

**CODE OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH  
NSS COLLEGE PANDALAM**



## **INTRODUCTION**

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

The NSS College Pandalam receives funds from various national government agencies like University Grants Commission, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Biotechnology etc. and state agencies like Kerala State Council for Science Technology and Environment, Center for Engineering Research and Development etc. , whose funding enables it to provide essential research resources to its scholarly community. It requires its members to adhere to the terms and conditions governing access to such resources, be they on paper or in digital format. The Institute invites its members (teaching staff, fellows, research students as well as administrative and support staff) to abide by the highest standards of integrity in their conduct of academic research and/or support to academic research activities.

# GOOD PRACTICE IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

## A. Academic Freedom, Integrity and Responsibility

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach study and pursue knowledge and research without unreasonable interference or restriction from law, institutional regulations or public pressure. Its basic elements include the freedom of scholars to inquire into any subject that evokes intellectual concern, to present findings, to publish data and conclusions without control or censorship and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate. At the same time, integrity, accountability and responsibility in conducting academic research form the cornerstone of any academic enterprise and violations of widely-recognized academic research standards represent serious offences to the entire academic community at the Institute and are considered injurious for its credibility and authority as an institution.

Academic integrity requires that academic research follows elevated professional standards, including appropriate research design and frameworks, adheres to high levels of research ethics and abides by the requirements set out by professional and regulatory research guidance and research ethics frameworks issued in appropriate areas. Academic integrity is defined in terms of the commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, legality and dissemination.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **B. Institutional Responsibilities**

The Principal, the Heads of Departments, the Librarian, together with the teaching staff, are responsible for promoting and endorsing a transparent academic environment conducive to the application of the high professional and ethical criteria of good practice for academic research. Research guides are expected to create and sustain a climate of mutual co-operation that facilitates the open exchange of ideas and the development of academic research skills. They are also expected to ensure the provision of appropriate supervision and direction for researchers, in accordance with the nature of the individual academic discipline and associated mode of research. The NSS College Pandalam is committed to the provision of appropriate direction of research and supervision for researchers. Supervisors are expected to adhere to norms for Doctoral Supervision as and when prescribed and modified by University of Kerala, which delineates the supervisory relationship, the assessment of research progress, and the procedures to resolve problems in the supervisory relationship.

## **C. Training**

The Academic Departments should ensure that all researchers undertake appropriate training in research design, methodology, regulatory and ethics approvals and consents, equipment use, confidentiality, data management, record keeping, data protection and publication, the appropriate use of licensed research resources and respect for the intellectual property rights of third parties.

## **D. Publication Practice and Authorship**

The NSS College Pandalam encourages the publication and dissemination of results of high-quality research. It also expects that researchers will engage in the process of publishing and dissemination of their work responsibly and with an awareness of the consequences of any such dissemination in the wider media. Results should be published in a form appropriate to the academic discipline. The Institute requires that all individuals listed as authors accept responsibility for the contents of the publication and can identify their contribution to it. Authors should have participated sufficiently in the research to take public responsibility for the content.

# **THE ETHICS COMMITTEE**

## **A. Tasks of Ethic Committee**

- to provide advice and guidance to the NSS College Pandalam's academic community on all matters pertaining to academic research ethics
- to advise the Academic Council on compliance with the 'Code of Ethics in Academic Research' of the various academic activities at the college
- to provide guidance and academic support to scholars on ethical issues in respect of teaching, research and other academic activities.
- to advise the Academic Council of any policies that may be required in relation to accepting funds from particular sponsors of research
- to act as an investigative/consultative body for any disputed matter concerning research ethics and conduct
- to make recommendations to the University of Kerala on what action, if any, should be taken as a result of the investigations.

## **B. Composition of Ethic Committee**

The Research Committee of NSS College Pandalam also acts as ethic committee.

## MISCONDUCT IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Misconduct in academic research implies (and is not limited to) fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or deception in proposing, carrying out or reporting results of research and deliberate, dangerous or negligent deviations from accepted practice in carrying out research. It includes failure to follow an agreed protocol if and when this failure results in unreasonable risk or harm to persons, the environment, and when it facilitates misconduct in research by collusion in, or concealment of, such actions by others. Misconduct also includes any plan or attempt to do any of these things. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results, or misconduct unrelated to research processes.

