

## PROJECT

Resolution of the Senate of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University No. 81-2.5 of May 5, 2015  
(Recast of the Resolution of the Senate of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University No. 116-3 of 18 February 2020)

# VILNIUS GEDIMINAS TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS

## I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The purpose of the Code of Academic Ethics (hereinafter - the Code) of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (hereinafter - the University) is to promote the university quality culture of study and research activities, act in a socially responsible way, uphold the academic integrity, transparency and responsibility towards interested parties.

2. This Code aims to contribute to the mission of science and studies laid out in the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the implementation of Lithuanian science and studies policy, and the development and implementation of a coherent system of science and studies.

3. The key concepts used in this Code:

3.1. **Academic community** - the University administrative, pedagogical and research staff as well as students and unclassified students.

3.2. **Academic ethics** - the moral principles recognized by the academic community and enshrined in this Code. They ensure the transparency of the research and study process, fair competition, ethical scientific practices, and the protection of intellectual property.

3.3. **Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics** - a collegial institution that implements the supervision of the Code of Academic Ethics and is set up by the University Senate.

3.4. **Fundamental values of academic ethics** - academic integrity, responsibility, equality, justice, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency, sustainable use of resources, academic freedom, impartiality in the assessment of research works, trust, respect.

3.5. **Socially responsible behaviour** - the conduct of a member of the university academic community that is conscious and in accordance with ethical principles. It is a mature conduct in both external and internal environment.

4. Other concepts used in this Code shall have the meaning given to them by the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania and other legal acts.

## II. PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS

5. Objectives of the Code:

5.1. to promote ethical behaviour - the key idea lies in prevention rather than the punishment for unethical behaviour.

5.2. to define responsibility boundaries - the code shall clearly regulate the responsibility of the academic community members and protect them from unlawful decisions and actions (acts and / or omissions).

5.3. to perform the function of moral education - the code shall be used in the teaching process of both formal and informal ethical behaviour to encourage members of the academic community to adhere to the principles of academic ethics.

5.4. to exercise discipline over members of the academic community – in accordance with the Code, carry out ethical supervision and control of the quality of activities and decision-making of members of the academic community.

5.5. to increase public trust - the institutional values and standards specified in the Code shall be ensured by real actions, laying down the provision that members of the academic community are worthy of trust, since in their activities they are guided by the requirements and principles of academic ethics.

5.6. to regulate the behaviour of the members of the academic community - help members of the academic community assess and solve various academic life situations related to the academic ethics.

6. Functions of the Code:

6.1. to perform regulatory functions, defend the needs and interests of those for whom it is addressed, reconcile organizational behaviour with the values of the society and the principles of academic ethics.

6.2. to become the primary channel to ensure the academic ethics at the university.

6.3. to help members of the academic community understand their mission in the society and their social responsibility.

6.4. to help achieve greater transparency in the university activities.

6.5. to demonstrate the public that the university cares about responsible, professional behaviour.

6.6. to develop (and protect) the image of the university.

6.7. to establish criteria for members of the academic community to build relationships with each other.

6.8. to encourage the academic community to perform its functions honestly and effectively.

6.9. to encourage the academic community to rely on its own and institutional values.

6.10. to indicate behaviour regulation measures (for example, incentives in the form of an award, acknowledgement, etc., or sanctions in the form of a suspension of academic activities, dismissal, etc.).

6.11. to act as a measure for competence development by use of the professional meetings or discussions (for example, by initiating trainings on ethical behaviour).

6.12. to help achieve a high level of academic awareness and social responsibility.

### **III. STANDARDS OF ACADEMIC COMMUNITY ACADEMIC ETHICS**

#### **General standards of ethics**

7. The standards of the academic community ethics are established in accordance with the principal provisions of ethical (academic) behaviour. They indicate the direction of the university academic ethics policy, the implementation of which is ensured in accordance with the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania as well as agreements and internal documents of the university.

8. Academic freedom means the right of the members of the academic community to openly express their views on the organization and administration of studies and research, to express uncensored critical remarks, to operate freely in the choice of research methods, as well as the university commitment to protect the academic community from constraints. The responsible exercise of this right requires that members of the academic community recognize the same right for other members of the university community, maintain the tradition of critical thinking and the atmosphere of open discussion.

9. The responsible exercise of academic freedom is contradictory to:

9.1. intolerance toward those members of the academic community who hold different opinions or express constructive criticism.

9.2. disregard or other restriction of the right of the members of the academic community to express and defend their opinion in making decisions that are significant for the University academic community, departments of the University, or members of the academic community.

