- Provide timely academic guidance and constructive feedback to students.
- Maintain fairness and consistency in classroom practices.

7.5 Academic Integrity

Faculty members shall uphold academic integrity by:

- Promoting honesty in teaching, assessment, and evaluation.
- Preventing plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, and academic misconduct.
- Respecting intellectual property rights and copyright laws.
- Maintaining confidentiality of examination materials and student records.
- Ensuring that academic evaluations are objective, impartial, and evidence-based.
- Reporting instances of academic misconduct through appropriate institutional mechanisms.

7.6 Student-Centred Responsibilities

Faculty members shall:

- Treat every student with dignity, fairness, and respect.
- Promote equality, diversity, and inclusiveness in the classroom.
- Encourage independent learning and lifelong learning.

- Provide mentoring, counselling, and academic support whenever required.
- Maintain professional boundaries while interacting with students.
- Protect students from discrimination, harassment, bullying, or exploitation.
- Respect the confidentiality of student information.

7.7 Research, Innovation and Scholarly Activities

Faculty members are encouraged to:

- Engage in quality research, innovation, consultancy, and scholarly activities.
- Publish research ethically and responsibly.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- Mentor students in research and innovation activities.
- Seek funded research projects and industry collaborations.
- Avoid plagiarism, duplicate publication, data manipulation, and other forms of research misconduct.
- Comply with institutional policies relating to research ethics and intellectual property.

7.8 Professional Behaviour

Faculty members shall:

- Demonstrate honesty, integrity, courtesy, and professionalism in all interactions.
- Respect colleagues, students, administrators, and support staff.
- Promote teamwork, cooperation, and mutual respect.

- Avoid behaviour that may damage the University's reputation.
- Refrain from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or abusive conduct.
- Dress appropriately and maintain professional decorum on campus.
- Serve as positive role models for students and colleagues.

7.9 Administrative Responsibilities

Faculty members shall:

- Participate actively in departmental and University committees.
- Attend meetings, workshops, faculty development programmes, and official events.
- Complete institutional documentation accurately and within prescribed timelines.
- Support accreditation, ranking, audit, and quality assurance activities.
- Cooperate with academic and administrative authorities.
- Assist in implementing institutional policies and strategic initiatives.

7.10 Responsible Use of Technology

Faculty members shall:

- Use digital technologies responsibly and ethically.
- Protect institutional information systems and confidential data.
- Promote responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool to support teaching and learning while ensuring originality, transparency, and academic integrity.
- Respect copyright, software licensing, and digital content ownership.

- Use official digital platforms responsibly for academic and administrative communication.

7.11 Conflict of Interest

Faculty members shall:

- Disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest.
- Avoid situations where personal interests could influence professional decisions.
- Refrain from accepting gifts, favours, or benefits that may compromise impartiality.
- Ensure that all academic and administrative decisions are based solely on merit and institutional interest.

7.12 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Faculty members shall:

- Promote equal opportunity in teaching and assessment.
- Respect cultural, linguistic, religious, and social diversity.
- Support students with disabilities and those requiring additional academic assistance.
- Encourage an inclusive learning environment free from discrimination.
- Uphold the principles of gender equality and human dignity.

7.13 Environmental and Social Responsibility

Faculty members shall:

- Support Green Campus initiatives and sustainable practices.

- Encourage environmental awareness among students.
- Participate in community engagement, extension activities, and Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) programmes.
- Promote ethical citizenship, social responsibility, and sustainable development.

7.14 Compliance and Accountability

Faculty members are accountable for compliance with:

- University policies and regulations.
- Academic and administrative procedures.
- Statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Professional ethical standards.
- Directions issued by competent University authorities.

Any violation of this Code may be reviewed in accordance with the University's disciplinary procedures while ensuring fairness, confidentiality, and due process.

7.15 Continuous Professional Development

Faculty members are expected to engage in lifelong learning by:

- Participating in Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) and Faculty Improvement Programmes (FIPs).
- Attending workshops, seminars, conferences, and certification programmes.
- Enhancing pedagogical, digital, leadership, and research competencies.
- Sharing knowledge and best practices with colleagues.

- Contributing to institutional innovation and quality enhancement.

7.16 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) recognizes faculty members as the cornerstone of academic excellence and institutional success. The University is committed to supporting faculty through a culture of ethical governance, professional development, academic freedom, innovation, inclusiveness, and continuous quality improvement.

By adhering to this Code of Conduct, faculty members contribute to the University's mission of delivering high-quality education, fostering ethical leadership, advancing knowledge, supporting student success, and strengthening institutional performance in alignment with the expectations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and international benchmarks reflected in the QS World University Rankings.

9. Code of Conduct for Administrative Staff

9.1 Introduction

Administrative staff are integral to the effective functioning and governance of VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS). Through efficient administration, transparent processes, timely services, and responsible management of institutional resources, administrative personnel contribute significantly to the University's academic excellence and stakeholder satisfaction.

This Code of Conduct establishes the ethical standards, professional expectations, and responsibilities applicable to all administrative employees of the University. It promotes integrity, accountability, transparency, professionalism, confidentiality, fairness, and service excellence while ensuring compliance with University regulations, statutory requirements, and quality assurance frameworks.

The provisions of this Code apply to all officers, administrative personnel, technical staff, finance and accounts staff, human resource personnel, examination office staff, library

professionals, information technology personnel, laboratory support staff, maintenance personnel, and all other non-teaching employees engaged by the University.

9.2 Objectives

The objectives of this Code are to:

- Promote ethical and professional behaviour in administrative functions.
- Ensure transparent, efficient, and accountable governance.
- Deliver high-quality services to students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders.
- Protect institutional assets, information, and resources.
- Foster teamwork, mutual respect, and stakeholder confidence.
- Support institutional quality enhancement and continuous improvement.
- Align administrative practices with the expectations of UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and international quality standards.

9.3 Professional Responsibilities

Administrative staff shall:

- Perform assigned duties honestly, diligently, and efficiently.
- Demonstrate integrity, professionalism, and impartiality in all official responsibilities.
- Maintain punctuality, discipline, and regular attendance.
- Deliver services in a courteous, responsive, and stakeholder-focused manner.
- Exercise sound judgment while carrying out administrative responsibilities.
- Comply with all University rules, regulations, policies, and lawful directions.

- Maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in every official interaction.

9.4 Service Excellence

Administrative staff shall:

- Provide prompt, accurate, and efficient administrative services.
- Respond to requests from students, faculty, visitors, and external stakeholders courteously and professionally.
- Minimize delays in processing official documents and services.
- Maintain a service-oriented approach while addressing stakeholder needs.
- Ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency in service delivery.
- Promote a welcoming and supportive institutional environment.

9.5 Integrity and Accountability

Administrative staff shall:

- Act honestly and ethically in all official matters.
- Accept responsibility for decisions and actions within their assigned duties.
- Avoid misuse of authority, official position, or institutional resources.
- Ensure that official records and documents are accurate, complete, and authentic.
- Report unethical practices, fraud, corruption, or misuse of institutional resources through appropriate channels.
- Cooperate fully during audits, inspections, and institutional reviews.

9.6 Confidentiality and Information Management

Administrative staff are entrusted with confidential institutional information and shall:

- Protect the confidentiality of student, employee, financial, and institutional records.
- Access information only when authorized.
- Prevent unauthorized disclosure, modification, or misuse of confidential information.
- Maintain secure storage of physical and electronic records.
- Follow University policies relating to information security and data protection.
- Exercise discretion while handling sensitive information.

9.7 Financial and Resource Management

Administrative staff shall:

- Ensure responsible and economical utilization of University resources.
- Maintain transparency in procurement, finance, budgeting, and expenditure.
- Protect University property, equipment, and infrastructure.
- Prevent waste, misuse, or unauthorized use of institutional assets.
- Maintain proper financial documentation and records.
- Follow applicable financial rules, audit requirements, and statutory regulations.

9.8 Professional Behaviour

Administrative staff shall:

- Demonstrate courtesy, respect, and professionalism in all interactions.

- Treat every stakeholder with dignity, fairness, and impartiality.
- Promote teamwork and positive workplace relationships.
- Avoid harassment, intimidation, discrimination, bullying, or abusive behaviour.
- Maintain appropriate professional attire and workplace decorum.
- Refrain from behaviour that may adversely affect the University's reputation.

9.9 Digital Ethics and Responsible Use of Technology

Administrative staff shall:

- Use University information systems responsibly and securely.
- Protect institutional networks, databases, and digital infrastructure.
- Follow cybersecurity and information security protocols.
- Ensure confidentiality of electronic communications and records.
- Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools responsibly, ensuring that administrative decisions remain transparent, accurate, accountable, and subject to human oversight.
- Respect copyright, software licensing, and digital usage policies.

9.10 Conflict of Interest

Administrative staff shall:

- Avoid situations that create actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest.
- Disclose any personal, financial, or professional interests that may influence official duties.
- Refrain from accepting gifts, favours, hospitality, or benefits that could compromise impartiality.

- Ensure that administrative decisions are based solely on institutional interests and applicable regulations.

9.11 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Administrative staff shall:

- Treat all stakeholders fairly without discrimination.
- Respect diversity of culture, language, gender, religion, age, disability, and socioeconomic background.
- Support equal opportunity and accessibility.
- Promote an inclusive, safe, and respectful workplace.
- Uphold the principles of gender equality and human dignity.

9.12 Environmental and Social Responsibility

Administrative staff shall:

- Support Green Campus initiatives and sustainable administrative practices.
- Encourage responsible use of energy, water, paper, and other resources.
- Participate in waste reduction, recycling, and environmental awareness programmes.
- Contribute to community engagement and institutional social responsibility initiatives whenever appropriate.