Misconduct includes (and is not limited to) the following acts:

**Plagiarism:** The deliberate copying of ideas, text, data or other work (or any combination thereof) without acknowledgement.

**Piracy:** The deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without proper acknowledgement.

**Abuse of Intellectual Property Rights:** Failure to observe legal norms regarding copyright and the moral rights of authors.

**Abuse of Research Resources:** Failure to observe the terms and conditions of institutionally licensed research resources.

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

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

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

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

**Sabotage:** Acting to prevent others from completing their work. This includes stealing or cutting pages out of library books or otherwise damaging them; or wilfully disrupting the experiments of

others; or endangering institutional access to licensed research resources by wilfully failing to observe their terms and conditions.

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

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

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

**1. Minor Violations:** Minor violations may occur because of inexperience or lack of knowledge of the principles of academic integrity and are often characterised by the absence of dishonest intent on the part of the person committing the violation. They may result from: a. weak procedures and methods which may jeopardise the integrity of the research but are not undertaken deliberately or recklessly b. weaknesses which present no major risks to either subjects or policies which they may influence On the whole, these minor violations can be seen as failings which may reflect only poor, rather than unacceptable practices and therefore mainly require further training and development rather than any formal disciplinary action.

Examples of minor violations include:

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

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

a. Deliberate, reckless or grossly negligent conduct which would clearly pose a significant risk in one form or another to the integrity of the research.

b. Conduct that may pose risks to subjects, the wider community, the environment, or to the research reputation of the institution and research in general.

c. Major plagiarism defined as:

extensive paraphrasing or quoting without proper citation of the source; lifting directly from a text or other academic source without reference; presenting another's designs or concepts as one's own; continued instances of what was initially regarded as minor plagiarism despite warnings having been given.

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

## **Procedures for Investigation of Research Misconduct**

1. Instigation of proceedings:

Without prejudice to the right and duty of Departments to address and assess issues of plagiarism in the course of the regular assessment of a paper presented by a researcher, any person may submit a complaint about academic misconduct to the Principal. Such complaints need to be supported by sufficient evidence. The Principal will decide whether the allegation is serious enough to warrant an investigation by the Ethics Committee. The initiator of the allegation shall be asked to set out in writing the basis of the allegation. The Ethics Committee may carry out: a preliminary investigation to ascertain whether there is sufficient substance to the allegation as to warrant a more thorough investigation; a formal inquiry which may include the consultation or involvement of external experts when needed. The Librarian has the right to investigate any suspected abuse of institutionally licensed research resources and to suspend any user from continued access to all resources, digital or paper, pending a full investigation. The Librarian will also register a complaint with the Ethics Committee when appropriate.

## 2. Investigation:

Where possible, the investigation will include examination of all relevant documentation, including, but not limited to: relevant research data; laboratory notebooks; computer files; other materials; proposals; publications; correspondence; and memoranda, insofar as this is necessary for the investigation. The Coordinator of the Ethics Committee may invite internal or external experts who are not involved in the disputed matter and who are not members of the Committee to attend meetings. Interviews shall be conducted with the complainant and the respondent. Other individuals involved in making the allegations and individuals who might have information regarding key aspects of the allegations may also be heard by the Committee. Details of the allegations and the investigation will be made available only to the Ethics Committee. All individuals interviewed during the investigation will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the investigation.

## 3. Investigation report and recommendations

The Ethics Committee will produce a report stating: the procedures under which the formal investigation was conducted; how and, where appropriate, from whom information was obtained; the findings of the committee and the basis for these; a summary of the views of the respondent; and a description of any recommendations made by the committee. The respondent will receive a copy of the investigation report and have an opportunity to comment on it. Comments may be submitted to the Ethics Committee and will be attached as an addendum to the investigation report. If disciplinary actions are recommended, the Ethics Committee will communicate to the University of Kerala what action, if any, should be taken as a result of the investigation.

## 4. Actions on the Investigation report

The college will take necessary actions as prescribed by the University of Kerala.

**The ethics policy of NSS College Pandalam followed the policy documents on Code of Ethics in Academic Research (2017 Edition) of European University Institute and modified the contents as per the requirements for NSS College Pandalam.**