



## **RESEARCH INTEGRITY POLICIES**

*(Approved in the 56<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Board of Management held on 04.04.2019)*

Over the years, VIT has formulated several policies that set out procedures for good research. It is mandatory that all those who undertake research work at VIT are aware of the policies and guidelines. These are enunciated in the following sections.

Integrity and responsible conduct of research is the basis of VIT's research activities. It is necessary to build a relationship of trust between researchers, funders and research collaborators. It is further indispensable to build a trustworthy relationship between VIT researchers and society at large. Therefore, it is a fundamental obligation of all concerned within VIT's research community, whether they are students at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, or employees (technical and research staff and faculty), visiting researchers or collaborators, to ensure that their actions are of the highest integrity, and do not tarnish the institution's reputation. All those concerned with research at VIT must accept this obligation. On appointment, all persons involved in research at VIT shall sign a declaration of commitment to the upholding of the highest standards of research integrity.

The researcher, at any level, is expected to abide by the norms of Research Integrity policies of VIT.

### **Research Misconduct**

The responsible conduct of research covers accepted norms of behavior in all aspects that regulate the researcher to conduct his research with care, rigor, honesty, and respect for all. Good scholarship must be maintained in accordance with the VIT statement on Research Integrity. This covers the obligations to maintain full and accurate records of research and their storage in VIT, both in hard copy as well as electronic records. It also ensures that all those involved or quoted are given appropriate credit and recognition. Researchers must respect all matters relating to privacy and comply fully with all relevant laws and codes of ethical behavior pertaining to research.

### **Reporting Research Misconduct**

With these obligations in the conduct of research, comes the corollary, that there is also an obligation of those concerned to report observed, suspected or apparent misconduct and malpractices.

The fallout from any collaboration, not authorized by VIT, including any form of cheating and plagiarism, can have serious repercussions. It might also include an outright expulsion from VIT. Violations and deviation from expected norms of responsible conduct are tantamount to violation of research integrity.

Consequently, a breach of integrity in academic research is a very serious offense and can entitle longterm consequences affecting both VIT as well as the individual concerned.

For a student, the first violation can lead to an immediate “F” course grade with a warning slapped on. Any subsequent of an offense serious in nature could even lead to expulsion. The committee recommends that the concerned faculty can report such violations to the Dean, Academic Research.

After collating all such reports of misconduct, The Dean, Academic Research shall appoint an Investigating Committee for suggesting corrective measures on a case by case basis.

### **Research Integrity Policy**

1. Honesty in all aspects of Research
2. Accountability in the conduct of Research
3. Professional courtesy and fairness in working with others
4. Good stewardship of research on behalf of others
5. Researchers taking responsibility for the trustworthiness of their research.
6. **Research Methods:** All researchers are expected to adopt authorized research methods and then base conclusions only on the level of supporting evidence. Thereafter he/she must report all findings with honesty and interpret them fully.
7. **Research Records:** It is expected that clear records are maintained for subsequent verification and replication if necessary.
8. **Research Findings:** Data sharing and disseminating of research findings must be done openly and transparency is to be encouraged. This should be done as soon as the researchers have established all priority and ownership claims. Products that are assembled and designed in VIT can be taken out from its premises only after obtaining the approval from the authorities concerned.
9. **Authorship:** Full responsibility should be taken for all authorial contributions with regard to publication, funding applications, and any other form of research dissemination. Lists should include only those who meet authorship criteria.
10. **Acknowledgments in Publication:** All significant contributions must be acknowledged by the researcher and may include sponsors, funding agencies as well as commenters. However, the material included in acknowledgments should not clash with authorship criteria.
11. **Peer Review:** Researchers are often asked to conduct academic peer reviews and should provide the review reports fairly, promptly and rigorously.
12. **Research Misconduct:** Academic institutions are known to preserve the integrity of the research. This should be clearly followed by the researcher, and any suspicious behavior

and misconduct should be brought to the notice of the higher authorities. Misconduct can include plagiarism, falsification, and fabrication of data and all such irresponsible practices that can bring a bad name to the institution. Carelessness, slovenly done work and failure to report conflicting data, use of misleading analytical methods, should be thoroughly discouraged.