9.13 Compliance with Institutional Policies

Administrative staff shall comply with:

- University Statutes, Ordinances, Rules, and Regulations.
- Service Rules and Human Resource policies.
- Financial regulations and audit requirements.
- Information security and data privacy policies.
- Safety, health, and environmental guidelines.
- Directions issued by competent University authorities.
- Ethical policies approved by the University Ethical Committee.

9.14 Continuous Professional Development

Administrative staff are encouraged to:

- Participate in administrative training programmes.
- Attend workshops, seminars, and capacity-building initiatives.
- Develop digital literacy and emerging technology skills.
- Enhance communication, leadership, and managerial competencies.
- Contribute to process improvement and institutional innovation.
- Share best administrative practices across departments.

9.15 Violations and Corrective Action

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct may include, but is not limited to:

- Breach of confidentiality.
- Misuse of official authority or institutional resources.

- Fraud, corruption, or falsification of records.
- Discrimination, harassment, or workplace misconduct.
- Conflict of interest without disclosure.
- Unauthorized access to institutional information systems.
- Negligence resulting in financial, operational, or reputational loss.

Such matters shall be reviewed in accordance with University policies, ensuring fairness, confidentiality, due process, and appropriate corrective or disciplinary action.

9.16 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) recognizes that efficient, ethical, and professional administration is fundamental to institutional excellence. The University is committed to fostering a work environment based on integrity, accountability, transparency, mutual respect, inclusiveness, and continuous improvement.

By adhering to this Code of Conduct, administrative staff contribute to effective governance, high-quality stakeholder services, operational excellence, regulatory compliance, and the University's long-term strategic goals. This commitment supports the quality expectations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and institutional initiatives that contribute to the QS World University Rankings.

10. Academic Integrity

10.1 Introduction

Academic integrity is the cornerstone of excellence in higher education. It reflects the University's commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in all academic endeavours. VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) recognizes that maintaining academic integrity is essential for preserving the

credibility of its academic programmes, protecting the value of its qualifications, promoting intellectual growth, and fostering public confidence in the institution.

Academic integrity extends to all aspects of teaching, learning, assessment, scholarly communication, academic administration, and professional conduct. Every member of the University community—including students, faculty members, academic administrators, researchers, examiners, evaluators, and external collaborators—is expected to uphold the highest standards of ethical behaviour and academic honesty.

This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for promoting ethical academic practices, preventing academic misconduct, ensuring fair assessment, protecting intellectual property, and strengthening a culture of responsibility and accountability throughout the University.

10.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Academic Integrity Policy are to:

- Promote honesty, fairness, and responsibility in all academic activities.
- Foster a culture of ethical teaching, learning, and assessment.
- Prevent plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, falsification, and other forms of academic misconduct.
- Protect intellectual property rights and scholarly contributions.
- Ensure transparency and fairness in examinations and evaluations.
- Encourage originality, critical thinking, creativity, and innovation.
- Strengthen institutional credibility and academic reputation.
- Support quality enhancement in accordance with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and international academic standards.

10.3 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, doctoral, and post-doctoral students.
- Faculty members and academic staff.
- Research scholars in academic activities not governed by separate research ethics policies.
- External examiners, evaluators, and paper setters.
- Academic administrators.
- Visiting and adjunct faculty.
- Any individual participating in academic activities conducted by the University.

The policy covers all academic activities, including:

- Teaching and learning.
- Classroom assignments.
- Laboratory work.
- Tutorials and seminars.
- Internal assessments.
- Semester examinations.
- Practical examinations.
- Project work.
- Dissertation and thesis preparation.
- Academic publications.
- Online learning and digital assessments.

- Academic collaborations and scholarly communication.

10.4 Principles of Academic Integrity

The University is guided by the following principles:

Honesty

All academic work shall represent the individual's own efforts unless collaboration is expressly permitted.

Trust

Students, faculty, and administrators shall maintain mutual trust by conducting academic activities with sincerity and transparency.

Fairness

Assessment, evaluation, grading, and academic decisions shall be objective, impartial, and evidence-based.

Respect

Every member of the academic community shall respect intellectual property, scholarly contributions, and the academic rights of others.

Responsibility

Individuals shall take responsibility for maintaining academic standards and reporting academic misconduct.

Accountability

All stakeholders are accountable for ensuring compliance with this policy and maintaining institutional credibility.

10.5 Academic Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Students

Students shall:

- Submit original academic work.
- Properly acknowledge all sources through appropriate citation and referencing.
- Avoid plagiarism, cheating, impersonation, fabrication, falsification, and collusion.
- Follow examination rules and academic regulations.
- Complete assignments independently unless collaborative work is specifically authorized.
- Respect intellectual property rights.
- Report academic misconduct when observed.
- Use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools responsibly and only in accordance with University guidelines, ensuring that AI-assisted work is appropriately disclosed where required.

Responsibilities of Faculty Members

Faculty members shall:

- Promote academic honesty in teaching and assessment.
- Clearly communicate academic integrity expectations.
- Design fair and transparent assessment methods.
- Evaluate student work objectively.
- Maintain confidentiality of examination materials.
- Detect and report academic misconduct.

- Educate students regarding plagiarism, citation practices, and ethical scholarship.
- Use plagiarism detection software where applicable.
- Guide students in the ethical use of AI and digital learning tools.

Responsibilities of Academic Administrators

Academic administrators shall:

- Implement institutional policies relating to academic integrity.
- Ensure fairness in examination processes.
- Facilitate awareness programmes and training.
- Maintain documentation relating to academic misconduct cases.
- Monitor compliance through periodic reviews.
- Support the University Ethical Committee in policy implementation.

10.6 Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes any action that compromises academic honesty or provides an unfair academic advantage.

Examples include:

Plagiarism

Presenting another person's words, ideas, data, images, or creative work as one's own without proper acknowledgment.

Cheating

Using unauthorized materials, devices, assistance, or information during examinations or assessments.

Fabrication

Creating false data, information, attendance records, certificates, or academic documents.

Falsification

Altering research findings, examination records, attendance, marks, laboratory results, or official academic documents.

Impersonation

Allowing another person to complete academic work or appear in examinations on one's behalf.

Collusion

Unauthorized collaboration resulting in submission of substantially similar work by multiple individuals.

Contract Cheating

Submitting assignments, projects, dissertations, or reports prepared wholly or partly by another individual or commercial service.

Unauthorized Use of Artificial Intelligence

Using AI tools to generate assignments, examinations, projects, or academic work without authorization or proper disclosure, thereby misrepresenting authorship or learning.

Examination Misconduct

Including possession of unauthorized materials, communication during examinations, copying, electronic malpractice, or any violation of examination regulations.

10.7 Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

The University recognizes the educational value of Artificial Intelligence while emphasizing responsible use.

Students and faculty shall:

- Use AI to support learning rather than replace independent intellectual effort.
- Verify the accuracy of AI-generated information.
- Properly acknowledge AI-assisted work where required by University guidelines.
- Avoid submitting AI-generated content as entirely original work.
- Protect confidential, personal, and institutional information when using AI tools.
- Ensure that final academic submissions reflect critical thinking, analysis, and individual understanding.

10.8 Assessment Integrity

To maintain fairness and credibility, the University shall ensure:

- Transparent assessment criteria.
- Confidential handling of examination materials.
- Secure question paper preparation and distribution.
- Fair invigilation procedures.
- Standardized evaluation methods.
- Moderation of assessment where applicable.
- Timely declaration of results.
- Secure maintenance of academic records.

10.9 Prevention of Academic Misconduct

The University shall promote academic integrity through:

- Orientation programmes for students and faculty.
- Workshops on plagiarism awareness and academic writing.
- Training in citation and referencing techniques.
- Awareness programmes on ethical scholarship.
- Use of plagiarism detection software.
- Faculty development programmes on assessment integrity.
- Periodic review of examination procedures.
- Awareness regarding responsible use of Artificial Intelligence.

10.10 Reporting and Investigation

Any suspected violation of academic integrity shall be reported to the appropriate academic authority or committee.

The University shall ensure that:

- Complaints are reviewed objectively.
- Investigations are conducted confidentially.
- Individuals receive an opportunity to present their explanation.
- Decisions are evidence-based.
- Records of proceedings are maintained.

- Corrective and disciplinary actions are consistent with University regulations.

10.11 Corrective and Disciplinary Measures

Where academic misconduct is established, the University may implement appropriate corrective actions, which may include:

- Academic counselling.
- Mandatory integrity training.
- Re-submission of academic work.
- Reduction or cancellation of marks.
- Re-examination where applicable.
- Written warning.
- Suspension from specific academic activities.
- Disciplinary action in accordance with University regulations.

The nature of the action shall be proportionate to the seriousness, intent, and recurrence of the misconduct while ensuring fairness and due process.

10.12 Awareness and Capacity Building

The University shall regularly organize:

- Academic Integrity Orientation Programmes.
- Workshops on ethical scholarship.
- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).
- Student awareness campaigns.

- Seminars on plagiarism prevention.
- Training on responsible AI use.
- Sessions on academic writing, referencing, and publication ethics.

These initiatives shall strengthen the culture of integrity across the institution.

10.13 Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The University Ethical Committee (Non-Research), in collaboration with IQAC and other academic bodies, shall:

- Monitor implementation of the Academic Integrity Policy.
- Review cases of academic misconduct.
- Recommend preventive and corrective measures.
- Conduct periodic policy reviews.
- Benchmark institutional practices against national and international standards.
- Recommend improvements based on stakeholder feedback and evolving educational practices.

10.14 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering a culture where academic integrity is embedded in every aspect of teaching, learning, assessment, and scholarly engagement. The University believes that integrity is fundamental to academic excellence, innovation, lifelong learning, and responsible citizenship.

By implementing this Academic Integrity Policy, the University reaffirms its commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards in higher education and strengthening institutional

quality in alignment with the expectations of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and internationally recognized benchmarks reflected in the QS World University Rankings.

11. Responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI)

11.1 Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming higher education by enhancing teaching, learning, research, administration, student support services, institutional planning, and decision-making. AI-powered technologies such as intelligent tutoring systems, learning analytics, virtual assistants, automated assessment, predictive analytics, and generative AI applications offer significant opportunities to improve educational quality, operational efficiency, and stakeholder engagement.

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) recognizes the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence while acknowledging the ethical, legal, social, and governance challenges associated with its use. The University is committed to promoting the responsible, transparent, secure, and human-centred use of AI in accordance with national regulations and internationally accepted ethical principles.

This policy establishes institutional guidelines to ensure that Artificial Intelligence is used responsibly, fairly, transparently, and accountably while protecting academic integrity, privacy, intellectual property, human dignity, and institutional values.

11.2 Objectives

The objectives of this Responsible AI Policy are to:

- Promote ethical and responsible adoption of Artificial Intelligence across the University.
- Encourage innovation while safeguarding human values and academic integrity.

- Ensure transparency and accountability in AI-assisted decision-making.
- Protect personal data, privacy, confidentiality, and information security.
- Promote fairness, inclusiveness, and non-discrimination in AI applications.
- Prevent misuse of AI in teaching, learning, examinations, and administrative functions.
- Build AI literacy among students, faculty, and administrative staff.
- Align institutional AI practices with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and global ethical standards.

11.3 Scope

This policy applies to all stakeholders, including:

- Students.
- Faculty members.
- Administrative staff.
- University authorities.
- Research scholars where applicable.
- External consultants.
- Service providers deploying AI-enabled systems.
- Technology partners working with the University.

The policy governs AI use in:

- Teaching and learning.

- Academic support.
- Student assessment.
- Administrative decision-making.
- Learning Management Systems (LMS).
- Library services.
- Examination management.
- Student counselling and support.
- Institutional planning.
- Data analytics.
- Digital communication.
- Campus management.
- Quality assurance activities.

11.4 Guiding Principles for Responsible AI

The University shall adopt the following principles while implementing Artificial Intelligence technologies.

Human-Centred Approach

Artificial Intelligence shall support human intelligence and decision-making rather than replace human judgment. Final responsibility for academic and administrative decisions shall always remain with authorized University personnel.

Transparency

AI-assisted processes shall be transparent. Users should be informed whenever AI tools significantly contribute to decisions, recommendations, assessments, or content generation.

Accountability

Individuals responsible for implementing or using AI systems shall remain accountable for decisions made with AI assistance. AI systems shall not be used to avoid institutional responsibility.

Fairness and Non-Discrimination

AI applications shall be designed and used in a manner that avoids bias, discrimination, and unfair treatment of individuals or groups.

Privacy and Data Protection

Personal information shall be collected, processed, stored, and shared only in accordance with applicable laws and University policies.

Reliability and Accuracy

AI-generated outputs shall be verified before being used for academic, administrative, or institutional purposes. Users shall not rely solely on AI-generated content without appropriate validation.

Safety and Security

AI systems shall be deployed using appropriate cybersecurity measures to protect institutional information, digital infrastructure, and stakeholder data.

Ethical Innovation

The University encourages innovation while ensuring that technological advancements respect human dignity, ethical values, and societal wellbeing.

11.5 Responsible Use of AI by Students

Students may use AI tools to support learning, provided they:

- Use AI as a supplementary educational resource rather than a substitute for independent learning.
- Submit original academic work reflecting their own understanding and critical thinking.
- Disclose AI assistance whenever required by course or University guidelines.
- Verify the accuracy of AI-generated information before use.
- Properly acknowledge AI-generated content where appropriate.
- Avoid using AI during examinations or assessments unless expressly authorized.
- Refrain from using AI to generate assignments, reports, projects, dissertations, or presentations that falsely represent their own work.
- Respect copyright, intellectual property, and academic integrity requirements.

11.6 Responsible Use of AI by Faculty Members

Faculty members shall:

- Integrate AI responsibly into teaching and learning.
- Encourage critical evaluation of AI-generated information.
- Clearly communicate expectations regarding AI use in coursework and assessments.
- Design assessments that evaluate higher-order thinking and authentic learning.
- Protect confidential student information while using AI platforms.
- Avoid excessive dependence on AI-generated teaching materials without academic review.

- Ensure that AI complements, rather than replaces, effective pedagogy and faculty expertise.

11.7 Responsible Use of AI in Administration

Administrative departments may utilize AI to improve operational efficiency while ensuring:

- Human oversight in all significant administrative decisions.
- Transparency in AI-supported processes.
- Protection of confidential institutional information.
- Compliance with data protection and cybersecurity requirements.
- Regular review of AI-enabled administrative systems.
- Prevention of algorithmic bias affecting institutional decisions.

Examples include:

- Student enquiry management.
- Admission support.
- Document processing.
- Scheduling.
- Learning analytics.
- Resource planning.
- Administrative automation.

11.8 Academic Integrity and AI

Artificial Intelligence shall not compromise academic integrity.

The following practices are prohibited unless explicitly authorized:

- Submission of AI-generated assignments as entirely original work.
- AI-assisted plagiarism.
- Fabrication of references or citations.
- Manipulation of examination responses.
- Unauthorized AI use during examinations.
- Generation of false research data or academic documents.
- Misrepresentation of AI-generated content as personal scholarship.

The University may require students and faculty to declare the extent of AI assistance used in academic work.

11.9 Data Privacy and Information Security

Users shall:

- Protect confidential institutional information.
- Avoid uploading sensitive University documents to unauthorized AI platforms.
- Safeguard personal, financial, academic, and employee information.
- Follow University cybersecurity policies.
- Use only approved digital platforms for institutional work whenever required.
- Report suspected data breaches immediately.

11.10 Intellectual Property

The University recognizes the importance of protecting intellectual property while using AI technologies.

Stakeholders shall:

- Respect copyright laws.
- Properly acknowledge AI-assisted content where required.
- Avoid infringement of intellectual property rights.
- Protect University-owned educational resources.
- Ensure originality in scholarly and creative work.

11.11 Risk Management

Potential AI-related risks include:

- Algorithmic bias.
- Hallucinated or inaccurate information.
- Privacy violations.
- Cybersecurity threats.
- Academic misconduct.
- Copyright infringement.
- Misinformation.
- Overdependence on automation.
- Ethical misuse of generative AI.

The University shall periodically assess these risks and implement appropriate mitigation strategies.

11.12 Awareness and Capacity Building

The University shall promote AI literacy through:

- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).
- Student orientation programmes.
- Workshops on Responsible AI.
- Digital literacy initiatives.
- Cybersecurity awareness programmes.
- Training on ethical AI use.
- Seminars on emerging technologies.
- Awareness campaigns on AI governance and academic integrity.

11.13 Monitoring and Compliance

The University Ethical Committee (Non-Research), in collaboration with IQAC, Information Technology Services, and relevant academic bodies, shall:

- Monitor implementation of this policy.
- Review emerging AI-related ethical issues.
- Recommend institutional AI governance practices.
- Conduct periodic policy reviews.
- Evaluate AI-related risks.

- Recommend updates in response to technological developments and regulatory changes.

11.14 Violations

Examples of violations include:

- Unauthorized AI use during examinations.
- AI-assisted plagiarism.
- Fabrication of academic work using AI.
- Misuse of confidential institutional data.
- Creation or dissemination of misleading AI-generated content.
- Unauthorized deployment of AI systems affecting institutional operations.
- Failure to disclose AI assistance where disclosure is required.

Violations shall be reviewed in accordance with University regulations, ensuring fairness, confidentiality, due process, and appropriate corrective or disciplinary action.

11.15 Continuous Improvement

Recognizing that Artificial Intelligence is an evolving technology, the University shall periodically review and update this policy to incorporate technological advancements, emerging ethical challenges, regulatory developments, stakeholder feedback, and international best practices. Continuous monitoring and institutional learning will ensure that AI remains a tool for innovation, quality enhancement, and responsible governance.

11.16 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to harnessing the potential of Artificial Intelligence in a manner that strengthens teaching, learning, administration, innovation, and institutional excellence while preserving human values, academic integrity, transparency, accountability, and social responsibility.

Through this Responsible AI Policy, the University reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that Artificial Intelligence serves as a tool for educational advancement, informed decision-making, and sustainable institutional development. The policy supports the University's strategic goals and aligns with the principles of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021), the OECD AI Principles, and international quality benchmarks that contribute to the QS World University Rankings.

12. Whistleblower Policy

12.1 Introduction

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, accountability, and ethical governance. The University recognizes that effective governance depends upon the willingness of members of the University community to report genuine concerns regarding unethical conduct, malpractice, fraud, corruption, abuse of authority, misconduct, or violations of institutional policies without fear of retaliation.

The Whistleblower Policy establishes a secure and confidential mechanism for reporting suspected unethical or illegal activities occurring within the University. It encourages students, faculty members, administrative staff, researchers, alumni, consultants, vendors, and other stakeholders to report concerns in good faith so that appropriate corrective actions may be taken.

The University is committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, victimization, intimidation, discrimination, or any adverse consequences arising from genuine disclosures made under this Policy.

12.2 Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Promote honesty, integrity, and ethical governance across the University.
- Encourage timely reporting of unethical practices and policy violations.
- Establish a transparent, confidential, and impartial reporting mechanism.
- Protect whistleblowers acting in good faith from retaliation.
- Facilitate prompt investigation and resolution of reported concerns.
- Strengthen institutional accountability and stakeholder confidence.
- Prevent fraud, corruption, financial irregularities, academic misconduct, and misuse of authority.
- Support continuous institutional improvement and compliance with quality assurance frameworks.

