

CODE OF ETHICS IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH (FOR FACULTY, STUDENTS AND STAFF)

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**MAR BASELIOS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY
(Autonomous)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Mar Baselios College of Engineering and Technology (MBCET) 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, teach, and 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.

MBCET invites its members (teaching staff, fellows, research students, visiting 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.

Code of Ethics in Academic Research incorporates the basic principles of ethical conduct directed towards the attainment of the ideals of research, foremost being perusal of truth and benefits to the community. Research that involves human subjects or participants raises unique and complex ethical, legal, social, and political issues. Research ethics is specifically interested in the analysis of ethical issues that are raised when people are involved as participants in research.

There are three major objectives in research ethics.

- i. The first and broadest objective is to protect human participants.
- ii. The second objective is to ensure that research is conducted in a way that serves the interests of individuals, groups, and/or society as a whole.
- iii. The third objective is to examine specific research activities and projects for their ethical soundness, looking at issues such as the management of risk, protection of confidentiality, and the process of informed consent.

II. GOOD PRACTICE IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH

i. Academic Freedom, Integrity, Accountability and Responsibility

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach study and enhance knowledge through research activity without undesirable interference or restriction from the law, institutional rules, and 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 plagiarism, and to teach in the manner they consider professionally appropriate.

At the same time, integrity, accountability, and responsibility in conducting academic research form the basics of any academic research, and violations of widely-recognized academic research standards represent serious offenses to the entire academic community at MBCET.

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.

- ii. **Principles and Values of Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is defined in terms of the commitment and promises to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, sincerity and responsibility, striving for consistency, legality, and dissemination.
- iii. **Ethics:** Research is conducted in an ethical manner ensuring dignity, rights, safety, and privacy within the researcher ecosystem.
- iv. **Rigour:** Research ensures high quality design, reliable data, the appropriate use of methods, rigorous and careful analysis, and transparent reporting and interpretation of the results.
- v. **Relevance:** In the endeavour of expanding the knowledge-base and understanding the environment and ecosystem, research advances the short-and long-term goals of science and society.
- vi. **Honesty:** An academicians should honestly report the data, results, methods and procedures, and publication status without fabricating, manipulating or misrepresenting data. Honesty is promoted through transparency in developing, undertaking, reviewing, reporting, and communicating research in a fair, comprehensive, and unbiased fashion.
- vii. **Trust:** Academic excellence in MBCET should foster an environment of mutual faith to encourage the free exchange of ideas and enable all to reach their highest potential.
- viii. **Fairness:** An academic body of this institute should seek to ensure fairness in institutional standards, practices, and procedures as well as fairness in interactions between members of the community.
- ix. **Respect:** An academic environment of MBCET should promote respect among students, staff and faculty, respect for self, for others, and treat them fairly for scholarship and research, for the educational process and for intellectual heritage. The process of research is also aligned with the norms and traditions of society and its cultural heritage.
- x. **Responsibility:** An academic community of MBCET 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 by striving to promote social good and prevent or mitigate social harms through research, public education, and advocacy.
- xi. **Legality:** MBCET observes valid legal norms related to the conduct and publication of research particularly concerning copyright, the intellectual property rights of third parties, the terms and conditions regulating access to research resources and obeying the associated laws and institutional and governmental policies.
- xii. **Communication:** The Research Promotion Committee of MBCET seeks to make the results of its research as widely and as freely available as possible.
- xiii. **Non-Discrimination:** The institution should avoid discrimination against colleagues or students based on sex, race, ethnicity, or other factors that are not related to their scientific competence and integrity. Researchers should avoid conflicts of interest in setting research priorities, establishing research collaborations, choosing research questions, and interpreting and assessing the implications of the research results
- xiv. **Confidentiality:** The institution should protect confidential communications, such as papers or grants submitted for publication, personnel records, trade or military secrets, and patient records.

II. INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Head of the Institute, Deans, and Heads of various Departments together with the other faculty members, 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. Senior faculty members are expected to create and sustain an atmosphere of cooperation 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.

TRAINING (Doctoral researchers): 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.

III. PUBLICATION PRACTICE AND AUTHORSHIP

MBCET encourages the publication and dissemination of results of high-quality research. It also expects that researchers will engage in the process of publishing and disseminating 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.