9.3. disregard or other restriction of the right to respond to criticism or accusation.

9.4. engagement in research or experiments that produce harm to a human being, nature, society, or culture.

10. Any member of the academic community shall respect the general interests of the university and, in so far as is reasonable and practicable, shall contribute to the implementation of the University study and research goals. From the ethical viewpoint, members of the academic community shall:

10.1. actively adhere to the standards of academic integrity and the principle of open access in the study process and research activities.

10.2. when initiating and / or implementing the projects under the name of the university, pursue the ambition that project results serve the general interests of the university and are publicly available.

10.3. report to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics on cases that may concern corruption or attempted undue influence on a member of the university community.

10.4. provide the available information to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics and (or) the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania, for the examination of possible violations of academic ethics and (or) procedures.

10.5. withdraw the right to vote when issues of financing, imposition of a penalty or promotion, which may cause a conflict of interests, are being decided at the university institutions.

10.6. use the name of the University and the fact of being employed at the University for political activities only with the written consent of the university.

11. Relations between members of the academic community are based on the principles of respect, goodwill, impartiality, and non-discrimination. These principles are violated when:

11.1. a member of the academic community is being discriminated against language, behaviour, or academic assessment, as well as the tolerance of such discrimination.

11.2. a member of the academic community is being humiliated by the exercise of powers conferred.

12. The relations between members of the academic community are based on the principles of collegiality and academic solidarity, and focused on the quality of studies and research, and the creative atmosphere. These principles are violated when:

12.1. a professional competition between colleagues acquires unfair forms; university colleagues take part in the unlawful, dishonest (shameful and otherwise unfair) arrangements, conceal the information intended for members of the academic community, encourage and / or raise conflicts and provoke intrigues.

12.2. a member of the academic community undermines the pedagogical and (or) research abilities, theoretical point of view and personal qualities of a non-participating colleague in the presence of other members of the academic community.

12.3. in recommendation to award a scientific degree, pedagogical title, prize or other form of recognition to a colleague for his/her activities, the judgement is based on a personal, business or political relationship, rather than a factual evaluation of the submitted work and professional qualities of the candidate.

12.4. psychological pressure is exerted on a member of the academic community with the aim for personal appraisal or intention to conceal unfair academic practices.

12.5. confidential information about members of the academic community (for example, academic achievements, salary, career plans, personal affairs, etc.) is made public or discussed publicly.

12.6. a member of the academic community is stigmatized in a systematic (consistent, planned) way, thus violating the procedure laid down in the internal documents of the university.

13. The use of the university science base and other resources shall be sustainable, responsible, and intended to fulfil the commitments taken by the University. This provision is violated when:

13.1. materials, human and financial resources of the University are used to contribute to the political activities, private business commitments or personal needs.

13.2. the University resources are being misused for the implementation of the projects.

13.3. the University property is being devastated.

### **Ethics of pedagogical activity**

14. The relationship between a teacher and a student shall be built on the principles of academic cooperation and transparency. Engagement in non-academic commitments can lead to conflicts of interest, thus ambiguous relationships with students shall be avoided. These principles are violated when:

14.1. a student or a University teacher attempt to establish a non-academic relationship with a University teacher or a student respectively through a course unit that is delivered, supervision process of research work or other academic activities.

14.2. a member of the University community takes the role of a teacher toward a family member, a close friend (with whom direct, close ties and relationship is maintained), a business partner (examination, supervision of written works, etc.) in cases where there is a possibility to avoid such a role.

14.3. gifts or services of a non-academic or academic nature and not related directly to the study courses are requested and / or taken (directly or indirectly) from members of the academic community.

15. The assessment of a student's knowledge and skills shall be fair, honest, and consistent with the objectives of the course taught:

15.1. a University teacher shall address with integrity and report to the administration of the university (or administration of the faculty, institute, or department) or to the Committee of Legal Affairs and Ethics about cases of a student's dishonesty, such as plagiarism, cheating, data falsification, fabrication, forgery of examination or credit test scores, use of external help during an exam or a credit test, submission of someone else's written work as one's own, earning money by preparing written works for other students, purchasing a written work and submitting it to a member of the academic community for evaluation, submitting the already assessed written work for assessment in another course, etc.

15.2. during the assessment procedure a University teacher shall reduce the chances for students to exploit academic dishonesty.

15.3. a University teacher shall not request personal data from a student or another teacher in group discussions, except for the cases provided for in the Law on the Legal Protection of Personal Data of the Republic of Lithuania.

15.4. a University teacher shall retain a student's personal data in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on the Legal Protection of Personal Data of the Republic of Lithuania.