12.3 Scope

This Policy applies to all members of the University community, including:

- Students.
- Faculty members.
- Administrative and non-teaching staff.
- Technical and laboratory personnel.
- University officers.
- Members of statutory bodies and committees.

- Contractual employees.
- Consultants and advisors.
- Vendors, suppliers, and service providers.
- Alumni and external stakeholders associated with the University.

The Policy covers all academic, administrative, financial, operational, and institutional activities conducted by or on behalf of the University.

12.4 Reportable Concerns

The following matters may be reported under this Policy:

Academic Misconduct

- Plagiarism.
- Examination malpractice.
- Fabrication or falsification of academic records.
- Manipulation of evaluation processes.
- Unauthorized issuance of academic documents.

Financial Irregularities

- Fraud.
- Misappropriation of University funds.
- Bribery or corruption.
- Financial mismanagement.
- Unauthorized expenditure.

- Procurement irregularities.

Administrative Misconduct

- Abuse of authority.
- Misuse of official position.
- Favouritism or nepotism.
- Conflict of interest.
- Deliberate violation of University policies.

Ethical Violations

- Dishonesty.
- Discrimination.
- Harassment.
- Bullying.
- Sexual harassment.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Unethical professional conduct.

Information Technology Misuse

- Unauthorized access to information systems.
- Data manipulation.
- Cybersecurity violations.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information.

- Misuse of Artificial Intelligence or digital technologies.

Safety and Environmental Concerns

- Unsafe laboratory practices.
- Fire and electrical safety violations.
- Improper biomedical waste disposal.
- Environmental pollution.
- Non-compliance with safety regulations.

Other Violations

- Forgery of official documents.
- Theft or misuse of institutional property.
- Violations of statutory regulations.
- Any act that adversely affects the reputation, integrity, or functioning of the University.

12.5 Matters Outside the Scope

The following matters shall normally be addressed through their respective institutional mechanisms:

- Personal employment grievances.
- Routine academic appeals.
- Student examination revaluation requests.
- Admission disputes governed by separate regulations.

- Service matters covered under Human Resource policies.
- Matters already under judicial consideration unless specifically referred by competent authorities.

12.6 Principles of the Policy

The implementation of this Policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- Confidentiality.
- Good faith reporting.
- Fairness.
- Impartiality.
- Protection from retaliation.
- Due process.
- Natural justice.
- Timely investigation.
- Accountability.
- Transparency in outcomes while protecting confidentiality.

12.7 Reporting Mechanism

A whistleblower may submit a complaint through one or more of the following channels:

- Written complaint addressed to the Chairperson of the University Ethical Committee.
- Official University e-mail designated for ethics complaints.

- Secure online grievance or ethics reporting portal.
- Complaint submitted to the Registrar or other competent authority.
- Confidential submission through the University Ethics Cell.
- Sealed written complaint marked "Confidential".

Wherever possible, complaints should include:

- Name and contact details of the complainant (unless anonymous reporting is permitted).
- Description of the incident.
- Date, time, and location.
- Persons involved.
- Supporting documents or evidence, if available.
- Names of witnesses, if any.

Anonymous complaints may be considered if supported by credible information or documentary evidence.

12.8 Protection of Whistleblowers

The University shall ensure that every whistleblower acting in good faith is protected against:

- Victimization.
- Harassment.
- Intimidation.
- Retaliation.

- Discrimination.
- Suspension or adverse academic consequences.
- Demotion or unfair employment action.
- Threats or coercion.

No person shall suffer adverse consequences solely because they have made a genuine disclosure under this Policy.

However, protection shall not extend to individuals making knowingly false, malicious, or frivolous complaints.

12.9 Confidentiality

The identity of the whistleblower shall be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible.

Information relating to complaints shall be disclosed only:

- To authorized officials involved in the investigation.
- When required by law.
- When necessary to ensure a fair investigation.
- When approved by the competent authority.

All records relating to whistleblower complaints shall be maintained securely.

12.10 Investigation Procedure

Upon receipt of a complaint:

1. The complaint shall be acknowledged, where applicable.
2. A preliminary review shall determine whether the complaint falls within the scope of this Policy.

3. If admissible, the matter shall be referred to the appropriate authority or investigation committee.
4. Relevant evidence and documents shall be examined.
5. Individuals concerned shall be provided an opportunity to present their explanation.
6. Findings shall be documented objectively.
7. Recommendations shall be submitted to the competent authority.
8. Appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be implemented where warranted.
9. The case shall be formally closed and documented.

Investigations shall be conducted fairly, confidentially, and without bias.

12.11 Responsibilities

University Ethical Committee

The Committee shall:

- Receive and review whistleblower complaints.
- Ensure impartial investigation.
- Protect whistleblowers from retaliation.
- Recommend corrective actions.
- Monitor implementation of recommendations.
- Maintain confidential records.
- Submit periodic reports to University authorities.

Registrar

The Registrar shall:

- Ensure administrative support for implementation of this Policy.
- Facilitate timely investigation.
- Implement approved recommendations.
- Maintain official records.

Heads of Schools and Departments

Heads shall:

- Encourage ethical reporting.
- Cooperate with investigations.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Ensure corrective actions are implemented within their respective units.

Faculty, Staff and Students

All stakeholders shall:

- Report genuine ethical concerns.
- Cooperate during investigations.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Avoid retaliation against complainants.
- Promote ethical governance.

12.12 False or Malicious Complaints

The University encourages responsible reporting.

Complaints made deliberately with false information, malicious intent, or to harass another individual may result in appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with University regulations.

An unsubstantiated complaint made in good faith shall not be considered a false complaint merely because it is not ultimately proven.

12.13 Awareness and Training

The University shall promote awareness of this Policy through:

- Student orientation programmes.
- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).
- Administrative staff training.
- Ethics workshops.
- Awareness campaigns.
- Digital learning modules.
- Periodic policy dissemination.

12.14 Monitoring and Review

The University Ethical Committee shall periodically:

- Review implementation of this Policy.
- Monitor reporting trends.
- Evaluate effectiveness of complaint handling.
- Recommend improvements.

- Maintain annual statistics while preserving confidentiality.
- Update the Policy based on statutory requirements and institutional needs.

12.15 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to creating an institutional culture where every stakeholder can report ethical concerns without fear and with confidence that concerns will be addressed fairly, confidentially, and promptly. The University views whistleblowing as an essential component of good governance, institutional integrity, and continuous quality improvement.

By implementing this Whistleblower Policy, the University strengthens transparency, accountability, ethical leadership, and stakeholder trust while supporting the objectives of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and institutional practices that contribute to excellence under the QS World University Rankings.

Chapter 13

Whistleblower Policy

13.1 Introduction

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering a culture of integrity, accountability, transparency, fairness, and ethical governance. The University believes that maintaining the highest ethical standards requires the active participation of every member of the University community in identifying and reporting unethical, illegal, or improper practices.

The Whistleblower Policy provides a safe, confidential, and impartial mechanism through which stakeholders can report concerns relating to unethical conduct, misconduct, corruption, fraud, abuse of authority, financial irregularities, academic malpractice, safety violations, discrimination, harassment, conflicts of interest, or any other activity that is inconsistent with the University's values or applicable laws.

The University recognizes that individuals who report genuine concerns in good faith perform an important service in protecting institutional integrity. Therefore, VISTAS is committed to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, victimization, intimidation, discrimination, or any adverse consequences arising from legitimate disclosures.

This Policy supports the University's commitment to good governance and complements the ethical principles promoted under the University Code of Ethics.

13.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Whistleblower Policy are to:

- Promote a culture of honesty, integrity, accountability, and transparency.
- Encourage early reporting of unethical practices and policy violations.
- Provide a secure, confidential, and accessible reporting mechanism.
- Protect whistleblowers acting in good faith from retaliation.
- Ensure fair, impartial, and timely investigation of complaints.
- Prevent fraud, corruption, misuse of authority, and institutional misconduct.
- Strengthen stakeholder confidence in institutional governance.
- Support compliance with statutory regulations and quality assurance frameworks.
- Promote continuous institutional improvement through ethical accountability.

13.3 Scope

This Policy applies to all members of the University community, including:

- Students
- Faculty members

- Administrative staff
- Technical and laboratory personnel
- University officers
- Members of statutory bodies and committees
- Contractual employees
- Consultants and advisors
- Visiting faculty
- Alumni engaged in University activities
- Vendors, suppliers, contractors, and service providers
- Any individual representing or working on behalf of the University

The Policy covers all academic, administrative, financial, operational, and institutional activities conducted within or on behalf of the University.

13.4 Ethical Principles

Implementation of this Policy shall be guided by the following principles:

- Integrity
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Fairness
- Confidentiality
- Natural Justice

- Impartial Investigation
- Protection from Retaliation
- Good Faith Reporting
- Respect for Human Dignity

13.5 Reportable Matters

The following matters may be reported under this Policy.

