CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS OF VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. The key guidelines of the activities of Vilnius University (hereinafter referred to as the “University”) are to ensure professionalism in academic work, academic freedom and a democratic atmosphere encouraging trust and creativity in the community of the University and to foster the fundamental values of the academic community such as respect for the human being, truth, justice, honesty, and professional, scientific and civic responsibility.

1.2. The Code of Academic Ethics of Vilnius University (hereinafter referred to as the “Code”) shall provide for the main cases of avoidable (inappropriate) academic conduct and entrench the key provisions of ethic academic conduct, which are not directly defined in the laws of the State and the University’s internal procedure documents.

1.3. The Code shall be applicable to all members of the University’s academic community, namely, lecturers, students and unclassified students (hereinafter referred to as the “students”), scientific and administrative staff.

2. GENERAL NORMS OF ACADEMIC ETHICS

2.1. The right of self-expression enjoyed by the members of the University’s community shall encompass academic freedom, i.e. the possibility to openly voice their attitude towards the organisation and administration of studies and scientific research and express critical ideas without any censorship (freely and openly). The responsible use of this freedom requires that lecturers would recognise the same freedom for other members of the community, support the trend of critical thinking and the atmosphere of open discussion at the University. The following shall be incompatible with the responsible use of academic freedom:

2.1.1. intolerance towards opinions of others;

2.1.2. disregard or conscious restriction of the right to voice and defend one’s opinion in adopting decisions that are significant for the University’s community, its divisions or himself/herself personally;

2.1.3. disregard or conscious restriction of the right to respond to criticism or accusations;

2.1.4. participation in scientific research or tests that are known to be related to damage to a human being, the environment, society or culture.
2.2. Relationships between the members of the University’s community shall be based on the principles of respect, good will, impartiality and non-discrimination. Academic ethics shall be violated by:

2.2.1. discrimination of a member of the community by language, actions or academic assessment on the basis of age, gender or sexual orientation, disability, appearance, racial or ethnic affiliation, religion or beliefs, as well as tolerance of such discrimination;

2.2.2. (positive or negative) discrimination of a member of the community due to his/her participation in political, public, cultural or sports activities;

2.2.3. harassment of a member of the community – where human dignity is violated on the basis of age, gender or sexual orientation, disability, appearance, racial or ethnic affiliation, religion or beliefs and an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment is sought to be created or is created, and also where the behaviour violating human rights and humiliating human dignity is tolerated;

2.2.4. humiliation of students or colleagues by abusing one’s superior position as a lecturer or administrator (abuse by using a singular second person to address a student, malevolent irony, deliberate forcing to wait for a decision or reception at the agreed time without any objective reason, etc.).

2.3. Mutual relations between members of the community shall be based on the principles of collegiality and academic solidarity and directed towards ensuring the quality of research and a creative atmosphere. In this respect, academic ethics shall be violated where:

2.3.1. professional competition among colleagues takes forms of dishonesty, participation in illegal and disgraceful deals, information intended for all lecturers or students is concealed, and minor conflicts and intrigues are escalated;

2.3.2. students suffer as a result of mutual antipathy or disagreements among colleagues;

2.3.3. pressure is exerted on a member of the community in order to gain undeserved recognition or conceal dishonest academic actions;

2.3.4. confidential information about colleagues or subordinates (salary, etc.) is made public or discussed publicly;

2.3.5. the name of the University and of a member of its community is humiliated by violating academic discipline and public order systematically.

2.4. Each and every member of the University’s community shall have regard to the general interests of the University and, according to possibility, contribute to the implementation of the educational and research objectives set by the University, namely:

2.4.1. to follow the studies and research strategy and voice constructive criticism to members of the University’s community first;

2.4.2. not to initiate and/or implement projects associated with the name of the University if their results are not beneficial to the general interests of the University;

2.4.3. not to tolerate any cases that may be related to corruption, fraud or attempt at making an unlawful impact on a member of the University’s community. The disclosure of information about illegal actions or negligence shall not be considered a violation of loyalty to the University;
2.4.4. not to exercise one’s voting right where the issue related to funding, sanction or incentive, etc. to a family member or business partner is considered, i.e. any issue that may result in the conflict of public and private interests;
2.4.5. not to use the name of the University for political or religious activities, or self-praising.
2.5. The scientific base, material resources, computer equipment and library of the University shall be used in an economical and responsible manner and only for the purposes of implementing the obligations assumed by the University as an institution. This provision shall be violated by:
2.5.1. the use of the University’s material and financial resources for political activities, private business or satisfaction of personal needs;
2.5.2. the abuse of the University’s resources while implementing projects;
2.5.3. the infliction of damage to the University’s property out of malevolence or negligence.