15.5. a University teacher shall avoid linking student's assessments to his / her participation (non-participation) in political or social activities.

16. The atmosphere of trust is undermined by the disclosure of confidential information about a student. The principle of confidentiality of information requires:

16.1. to disclose a student's academic assessments or penalties to third parties only with the student's written consent or under legal basis for anticipated harm to others.

16.2. to avoid discussions on a student's achievements, except for the cases when an appeal lodged by a student is considered, and exam or credit test scores, as well as other academic issues talked over, as their objective resolution clearly justifies such consideration.

16.3. to use private information for teaching, study, and research purposes only with the written consent of a student.

16.4. to ensure that comments on a student's written work that has not been submitted for public defence yet are not available to third parties.

### **Ethics of science research activity**

17. Science research shall be based on honest research and the pursuit of the truth, and a researcher's conduct shall be built on morality and socially responsible behaviour. Science research shall not harm society and the environment. Recognizing the truth and cognition as the foundation of

scientific activity, and in the hope of trust and fair evaluation of their achievements, members of the academic community who conduct scientific research, shall undertake to adhere to the principle of academic integrity. The principle of academic integrity in scientific research is violated by:

17.1. counterfeiting, falsification, or manipulation (for example, creation of false data, introducing corrections in existing data to improve or degrade results). Typical cases of counterfeiting, falsification, or manipulation:

17.1.1. signature forgery, as well as forgery of certificates, data or results of reports and other documents (for example, forgery of data or results of academic tasks in laboratory works, course papers, etc.).

17.1.2. indication of a non-existent reference item, wrong pages of references used, wrong date of visit to the website or other incorrect data of the description of a reference.

17.1.3. omission of the obtained data that contradict the research hypothesis and /or questions and / or research conclusions.

17.1.4. deliberate misrepresentation of empirical research methodology.

17.1.5. unreasonable (undeserved) attribution of co-authorship to students, colleagues, subordinates, or managers.

17.1.6. Unjustified denial or omission of the intellectual and / or financial contribution of persons who have contributed to the scientific research.

17.2. Theft or intentional destruction of empirical research data, computer programmes, samples of empirical material, manuscripts.

17.3. Plagiarism, i.e. the practice of taking someone else's ideas, data or words and passing them off as one's own. Typical cases of plagiarism:

17.3.1. the word-for-word transcription of a section of someone else's work, without attribution and without quotation marks (for example, a separate paragraph, italics).

17.3.2. the exact reference to the authorship is not provided though someone else's idea, illustrative material or data is quoted.

17.4. Incorrect, biased criticism of a colleague's work and conscious and deliberate degrading due to personal antipathy, competition, political or other motives unrelated to the professional scientific research.

17.5. Assisting another person in academic activities that violate the principle of academic integrity.

17.6. Academic bribery, i. e. offering or giving remuneration for academic services (individual or group).

### **Academic Ethics of Students and Unclassified Students**

18. Students and unclassified students shall be guided by the principle of academic integrity. The principle of academic integrity in the study process is violated by:

18.1. cheating or supporting another person in cheating.

18.2. failure to report about the cases of academic dishonesty of members of the academic community.

18.3. prompting, use of crib notes or any other forbidden means without prior permission from an examiner.

18.4. plagiarism, i.e. the practice of taking someone else's written work and passing it off as one's own.

18.5. use of another student's work or his / her results for an assessment.

18.6. submission of the same written work for the assessment of several courses.

18.7. impersonation, i. e. cheating whereby a different person than the student completes an assignment, or a student completes an assignment for another person, etc.

19. On entering the University each student shall sign the Declaration of Integrity of a Student, which is valid throughout the entire duration of the study contract. This declaration can also be signed by unclassified students in accordance with the procedure laid down by the university.

20. Students and unclassified students undertake to use the university scientific research and IT facilities, as well as the library and other resources with responsibility, sustainability and for academic purposes.

#### **IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS**

21. The University shall examine the violations of ethics in accordance with this Code.

22. Sanctions for violations of academic ethics shall be differentiated according to the seriousness of the violation, and the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall rely on sanctioning guidelines and other provisions to impartially and fairly assess the circumstances of a possible violation of academic ethics and propose a solution.

23. The Code cannot cover all cases of unethical conduct, therefore, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics, while examining specific reports on misconduct that is not specified in the Code, shall consider whether a specific case of conduct is consistent with the fundamental values of academic ethics recognized by the academic community of the University.