Academic Misconduct

- Examination malpractice
- Plagiarism
- Fabrication of academic records
- Falsification of attendance
- Unauthorized modification of marks
- Academic fraud
- Misrepresentation of qualifications

Financial Misconduct

- Fraud
- Corruption
- Bribery
- Embezzlement
- Misappropriation of University funds

- Procurement irregularities
- Financial manipulation
- Unauthorized expenditure

Administrative Misconduct

- Abuse of authority
- Nepotism
- Favouritism
- Conflict of interest
- Deliberate violation of University policies
- Misuse of official position
- Improper allocation of institutional resources

Human Resource Misconduct

- Workplace harassment
- Bullying
- Discrimination
- Victimization
- Retaliation
- Sexual harassment
- Unethical employment practices

Digital and Information Security Violations

- Unauthorized access to information systems
- Cybersecurity breaches
- Data theft
- Privacy violations
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information
- Misuse of Artificial Intelligence
- Digital fraud

Safety and Environmental Violations

- Laboratory safety violations
- Fire safety violations
- Biomedical waste mismanagement
- Environmental pollution
- Unsafe working conditions
- Failure to follow disaster preparedness procedures

Other Ethical Violations

- Forgery
- Theft of institutional property
- Misrepresentation
- Breach of confidentiality
- Serious violations of University policies

- Any act that damages the University's reputation or public trust

13.6 Matters Not Covered

The following matters shall normally be dealt with under separate institutional procedures:

- Student examination revaluation
- Routine academic grievances
- Admission-related appeals
- Employee service matters governed by HR policies
- Salary or promotion disputes
- Matters pending before courts or statutory authorities
- Personal complaints unrelated to ethical misconduct

13.7 Reporting Mechanism

Whistleblower complaints may be submitted through any of the following channels:

- Chairperson, University Ethical Committee
- Registrar
- University Ethics Cell
- Official institutional e-mail designated for ethics complaints
- Online Ethics/Grievance Portal
- Written confidential complaint submitted in a sealed cover
- Authorized reporting mechanism approved by the University

Where possible, complaints should include:

- Name and contact details of the complainant
- Description of the incident
- Date, time, and place
- Persons involved
- Supporting evidence
- Names of witnesses, if available

Anonymous complaints may also be considered if supported by credible evidence.

13.8 Good Faith Reporting

A whistleblower is expected to:

- Report concerns honestly.
- Provide factual information to the best of their knowledge.
- Cooperate during investigations.
- Avoid malicious or intentionally false allegations.

A complaint made in good faith shall remain protected even if subsequent investigation does not establish wrongdoing.

13.9 Protection of Whistleblowers

The University shall ensure that whistleblowers acting in good faith are protected from:

- Harassment

- Victimization
- Intimidation
- Threats
- Retaliation
- Academic disadvantage
- Employment discrimination
- Unfair evaluation
- Transfer or demotion due to reporting
- Any other adverse action arising solely from the disclosure

The identity of the whistleblower shall remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law or is essential for a fair investigation.

13.10 Confidentiality

The University shall:

- Maintain confidentiality throughout the investigation.
- Restrict access to complaint records.
- Protect sensitive institutional information.
- Preserve evidence securely.
- Ensure that investigation reports are shared only with authorized personnel.

13.11 Investigation Procedure

Every complaint shall be processed through the following stages:

Stage 1 – Receipt of Complaint

The complaint is received and acknowledged.

Stage 2 – Preliminary Assessment

The University Ethical Committee determines whether the complaint falls within the scope of this Policy.

Stage 3 – Registration

Eligible complaints are formally registered and assigned a confidential reference number.

Stage 4 – Investigation

The Committee collects evidence, reviews records, interviews relevant persons, and evaluates the facts objectively.

Stage 5 – Findings

The investigation team prepares a report containing observations, evidence, conclusions, and recommendations.

Stage 6 – Decision

The Competent Authority reviews the recommendations and approves appropriate corrective or disciplinary action.

Stage 7 – Implementation

Approved actions are implemented by the concerned authorities.

Stage 8 – Closure

The case is formally closed, documented, and archived with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality.

13.12 Roles and Responsibilities

University Ethical Committee

The Committee shall:

- Receive whistleblower complaints.
- Ensure impartial investigation.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Recommend corrective actions.
- Monitor implementation.
- Maintain official records.
- Submit annual compliance reports.

Registrar

The Registrar shall:

- Provide administrative support.
- Facilitate implementation of Committee recommendations.
- Maintain institutional records.
- Ensure timely follow-up.

Heads of Schools and Departments

Heads shall:

- Encourage ethical reporting.
- Cooperate during investigations.
- Implement corrective actions.
- Promote awareness of the Policy.

Faculty, Staff and Students

All stakeholders shall:

- Report genuine ethical concerns.
- Cooperate with investigations.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Refrain from retaliation.
- Promote ethical governance.

13.13 Corrective and Disciplinary Measures

Where misconduct is established, the University may initiate appropriate actions including:

- Counselling
- Written warning
- Corrective training
- Withdrawal of responsibilities
- Recovery of losses where applicable
- Suspension
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Termination of services (where warranted)
- Student disciplinary action
- Referral to statutory authorities when required by law

Corrective measures shall always follow the principles of natural justice and due process.

13.14 False or Malicious Complaints

Knowingly submitting false, fabricated, or malicious complaints is itself an ethical violation.

Where it is established that a complaint was intentionally false or made with malicious intent, the University may initiate appropriate disciplinary action.

A complaint made honestly and in good faith shall not be treated as false merely because the allegations could not be substantiated.

13.15 Awareness and Capacity Building

The University shall conduct:

- Student orientation programmes.
- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).
- Administrative staff training.
- Ethics awareness workshops.
- Digital ethics training.
- Governance and compliance seminars.
- Awareness campaigns on whistleblower protection.
- Periodic dissemination of the Policy through institutional communication channels.

13.16 Monitoring and Review

The University Ethical Committee shall:

- Monitor implementation of the Policy.

- Review trends in complaints and resolutions.
- Recommend preventive measures.
- Prepare annual compliance reports.
- Review policy effectiveness periodically.
- Recommend revisions based on statutory changes, stakeholder feedback, and emerging governance practices.

13.17 Alignment with National Quality Frameworks

This Policy is aligned with the principles and expectations of:

- University Grants Commission (UGC)
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC)
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)
- Good Governance Guidelines issued by statutory authorities
- International best practices in higher education governance
- Institutional quality initiatives contributing to the QS World University Rankings

13.18 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) reaffirms its commitment to fostering an institutional culture in which ethical concerns can be reported safely, investigated fairly, and resolved transparently. The University recognizes

whistleblowing as an essential element of good governance and institutional accountability. By implementing this Policy, VISTAS seeks to strengthen stakeholder trust, safeguard institutional integrity, uphold ethical standards, and promote continuous quality improvement in teaching, learning, administration, and community engagement.

Chapter 14

Ethics Review

14.1 Introduction

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to promoting ethical governance, integrity, accountability, transparency, and responsible decision-making in all academic and administrative activities. The Ethics Review process provides a structured mechanism for evaluating institutional proposals, policies, programmes, activities, and initiatives to ensure that they are consistent with the University's ethical principles, statutory requirements, and institutional values.

The Ethics Review process aims to identify ethical issues at an early stage, minimize institutional risks, ensure fairness, protect stakeholder interests, and strengthen public confidence in the University's governance. It supports ethical leadership and continuous quality improvement while fostering a culture of responsibility and compliance.

This chapter applies primarily to non-research institutional activities. Research involving human participants, animals, or biosafety shall be governed by the respective Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC), Institutional Animal Ethics Committee (IAEC), Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBSC), or other applicable regulatory bodies.

14.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Ethics Review process are to:

- Promote ethical decision-making across the University.
- Ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in institutional activities.
- Review proposals for compliance with ethical principles and University policies.

- Identify and mitigate ethical, legal, operational, and reputational risks.
- Protect the rights, dignity, privacy, and interests of stakeholders.
- Strengthen institutional governance and quality assurance.
- Promote consistency in ethical review and institutional decision-making.
- Support compliance with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and international good governance practices.

14.3 Scope

The Ethics Review process applies to institutional activities including, but not limited to:

- University policies and regulations.
- Academic programmes and curriculum revisions.
- Student welfare initiatives.
- Digital learning and online education practices.
- Artificial Intelligence applications.
- Administrative reforms.
- Data management and information governance.
- Student feedback systems.
- Faculty development initiatives.
- Community engagement and extension activities.
- Industry collaborations.
- Consultancy and outreach programmes.

- Institutional quality enhancement initiatives.
- New technologies affecting students or employees.
- Ethical concerns referred by University authorities.

This Policy does not replace statutory regulatory approvals required under applicable laws.

14.4 Ethical Principles

The Ethics Review shall be guided by the following principles:

- Integrity.
- Honesty.
- Transparency.
- Accountability.
- Fairness.
- Respect for human dignity.
- Equality and non-discrimination.
- Inclusiveness.
- Confidentiality.
- Privacy and data protection.
- Professional responsibility.
- Sustainability.
- Social responsibility.

- Responsible use of technology.
- Compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

14.5 Types of Ethics Review

The University Ethical Committee may adopt different levels of review depending on the nature and potential impact of the proposal.

Exempt Review

Applicable to routine administrative matters, awareness programmes, policy updates, and activities involving minimal ethical implications.

Expedited Review

Applicable to proposals involving limited ethical concerns, moderate institutional impact, or minor procedural changes requiring timely consideration.

Full Committee Review

Applicable to proposals involving significant ethical, legal, technological, administrative, financial, reputational, or stakeholder implications. Such proposals shall be reviewed during a scheduled meeting of the University Ethical Committee.

14.6 Ethics Review Criteria

During the review process, the Committee shall evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with University Vision, Mission, and Core Values.
- Compliance with applicable laws and statutory regulations.
- Consistency with University policies and ethical principles.
- Protection of stakeholder rights and interests.

- Fairness and equity.
- Privacy and confidentiality.
- Data protection and cybersecurity.
- Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies.
- Conflict of interest management.
- Institutional reputation.
- Financial and operational implications.
- Health, safety, and environmental considerations.
- Sustainability and social responsibility.
- Feasibility of implementation.
- Risk mitigation measures.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

14.7 Ethics Review Process

The Ethics Review process shall normally include the following stages:

Step 1 – Submission

The concerned department submits the proposal, policy, programme, or initiative to the University Ethical Committee using the prescribed format with all supporting documents.

Step 2 – Preliminary Screening

The Member Secretary reviews the submission for completeness and determines whether sufficient information has been provided.

Step 3 – Risk Classification

The proposal is classified based on ethical risk:

- Minimal Risk
- Low Risk
- Moderate Risk
- High Risk

The level of risk determines the type of review required.