3. ETHICAL NORMS IN LECTURING

3.1. The teacher’s relationship with the student must be oriented towards the applicable academic requirements. The assumption of commitments of a non-academic nature may result in a conflict of interests; therefore, ambiguous relationships with students must be avoided. Academic ethics shall be incompatible with the following:
3.1.1. an attempt to strike up an intimate relationship with the student, with whom he/she is connected through the subject being taught, the supervision of a research study or any other direct academic relationship;
3.1.2. the assumption of the lecturer’s role in respect of a family member, close friend or business partner (examinations, supervision of written papers, etc.) in such cases where there is a possibility to avoid such role;
3.1.3. the acceptance of direct and indirect gifts, services of a non-academic nature or services of an academic nature that are not directly related to the studied subjects from students.
3.2. The disclosure of confidential information about the student shall undermine the atmosphere of trust. The principle of confidentiality of information shall require:
3.2.1. in the absence of special grounds (the student’s consent, legal grounds, benefit for the student, or expected damage to others), not to disclose information about the student’s academic performance or penalty to any third parties;
3.2.2. not to use information of a private nature about the student as training or research materials unless the student agrees with that;
3.2.3. to ensure that any remarks and comments on the student’s written paper that is not submitted for public defence shall be unavailable to any third parties.
3.3. The assessment of the student’s knowledge and skills shall be fair, honest and compatible with the objectives of the subject taught, therefore:
3.3.1. the lecturer shall react to the cases of students’ dishonesty, such as plagiarism, copying, data falsification, forgery of results of examinations or credits, use of third-party assistance during an examination or credit, submission of another person’s written paper as one’s own, earning money
from writing papers for other students, or submission of a written paper of one subject for assessment of one’s achievement in other subject, in a principled manner;

3.3.2. the confidence in the correctness of assessments shall be decreased by such cases where all students or their majority are ‘mechanically’ assessed with the highest or lowest points, having no obvious regard of their knowledge and abilities;

3.3.3. information of a personal nature may not be insistently demanded from a student in group discussions, and even more so, the provision of information of such nature may not be linked with the assessment of one’s knowledge;

3.3.4. reporting for a subject may not be linked with students’ participation in the political or public activity acceptable to the lecturer.

4. ETHICAL NORMS OF STUDIES

4.1. By recognising the truth, knowledge, abilities and understanding of the highest values of studies and hoping for confidence and fair assessment of own achievements, the University students must comply with the principle of academic honesty. Gross violations of the principle of academic honesty shall comprise the following:

4.1.1. Plagiarism – presenting the ideas of others as one’s own ideas. Typical cases of plagiarism shall include the following:

4.1.1.1. where the text by another person is presented without any quotation marks – inverted commas or other type of highlighting in the whole text (e.g. a separate paragraph, italics);

4.1.1.2. where the ideas, illustrative materials or data of another person are retold or quoted, without specifying the source.

4.1.2. Cheating when reporting for a subject or any part thereof – during colloquiums, credits, examinations, etc. Typical cases of cheating shall include the following:

4.1.2.1. where one copies or knowingly allows another student to copy;

4.1.2.2. where one prompts, uses ponies or any other means that are not allowed by the examiner;

4.1.2.3. where the paper of another person is submitted as one’s own;

4.1.2.4. where the same paper is submitted when reporting for several subjects;

4.1.2.5. where reporting is done on behalf of another student, or where advantage is taken of another student’s paper when reporting;

4.1.2.6. where the wrong page number of the source or date of visiting the site is indicated knowingly.

4.1.3. Falsification. Typical cases:

4.1.3.1. where the paper, which has been already assessed by the lecturer, is corrected without the lecturer’s consent in order to request higher assessment;

4.1.3.2. where the signatures of lecturers, certificates and other documents are falsified;

4.1.3.3. where data or results of academic assignments (laboratory, term papers and other works) are falsified.
4.1.4. assistance to another person while carrying out a dishonest academic action: plagiarising, cheating, or falsifying.
4.1.5. bribery – (personal or group) offering or giving remuneration for academic services.

5. ETHICS OF RESEARCH WORK

5.1. Scientific activities shall be based on the ideals of honest research and truth seeking. Such provision shall be violated by:
5.1.1. forgery and falsification of or manipulation with empirical research data;
5.1.2. deliberate concealment of received data contradicting the research hypothesis;
5.1.3. provision of deliberately misleading information about empirical research methodology;
5.1.4. theft of or deliberate damage to empirical research data, computer programmes, samples of empirical materials or manuscripts;
5.1.5. plagiarism, i.e. presenting another person’s text, idea or invention as one’s own;
5.1.6. unmeasured forcing younger colleagues or subordinates to accept co-authorship;
5.1.7. partiality in reviewing research projects or results;
5.1.8. incorrect, tendentious criticism and deliberate derogation of a colleague’s work due to personal antipathy, competition, political or other motives that are not related to professionalism of a research paper being assessed;
5.1.9. recommendation to grant a scientific degree, pedagogical title, award or recognition of scientific activities in other forms based on a personal or political relationship rather than an official assessment of the submitted paper and the candidate’s professional qualities;
5.1.10. constraint on academic freedom, while taking advantage of one’s official position.

6. FINAL PROVISIONS. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE

6.1. The supervision of the Code, except for Section 4. Ethical Norms of Studies, shall be carried out and its implementation shall be ensured by the relevant sanctions by the Academic Ethics Commission formed by the Senate of the University, acting in compliance with the General Regulations approved by the Senate and its Work Regulations.
6.2. Sanctions for violations of the ethical norms of studies shall be imposed under the administrative procedure, as provided in the Regulations of Studies of the University.
6.3. Each and every member of the University’s academic community shall comply with the norms and principles of conduct set forth herein. The Code and the Regulations of the Academic Commission shall be published on the website of the University. New employees and students shall be given a paper copy of this Code.