13. **Plagiarism:** As the term connotes, this involves ideas, figures, codes, data and written material without a proper acknowledgment or permission from the source.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- (i) Lifting whole sentences or parts of sentences from a book or thesis. This might also involve an internet source.
- (ii) Previously published data from one's own records can also be termed as self-plagiarism.
- (iii) Including material from class-notes, downloaded material in reports, presentations, and manuscripts also contribute to plagiarism.

14. **Cheating** falls under various categories:

- Copying of assignments, homework, manuscripts during exams or elsewhere, even prompting somebody else to copy, is termed as cheating.
- Unauthorized collaboration and use of unauthorized material from sources are also cheating.
- Falsifying and making up of data from dubious sources and using them in thesis and publications is also cheating.

Some guidelines for the proper conduct of research to safeguard against dishonesty and negligence are stated below:

- All experimental and computational work should use the proper and well-established methodology
- Not only primary data but also secondary data from readouts, laboratory notebooks and pictures should be stored in specific folders. Digital manipulation of photos should be saved for posterity, so that, they can be scrutinized later.
- Ensuring reproducibility of all simulations and experimentations is important. Data points and figures should not be included artificially by cherry-picking to make them look impressive.
- Lab notebooks must be maintained with utmost care. They should be bound with printed page numbers and should be amenable for subsequent checking. The practice of writing page numbers on every single page must be followed.
- One must use one's language as far as possible and must avoid copying and pasting from the internet.
- All previous reports, methods, and computer programs must be given appropriate citations. Otherwise, it shall be considered self-plagiarism.

Submission of the identical materials in different fora is completely unethical. All scientific and technical conferences, workshops, and journals prohibit these practices. Violations can have serious consequences for authors involved in fraudulent submissions.

**15. Conflict of Interest:** A clash of personal or private interests with professional activities can result in a potential conflict of interest, in a myriad of diverse activities such as teaching, research, publication, and work on committees, research funding, and consultancy. It is the institution's policy to protect professional independence whilst maintaining objectivity and commitment vigorously. The institution must also ensure that no impropriety arising from conflicts of interest appears in any form. Naturally, this need not be restricted to personal financial gain; it can extend to a wide range of academic activities which include activities concerned with an allotment of funds, writing of papers, recognition for some activity (whilst ignoring others) and even influencing public policy. It is essential that the credibility and transparency be maintained in VIT, and all potential conflicts must be written and recorded forwarded to the higher authorities. This will enable a decision on a case-by-case basis for any disciplinary action.

#### **16. Individual and Collective Responsibility**

**For Students:** They must check first and foremost all plagiarism content before submitting a thesis. The student should certify that they are fully aware of all the academic guidelines of VIT. A simple web-check does not always rule out plagiarism.

**For Faculty:** The faculty concerned should adopt proper methods not only for computations but also for experiments. Recorded data should be saved for future verification and references. Naturally, any conflicts that exist must be resolved through the Academic Research Office, which shall oversee all such issues relating to academic integrity.

#### **17. Unauthorized collaboration:**

- The students must strictly follow the instructions given by the guides while collaborating with their peers.
- All researchers must refrain from unsolicited and unauthorized collaborations.
- They are expected to sign an affidavit for plagiarism refraining from papers, Patents, and Thesis at the Bachelors/Masters/Doctoral level.

#### **18. Gender Discrimination:**

This involves the practice of treating a person (could be an applicant or an employee) unfavorably because of that person's sexual gender. It is also unlawful to harass a person based on gender.

#### **19. Sexual harassment**

Sexual harassment, both directly and by implication can be annoying and includes the following:

- All forms of sexual advances and physical contact
- Seeking sexual favors
- Passing remarks that are sexually colored
- Any other, verbal or non-verbal physical contact of a sexual nature
- Needless to mention strict disciplinary action will be taken by VIT be it a student or a staff member.
- The Internal Committee against sexual harassment will provide equal opportunity to all VIT personnel. This allows any person concerned to lodge complaints against sexual harassments in the workplace to the higher authorities.

#### **20. Animal Research Ethics**

If research work is done on animals, then it is necessary to obtain a clearance certificate from the Committee concerned.

#### **21. Proctor/Guide:**

Guides must be aware of all the regulations and guidelines of VIT. They should also create and develop an awareness amongst their scholars.

#### **22. Press and Media**

If any communication is sent to the press or media, it should be duly authorized by the authorized members of VIT.