Step 4 – Ethics Review

The Committee examines the proposal considering:

- Ethical principles
- Institutional policies
- Legal compliance
- Conflict of interest
- Stakeholder impact
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Data protection
- Responsible AI use
- Sustainability
- Quality assurance requirements

Where necessary, subject experts may be invited to provide technical advice.

Step 5 – Committee Decision

The Committee may recommend:

- Approved.
- Approved with Conditions.
- Revision Required.
- Deferred for Additional Information.
- Not Approved.

Recommendations shall be documented with appropriate justification.

Step 6 – Communication

The decision shall be communicated to the concerned department along with any conditions, recommendations, or corrective actions.

Step 7 – Monitoring

Approved proposals shall be monitored periodically to ensure continued compliance with ethical requirements.

Step 8 – Review of Amendments

Any significant modification to an approved proposal shall be resubmitted for ethics review before implementation.

14.8 Roles and Responsibilities

University Ethical Committee

The Committee shall:

- Review institutional proposals.
- Conduct ethical evaluations.
- Recommend approvals or modifications.

- Ensure fairness and transparency.
- Monitor implementation.
- Maintain confidential records.
- Recommend policy improvements.
- Submit annual reports to University authorities.

Chairperson

The Chairperson shall:

- Lead Committee meetings.
- Ensure impartial review.
- Facilitate ethical decision-making.
- Approve Committee recommendations.

Member Secretary

The Member Secretary shall:

- Receive proposals.
- Coordinate meetings.
- Maintain documentation.
- Communicate Committee decisions.
- Monitor implementation.

Committee Members

Members shall:

- Review proposals objectively.

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Declare conflicts of interest.
- Participate actively in discussions.
- Recommend improvements where appropriate.

Concerned Departments

Departments shall:

- Submit complete proposals.
- Provide accurate information.
- Implement Committee recommendations.
- Report significant changes requiring further review.

14.9 Conflict of Interest

All Committee members shall disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest before participating in the review.

Members with a conflict of interest shall:

- Declare the conflict.
- Refrain from participating in discussions related to the proposal.
- Abstain from voting on the concerned matter.

14.10 Documentation

The following records shall be maintained securely:

- Ethics Review applications.
- Review checklists.
- Risk assessment reports.
- Meeting agendas.
- Minutes of meetings.
- Decisions and recommendations.
- Approval letters.
- Monitoring reports.
- Compliance reports.
- Amendment requests.
- Annual Ethics Review reports.

Records shall be retained in accordance with University record retention policies.

14.11 Monitoring and Compliance

The University Ethical Committee shall:

- Monitor implementation of approved proposals.
- Conduct periodic compliance reviews.
- Review corrective actions.
- Verify implementation of Committee recommendations.
- Recommend additional safeguards where necessary.

- Report significant ethical concerns to the competent authority.

14.12 Capacity Building

The University shall organize regular programmes on:

- Ethics Review procedures.
- Ethical decision-making.
- Good governance.
- Responsible Artificial Intelligence.
- Data privacy and information security.
- Conflict of interest management.
- Academic integrity.
- Institutional ethics and compliance.

Faculty, administrative staff, committee members, and University officers shall be encouraged to participate in these programmes.

14.13 Continuous Improvement

The Ethics Review framework shall be reviewed periodically to:

- Incorporate amendments in statutory regulations.
- Address emerging ethical challenges.
- Strengthen institutional governance.
- Improve review efficiency.

- Enhance stakeholder confidence.
- Align with evolving national and international best practices.

Feedback from stakeholders shall be considered while revising procedures and review mechanisms.

14.14 Alignment with National and International Quality Frameworks

The Ethics Review process is designed to support institutional excellence by aligning with:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) quality indicators.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) initiatives.
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- Good governance principles for higher education institutions.
- International ethical governance practices that contribute to institutional excellence and the QS World University Rankings.

14.15 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into institutional planning, decision-making, academic administration, and quality assurance. Through a structured Ethics Review process, the University seeks to promote integrity, transparency, accountability, responsible leadership, and continuous improvement.

The University Ethical Committee shall periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Ethics Review process and recommend enhancements to ensure that institutional practices remain

aligned with evolving legal requirements, technological advancements, stakeholder expectations, and national and international standards of ethical governance.

Chapter 15

Monitoring and Compliance

15.1 Introduction

Effective monitoring is essential to ensure that ethical principles, institutional policies, and governance practices are consistently implemented across all academic and administrative functions. VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to establishing a systematic monitoring framework that promotes accountability, transparency, continuous improvement, and compliance with statutory requirements.

The Monitoring and Compliance framework enables the University to assess the implementation of the Code of Ethics, identify areas requiring improvement, manage institutional risks, and ensure that ethical standards are integrated into everyday decision-making. Regular monitoring also supports evidence-based governance, enhances stakeholder confidence, and contributes to institutional excellence.

This chapter provides the procedures, responsibilities, performance indicators, reporting mechanisms, and review processes for monitoring compliance with the University's Ethics Policy.

15.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Monitoring and Compliance framework are to:

- Ensure effective implementation of the University Code of Ethics.
- Monitor adherence to ethical standards across academic and administrative units.
- Promote transparency, accountability, and responsible governance.
- Identify ethical risks and implement timely corrective measures.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of ethics-related policies and programmes.

- Support institutional quality assurance and accreditation requirements.
- Encourage continuous improvement through periodic review and feedback.
- Align institutional practices with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, QS World University Rankings, and other applicable regulatory requirements.

15.3 Scope

The Monitoring and Compliance framework applies to all University stakeholders and covers:

- Academic activities.
- Teaching and learning practices.
- Student assessment and examination processes.
- Administrative operations.
- Faculty and staff conduct.
- Student conduct and discipline.
- Digital governance and responsible use of technology.
- Artificial Intelligence applications.
- Data privacy and information security.
- Financial and procurement processes.
- Community engagement and extension activities.
- Environmental sustainability initiatives.
- Institutional quality assurance and governance.

15.4 Principles of Monitoring

Monitoring activities shall be guided by the following principles:

- Integrity and ethical conduct.
- Transparency in reporting.
- Fairness and impartiality.
- Confidentiality of information.
- Accountability at all organizational levels.
- Evidence-based evaluation.
- Continuous improvement.
- Stakeholder participation.
- Compliance with statutory regulations.
- Timely corrective action.

15.5 Monitoring Framework

The University shall implement a structured monitoring system consisting of:

Routine Monitoring

Regular monitoring conducted by Schools, Departments, Centres, and administrative units to ensure day-to-day compliance with institutional policies.

Periodic Compliance Reviews

Scheduled reviews conducted by the University Ethical Committee to assess implementation of ethical policies and identify areas requiring improvement.

Internal Audits

Periodic audits to verify compliance with ethical, academic, financial, administrative, digital, and operational standards.

Special Reviews

Focused evaluations initiated in response to complaints, ethical concerns, emerging risks, or directions from the competent authority.

Annual Institutional Review

A comprehensive annual assessment of the University's ethical governance framework, leading to recommendations for policy enhancement and strategic planning.

15.6 Key Monitoring Areas

The University Ethical Committee shall monitor compliance in the following areas:

Ethical Governance

- Implementation of the Code of Ethics.
- Compliance with institutional policies.
- Committee effectiveness.
- Ethical decision-making processes.

Academic Integrity

- Examination integrity.
- Prevention of plagiarism.
- Fair assessment practices.
- Responsible academic conduct.

Professional Conduct

- Faculty and staff behaviour.
- Student discipline.
- Respectful workplace practices.
- Compliance with institutional regulations.

Responsible Artificial Intelligence

- Ethical use of AI in teaching, learning, administration, and assessment.
- Human oversight of AI-assisted decisions.
- Responsible use of generative AI tools.
- AI awareness and capacity-building initiatives.

Data Privacy and Information Security

- Protection of confidential information.
- Cybersecurity compliance.
- Secure handling of institutional records.
- Responsible digital practices.

Conflict of Interest

- Disclosure of conflicts.
- Management of identified conflicts.
- Compliance with institutional procedures.

Whistleblower Mechanism

- Functioning of reporting channels.

- Timeliness of investigations.
- Protection against retaliation.
- Implementation of corrective actions.

Environmental and Social Responsibility

- Green Campus initiatives.
- Waste management.
- Energy conservation.
- Community engagement.
- Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR).

15.7 Roles and Responsibilities

University Ethical Committee

The University Ethical Committee shall:

- Monitor implementation of the Code of Ethics.
- Conduct periodic compliance reviews.
- Evaluate ethical risks.
- Review monitoring reports.
- Recommend corrective and preventive actions.
- Prepare annual ethics reports.
- Recommend policy revisions where necessary.

Chairperson

The Chairperson shall:

- Provide leadership for monitoring activities.
- Review Committee findings.
- Ensure impartiality and transparency.
- Present recommendations to the University authorities.

Member Secretary

The Member Secretary shall:

- Coordinate monitoring activities.
- Maintain monitoring records.
- Compile compliance reports.
- Communicate Committee recommendations.
- Follow up on corrective actions.

Heads of Schools and Departments

Heads shall:

- Monitor compliance within their respective units.
- Ensure implementation of ethical policies.
- Submit periodic compliance reports.
- Address identified gaps promptly.
- Promote ethics awareness among faculty, staff, and students.

Faculty and Administrative Staff

Faculty and staff shall:

- Comply with institutional ethical policies.
- Participate in monitoring activities.
- Cooperate during audits and reviews.
- Report ethical concerns through appropriate mechanisms.
- Support implementation of corrective actions.

Students

Students shall:

- Follow the University's Code of Ethics.
- Participate responsibly in ethics awareness programmes.
- Report genuine ethical concerns.
- Cooperate during investigations where applicable.