#### **V. SUPERVISION OF THE CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS**

24. The following provisions shall be implemented to ensure the supervision of the Code:

24.1. the supervision of the Code shall be carried out by the University Senate Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics in accordance with the University Statute, the provisions of the Code, as well as the activities of the University Senate and its committees and other legal acts regulating the internal order of the University.

24.2. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics is set up by the University Senate.

24.3. the members of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall meet the requirements of good repute and the experience in the implementation of the principles of academic ethics.

24.4. the University Student Representation may form a separate commission to investigate possible violations of ethics made by students.

24.5. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall initiate supplements and amendments to the Code and submit them to the University Senate for consideration and approval. Any member or a group of the University academic community may initiate supplements or amendments to the Code and submit them to the University Senate for consideration.

24.6. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall accept and consider notifications or information on possible violations of academic ethics.

24.7. the meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics are convened upon receipt of a notification or information on possible violations of academic ethics or with the view to initiate supplements or amendments to the Code. Meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics are shall be convened and chaired by the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics. If the notification or information lodged relates to the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics or if the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics is otherwise unable to convene and chair the meeting, the meeting shall be convened and chaired by the oldest member of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics.

24.8. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall not consider a notification or information on possible violations of academic ethics, except for the ones specified in sub-paragraphs 17.1.2 and 17.3, if more than 60 calendar days have elapsed from the date of a possible violation of ethics to the date of the receipt of the notification or information. Within no more than 10 working days of the date of receipt of the notification or information, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall notify in writing the person who has submitted the notification or information of the decision not to consider the notification or information, and also of the transfer of the notification or information to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall immediately notify of the decision not to consider

the notification or information lodged and transfer the relevant material to the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania.

24.9. the notifications of possible ethical violations shall be submitted in a written form to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics via the Document Management Division. Only motivated notifications shall be accepted for consideration. Anonymous notifications shall not be considered.

Grounds for initiating a consideration procedure into a possible violation of academic ethics:

24.9.1. a written statement of a person (notifier) with the specified facts and supporting documents.

24.9.2. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics becomes aware of a possible breach of ethics.

24.10. the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall consider the notification or information received, come to a decision and respond in writing (signed by the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics) to a notifier or an interested person within the period of 60 calendar days from the date of receipt of the notification or information. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics may, by a reasoned decision, extend the deadline of the consideration of the notification or information.

24.11. the member of the academic community against whom the notification or information has been lodged shall be informed of the content of the notification and within 5 working days from the date of receipt of the notification shall provide written explanations. The available materials relating to the personal data (depersonalised where appropriate) may be provided at the request of the members of the academic community against whom the notification or information has been lodged. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics has the right to rule out a decision if a member of the academic community against whom a notification or information has been lodged refuses to provide or fails to provide explanations within the specified time.

24.12. the member of the academic community against whom a notification or information has been lodged shall be entitled to attend a meeting of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics when the notification or information relating to him or her is being considered.

24.13. members of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall be subject to confidentiality requirement and avoid the dissemination of the relevant information while the investigation into the question is ongoing.

24.14. decisions of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall be taken by simple majority. Where votes are tied, the Chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall have the casting vote.

24.15. with regard to the content of the notification or information on a possible violation of ethics lodged as well as the documents provided, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics may, in individual cases, address a proposal to the Chairperson of the Senate to include into the work of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics:

24.15.1. a student representative (representatives).

24.15.2. a representative (representatives) of the administration of the University or University subdivision (faculty, institute, department).

24.15.3. a specialist (specialists) who is an expert in a specific field of science, pedagogical activity, or other fields of science.

24.15.4. the social partner of the university or a representative of the social partner.

24.16. After examining the notification or information and finding a violation of academic ethics, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall respond to the seriousness of the violation and rule out a decision:

24.16.1. to give a written warning to a member of the academic community and publish on the University Website a depersonalised information about the decision of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics.

24.16.2. to recommend to the administration to impose one of the following sanctions: warning, reprimand, dismissal (for employees), expulsion from the university (for students).

24.16.3. to recommend measures to ensure academic ethics at the university.

24.17. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Ethics shall conduct an annual self-assessment review and provide a public annual report on its activities.

## **VI. FINAL PROVISIONS**

25. The University shall implement the Code on free and conscious volition.

26. In accordance with the University order, the provisions of these recommendations shall apply to a person entering the university, a university student, an unclassified student, a person applying for a position at the university, university employees, partners with a cooperation agreement.

27. The University responds to the foreign and international experience related to the regulation of issues of academic ethics, implementation of the provisions of academic ethics and the practice of prevention of violations of academic ethics.