15.8 Monitoring Indicators (Key Performance Indicators)

The University may monitor the effectiveness of ethical governance using measurable indicators such as:

- Number of ethics awareness programmes conducted.
- Percentage of faculty and staff trained in ethics and compliance.
- Student participation in ethics orientation programmes.
- Number of ethics-related complaints received and resolved.
- Timeliness of grievance resolution.
- Academic integrity violations reported.

- Plagiarism compliance rates.
- Responsible AI awareness initiatives conducted.
- Conflict of interest disclosures submitted.
- Compliance audit observations.
- Implementation status of corrective actions.
- Stakeholder satisfaction with ethical governance processes.
- Environmental sustainability initiatives implemented.

These indicators may be reviewed periodically to reflect evolving institutional priorities.

15.9 Reporting Mechanism

Monitoring reports shall include:

- Activities monitored.
- Compliance status.
- Observations and findings.
- Risks identified.
- Corrective and preventive actions recommended.
- Timeline for implementation.
- Follow-up status.
- Recommendations for improvement.

Reports may be submitted quarterly, half-yearly, or annually, depending on the nature of the activity.

15.10 Corrective and Preventive Actions

Where non-compliance is identified, appropriate actions may include:

- Counselling and guidance.
- Additional awareness programmes.
- Policy clarification.
- Capacity-building initiatives.
- Administrative improvements.
- Process revisions.
- Corrective action plans.
- Follow-up reviews.
- Disciplinary action where warranted under University regulations.

The focus shall be on preventing recurrence and strengthening institutional systems.

15.11 Documentation and Record Management

The University shall maintain appropriate records relating to:

- Ethics Committee meetings.
- Compliance reports.
- Audit findings.
- Corrective action plans.
- Training programmes.

- Monitoring checklists.
- Risk assessments.
- Annual ethics reports.
- Policy review documents.

All records shall be maintained securely and retained in accordance with the University's record retention policy.

15.12 Awareness and Capacity Building

To strengthen ethical compliance, the University shall regularly organize:

- Ethics orientation programmes for students.
- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs).
- Administrative staff training.
- Workshops on academic integrity.
- Sessions on responsible Artificial Intelligence.
- Cybersecurity awareness programmes.
- Governance and compliance seminars.
- Leadership development programmes.
- Awareness campaigns on institutional values and ethical practices.

15.13 Continuous Improvement

Monitoring is a continuous process designed to improve institutional performance. The University Ethical Committee shall:

- Periodically review monitoring outcomes.
- Analyse trends and recurring issues.
- Benchmark institutional practices against national and international standards.
- Seek feedback from stakeholders.
- Recommend revisions to policies, procedures, and training programmes.
- Encourage innovation in ethics governance and compliance management.

Lessons learned from monitoring activities shall be incorporated into future planning and institutional quality enhancement initiatives.

15.14 Alignment with Quality Assurance Frameworks

The Monitoring and Compliance framework supports institutional excellence by aligning with:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) quality indicators.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) initiatives.
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- University strategic planning and governance requirements.
- International best practices in higher education governance.
- Institutional quality initiatives contributing to the QS World University Rankings.

15.15 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering an ethical, transparent, and accountable institutional environment through a robust Monitoring and Compliance framework. The University recognizes that continuous monitoring, regular evaluation, stakeholder participation, and evidence-based decision-making are essential for sustaining ethical governance and institutional excellence.

Through periodic monitoring, systematic compliance reviews, and continuous quality improvement, VISTAS will ensure that ethical values remain embedded in all academic, administrative, and strategic activities, thereby strengthening institutional credibility, stakeholder trust, and long-term organizational effectiveness.

Chapter 16

Annual Review and Continuous Improvement

16.1 Introduction

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) recognizes that ethical governance is a dynamic process requiring continuous evaluation, reflection, and improvement. The Annual Review serves as a systematic mechanism to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the University's Code of Ethics, ethical governance framework, institutional policies, and compliance mechanisms.

The Annual Review enables the University to evaluate achievements, identify challenges, measure institutional performance, and recommend strategic improvements. It also ensures that ethical governance remains aligned with emerging educational trends, technological advancements, statutory requirements, stakeholder expectations, and national and international quality assurance frameworks.

Through periodic assessment and evidence-based decision-making, the University strengthens its commitment to integrity, accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, and continuous quality enhancement.

16.2 Objectives

The objectives of the Annual Review are to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the University Code of Ethics.
- Assess compliance with institutional ethical policies.
- Review implementation of recommendations issued by the University Ethical Committee.
- Identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
- Monitor institutional ethical performance using measurable indicators.
- Strengthen accountability and good governance.
- Support evidence-based policy revision and strategic planning.
- Promote continuous quality enhancement in alignment with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, and QS World University Rankings.

16.3 Scope

The Annual Review covers all major academic, administrative, and governance activities, including:

- Implementation of the Code of Ethics.
- Academic integrity and examination ethics.
- Faculty and staff professional conduct.
- Student conduct and ethical behaviour.
- Responsible use of Artificial Intelligence.
- Data privacy and information security.

- Conflict of interest management.
- Whistleblower complaints and grievance redressal.
- Ethics awareness programmes and training.
- Institutional compliance with statutory regulations.
- Environmental sustainability initiatives.
- Community engagement and Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR).
- Monitoring and compliance activities.
- Recommendations from previous Annual Review reports.

16.4 Annual Review Framework

The University Ethical Committee shall conduct an Annual Review using a structured framework consisting of the following stages:

Stage 1 – Planning

- Prepare the Annual Review schedule.
- Define review objectives and evaluation criteria.
- Identify key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Notify Schools, Departments, and administrative units.

Stage 2 – Data Collection

Information shall be collected from:

- Schools and Departments.
- Administrative offices.

- IQAC reports.
- Internal audit reports.
- Ethics Committee records.
- Student feedback.
- Faculty and staff feedback.
- Compliance reports.
- Training records.
- Grievance and whistleblower reports.
- Institutional performance data.

Stage 3 – Evaluation

The Committee shall evaluate:

- Policy implementation.
- Compliance status.
- Effectiveness of ethics initiatives.
- Risk management practices.
- Stakeholder participation.
- Achievement of annual objectives.
- Institutional strengths and improvement areas.

Stage 4 – Gap Analysis

The Committee shall identify:

- Areas of full compliance.
- Partial compliance.
- Non-compliance.
- Emerging ethical risks.
- Opportunities for institutional improvement.

Stage 5 – Recommendations

Based on the review, the Committee shall recommend:

- Policy revisions.
- Corrective actions.
- Capacity-building initiatives.
- Process improvements.
- New ethical initiatives.
- Resource requirements.
- Strategic priorities for the next academic year.

Stage 6 – Reporting

An Annual Ethics Review Report shall be prepared and submitted to the Competent Authority for consideration and implementation.

16.5 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The Annual Review may evaluate institutional performance using indicators such as:

Governance Indicators

- Ethics Committee meetings conducted.
- Attendance of Committee members.
- Implementation rate of Committee decisions.
- Timely submission of compliance reports.

Academic Integrity Indicators

- Number of academic integrity awareness programmes.
- Plagiarism screening compliance.
- Academic misconduct cases reported and resolved.
- Examination integrity measures implemented.

Capacity Building Indicators

- Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) conducted.
- Administrative ethics training programmes.
- Student ethics orientation programmes.
- Responsible AI awareness programmes.

Complaint Management Indicators

- Number of grievances received.
- Number of whistleblower complaints.
- Resolution rate.
- Average resolution time.
- Corrective actions implemented.

Digital Governance Indicators

- Responsible AI implementation.
- Cybersecurity awareness programmes.
- Data privacy compliance.
- Digital ethics initiatives.

Sustainability Indicators

- Green Campus initiatives implemented.
- Energy conservation measures.
- Waste management activities.
- Community outreach programmes.
- Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) activities.

16.6 Roles and Responsibilities

University Ethical Committee

The Committee shall:

- Coordinate the Annual Review process.
- Evaluate implementation of ethical policies.
- Review institutional performance.
- Recommend corrective and preventive actions.
- Prepare the Annual Ethics Review Report.
- Recommend revisions to the Code of Ethics.

- Monitor implementation of recommendations.

Chairperson

The Chairperson shall:

- Lead the Annual Review process.
- Ensure impartial evaluation.
- Present the Annual Report to the University authorities.
- Monitor implementation of approved recommendations.

Member Secretary

The Member Secretary shall:

- Coordinate data collection.
- Maintain review documentation.
- Prepare the draft Annual Review Report.
- Communicate recommendations to concerned departments.
- Monitor follow-up actions.

Heads of Schools and Departments

Heads shall:

- Submit annual compliance reports.
- Provide supporting documentation.
- Implement recommendations.
- Monitor departmental improvements.
- Promote ethical awareness within their units.

Faculty and Administrative Staff

Faculty and staff shall:

- Participate in review activities.
- Provide required information.
- Cooperate during evaluations.
- Implement recommended improvements.
- Promote ethical practices within their areas of responsibility.

16.7 Annual Ethics Review Report

The Annual Review Report shall normally include:

- Executive Summary.
- Introduction.
- Scope of the Review.
- Methodology adopted.
- Activities conducted during the year.
- Performance against KPIs.
- Compliance status.
- Major achievements.
- Ethical concerns identified.
- Risk assessment.
- Corrective actions implemented.

- Good practices and innovations.
- Recommendations for improvement.
- Action Plan for the next academic year.

The report shall serve as an important document for institutional planning, governance, accreditation, and quality enhancement.

16.8 Action Taken Report (ATR)

Following approval of the Annual Review Report:

- Each concerned department shall prepare an Action Taken Report (ATR).
- Responsibilities and timelines shall be clearly assigned.
- Progress shall be monitored periodically by the University Ethical Committee.
- Completed actions shall be documented for future reference.
- Pending actions shall be reviewed during subsequent Committee meetings.

The ATR ensures accountability and effective implementation of recommendations.

16.9 Benchmarking and Best Practices

To promote excellence, the University shall benchmark its ethical governance practices against:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC).

- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- National and international higher education best practices.
- Emerging trends in ethics, governance, Artificial Intelligence, digital transformation, and sustainability.

Benchmarking outcomes shall inform future policy revisions and strategic initiatives.

16.10 Continuous Improvement

The University shall adopt the Plan–Do–Check–Act (PDCA) approach for continuous quality improvement.

Plan

Develop annual ethics objectives, policies, and action plans.

Do

Implement approved initiatives, training programmes, awareness campaigns, and governance practices.

Check

Monitor implementation through audits, reviews, stakeholder feedback, and performance indicators.

Act

Implement corrective actions, revise policies, and strengthen institutional systems based on review outcomes.

This continuous improvement cycle shall ensure that ethical governance remains effective, relevant, and responsive to institutional needs.

16.11 Documentation and Record Management

The following records shall be maintained securely:

- Annual Ethics Review Reports.
- Action Taken Reports (ATR).
- Compliance reports.
- Ethics Committee minutes.
- Monitoring reports.
- Audit findings.
- Training records.
- Stakeholder feedback.
- Risk assessment reports.
- Policy revision documents.

Records shall be retained in accordance with the University's document retention and record management policies.

16.12 Policy Review

The University Ethical Committee shall review this Policy Manual:

- At least once every academic year.
- Whenever there are changes in statutory or regulatory requirements.
- Following significant institutional reforms.
- In response to emerging ethical or technological challenges.
- Based on stakeholder feedback and audit observations.

Policy revisions shall be submitted to the Competent Authority for approval before implementation.

16.13 Alignment with Quality Assurance Frameworks

The Annual Review framework supports institutional excellence by aligning with:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) accreditation criteria.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) quality initiatives.
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- Institutional Strategic Plan.
- Good Governance practices for Higher Education Institutions.
- International quality assurance principles supporting the QS World University Rankings.

16.14 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to fostering a culture of ethical excellence through systematic annual review, evidence-based evaluation, and continuous quality improvement. The University recognizes that ethical governance is a shared responsibility requiring active participation from all stakeholders.

By conducting regular Annual Reviews and implementing continuous improvement initiatives, VISTAS will strengthen institutional integrity, enhance stakeholder confidence, improve governance effectiveness, and support excellence in teaching, learning, administration, innovation, and community engagement. This commitment reinforces the University's mission to achieve sustainable institutional growth while maintaining the highest

standards of ethics, accountability, and quality in alignment with national and international higher education frameworks.

Chapter 17

Annexures

17.1 Introduction

The Annexures form an integral part of the University Ethics Policy Manual and provide standardized formats, templates, declarations, checklists, registers, and reporting mechanisms to facilitate the effective implementation of ethical governance across VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS).

These annexures serve as operational tools for the University Ethical Committee, faculty members, administrative staff, students, and University authorities to ensure consistency, transparency, accountability, documentation, and regulatory compliance. They also support quality assurance initiatives aligned with the requirements of the University Grants Commission (UGC), National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF), and internationally recognized institutional governance practices.

The annexures may be periodically revised by the University Ethical Committee with the approval of the Competent Authority to address emerging institutional requirements and statutory changes.

Annexure I

University Code of Ethics Declaration

Every faculty member, administrative staff member, and employee shall sign a declaration confirming that they:

- Have read and understood the University Code of Ethics.
- Agree to comply with all ethical policies and institutional regulations.
- Will maintain integrity, professionalism, confidentiality, and accountability.
- Will report ethical concerns through appropriate institutional mechanisms.
- Accept responsibility for complying with University ethical standards.

Suggested Fields

- Name
- Employee ID
- Department
- Designation
- Signature
- Date

Annexure II

Student Ethical Conduct Declaration

Students shall declare that they will:

- Maintain academic integrity.
- Avoid plagiarism and examination malpractice.
- Respect faculty, staff, and fellow students.
- Use Artificial Intelligence responsibly.
- Follow University regulations.
- Protect University property.
- Promote ethical behaviour on campus.

Suggested Fields

- Name
- Register Number

- Programme
- Year/Semester
- Signature
- Date

Annexure III

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

This form shall be completed whenever a committee member, faculty member, or administrator identifies an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest.

Suggested Fields

- Name
- Department
- Position
- Nature of Conflict
- Related Activity/Proposal
- Declaration
- Recommended Mitigation Measures
- Signature
- Date

Annexure IV

Ethics Review Application Form

Departments proposing new institutional initiatives requiring ethical review shall submit the following information:

- Title of Proposal
- Department
- Objectives
- Background
- Ethical Considerations
- Stakeholders Affected
- Data Privacy Issues
- AI Usage (if applicable)

- Risk Assessment
- Supporting Documents
- Head of Department Approval

Annexure V

Ethics Review Checklist

The University Ethical Committee may evaluate proposals using the following checklist:

- Proposal complete
- Objectives clearly defined
- Ethical principles addressed
- Conflict of Interest declared
- Privacy and confidentiality considered
- Data protection measures included
- AI use appropriately addressed

- Institutional risks identified
- Regulatory compliance confirmed
- Sustainability considerations included
- Monitoring plan available

Decision Options

- Approved
- Approved with Conditions
- Revision Required
- Deferred
- Not Approved

Annexure VI

Whistleblower Complaint Form

Individuals reporting ethical concerns may provide:

- Name (Optional if anonymous reporting is permitted)
- Contact Details
- Nature of Complaint
- Description of Incident
- Date and Location
- Persons Involved
- Supporting Evidence

- Witness Details
- Declaration of Good Faith
- Signature
- Date

Annexure VII

Ethics Incident Reporting Form

To report ethical violations involving students, faculty, staff, or institutional activities.

Suggested Fields

- Incident Number
- Date
- Department
- Description

- Persons Involved
- Immediate Action Taken
- Recommended Action
- Reporting Officer
- Signature

Annexure VIII

Annual Ethics Compliance Report Format

Each School or Department shall submit an Annual Ethics Compliance Report containing:

- Ethics awareness programmes conducted
- Faculty training
- Student orientation programmes
- Ethics Committee meetings

- Academic integrity initiatives
- Responsible AI initiatives
- Complaints received
- Corrective actions implemented
- Good practices adopted
- Future action plan

Annexure IX

Annual Ethics Action Plan

The Action Plan shall include:

- Objectives
- Planned activities
- Responsible persons
- Timeline

- Resources required
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Expected outcomes
- Review schedule

Annexure X

Monitoring and Compliance Checklist

The checklist may include:

- Code of Ethics implemented
- Faculty declaration completed
- Student declaration completed
- Ethics training conducted

- Conflict of Interest disclosures updated
- Whistleblower mechanism functioning
- Responsible AI practices implemented
- Data privacy measures complied with
- Academic integrity monitored
- Documentation maintained

Annexure XI

Ethics Committee Meeting Minutes Format

The standard Minutes shall include:

- Meeting Number
- Date and Venue

- Members Present
- Members Absent
- Agenda Items
- Discussion Summary
- Decisions Taken
- Action Points
- Responsibility Assigned
- Target Date
- Next Meeting Schedule

Annexure XII

Annual Ethics Calendar (Illustrative)

The University Ethical Committee may prepare an annual calendar covering:

- Committee meetings
- Ethics awareness programmes
- Faculty Development Programmes
- Student orientation
- Responsible AI workshops
- Academic integrity campaigns
- Monitoring visits
- Annual Review
- Policy revision activities

Annexure XIII

Ethics Training Attendance Register

Training records shall include:

- Programme Title

- Date
- Venue
- Resource Person
- Participants
- Department
- Signature
- Feedback Summary

Annexure XIV

Ethical Risk Assessment Matrix

Risk Level	Description	Review Type	Monitoring

Risk Level	Description	Review Type	Monitoring
Minimal	Routine institutional activity	Exempt Review	Routine monitoring
Low	Limited ethical concerns	Expedited Review	Periodic review
Moderate	Significant institutional implications	Full Committee Review	Enhanced monitoring
High	Major ethical, legal or reputational impact	Full Committee Review with Competent Authority oversight	Continuous monitoring

Annexure XV

Ethics Review Workflow

The Ethics Review process follows the sequence below:

1. Submission of proposal.
2. Preliminary completeness check.
3. Risk classification (Minimal/Low/Moderate/High).
4. Assignment of review type (Exempt/Expedited/Full Review).
5. Ethics Committee evaluation.
6. Decision and recommendations.
7. Communication of decision.
8. Implementation and monitoring.
9. Review of amendments, adverse events, and corrective actions.
10. Annual review and documentation.

Annexure XVI

Key References

The University Ethics Policy Manual has been developed with reference to:

- University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations.
- National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) Manuals and Criteria.
- Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) Guidelines.
- National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF).
- University Statutes, Ordinances, and Academic Regulations.
- Institutional policies relating to academic integrity, grievance redressal, data privacy, and information security.
- UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (2021).
- OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations relevant to education, governance, equality, and sustainability.

17.2 Review and Revision of Annexures

The annexures shall be reviewed annually by the University Ethical Committee to ensure their continued relevance, effectiveness, and compliance with evolving statutory requirements and institutional needs. Amendments may be recommended based on changes in University policies, regulatory frameworks, technological developments, stakeholder feedback, and quality assurance requirements.

17.3 Institutional Commitment

VELS Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS) is committed to ensuring that these annexures serve as practical tools for implementing ethical governance across the University. Their consistent use will strengthen documentation, transparency, accountability, compliance, and continuous quality improvement while supporting institutional excellence in alignment with UGC, NEP 2020, NAAC, IQAC, NIRF, QS World University Rankings, and global best practices in higher education governance.