IV. THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

i. Tasks of the Ethics Committee

- to provide advice and guidance to the MBCET faculty members on all matters about academic research ethics.
- To provide guidance and academic support to students on ethical issues in respect of teaching, research and other academic activities.
- To advise the Academic Council on compliance with the 'Code of Ethics in Academic Research' of the various academic activities at the institution.
- To act as an investigative/consultative body for any disputed matter concerning research ethics and conduct.

ii. Appointment and Composition of the Ethics Committee

The Ethics Committee is appointed by the College, upon nomination by the Principal. The Committee shall be composed of the following members:

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| 1) Principal | – Chairperson (Ex officio) |
| 2) Vice Principal | – Vice Chairperson (Ex officio) |
| 3) One external member | – Member on invitation |
| 4) Bursar, MBCET | – Member (Ex officio) |
| 5) Dean (Student Affairs) | – Member (Ex officio) |
| 6) Dean (PG Studies and Research) | – Member (Ex officio) |
| 7) Dean (Administration) | – Member (Ex officio) |
| 8) Dean (Research and Consultancy) | – Member Secretary (Ex officio) |
| 9) Head of Academic Department #1 | – Member |

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| 10) Head of Academic Department #2 | – Member |
| 11) A Registered Medical Practitioner | – Special invitee for issues involving bio/medical related matters |

The members' mandate is for two years. Members # 9 and 10 will be filled from among the HoDs of the College, in rotation, every two years.

In case of conflict of interests, members of the Ethics Committee shall be temporarily replaced by substitutes nominated by the Principal.

V. 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:

- i. **Plagiarism:** The deliberate copying of ideas, text, data or other work (or any combination thereof) without due permission and acknowledgment.
- ii. **Piracy:** The deliberate exploitation of ideas from others without proper acknowledgment.
- iii. **Abuse of Intellectual Property Rights:** Failure to observe legal norms regarding copyright and the moral rights of authors.
- iv. **Abuse of Research Resources:** Failure to observe the terms and conditions of institutionally licensed research resources.
- v. **Defamation:** Failure to observe relevant legal norms.
- vi. **Misinterpretation:** The deliberate attempt to represent falsely or unfairly the ideas or work of others, whether or not for personal gain or enhancement.
- vii. **Personation:** The situation where someone other than the person who has submitted any academic work has prepared (parts of) the work.
- viii. **Fabrication and Fraud:** The falsification or invention of qualifications, data, information or citations in any formal academic exercise.
- ix. **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.
- x. **Professorial misconduct:** Professorial acts that are arbitrary, biased or exploitative.
- xi. **Denying access to information or material:** To deny others access arbitrarily to scholarly resources or to deliberately and groundlessly impede their progress.
- xii. **Misconduct in formal examinations:** Includes having access, or attempting to gain access during an examination, to any books, memoranda, notes, unauthorized electronic devices or

any other material, except such as may have been supplied by the invigilator or authorized by the Academic Department. It also includes aiding or attempting to aid another candidate or obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from another candidate or any other communication and conversations that could have an impact on the examination results.

VI. IDENTIFYING LEVELS OF VIOLATIONS OF GOOD ACADEMIC PRACTICE

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

i) Minor Violations

Minor violations may occur because of inexperience or lack of knowledge of the principles of academic integrity and are often characterized 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 jeopardize the integrity of the research but are not undertaken deliberately or recklessly
- b)** weaknesses that present no major risks to either subjects or policies which they may influence

On the whole, these minor violations can be seen as failings that may reflect only poor, rather than unacceptable practices and therefore mainly require further training and development rather than any formal disciplinary action.

ii) Major Violations

Major violations are breaches of academic integrity that are more serious 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 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, the use of papers (or parts thereof) from essay banks, 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.
- d)** The wilful destruction of data (except where required by the legitimate data provider or where norms of privacy might otherwise be endangered).
- e)** Fabrication or falsification of data, falsification of ownership, defamation.
- f)** Systematic abuse of the terms and conditions of licensed research resources.
- g)** Other systematic violation of the intellectual property rights of third parties.

The Ethics Committee of MBCET is committed to fully investigate serious violations of academic misconduct by any academic member of the MBCET community.

VII. PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATION OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT

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, supported by sufficient evidence, about academic misconduct to the Principal. The Principal will decide whether the allegation is serious enough to warrant an investigation by the Ethics Committee.

The Ethics Committee may carry out:

- a preliminary investigation to ascertain whether there is sufficient point to the allegation for a thorough investigation.
- a formal inquiry that may include the consultation or involvement of external experts when needed.

The Librarian can also register a complaint with the Ethics Committee when any suspected abuse of institutionally licensed research resources is noted.

VIII. INVESTIGATION AND FURTHER PROCEEDINGS

Where possible, the investigation will include examination of all relevant documentation necessary for the investigation. The Chair 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. They may be heard or participate in discussions.

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. All individuals interviewed during the investigation will be asked to respect the confidential nature of the investigation.

The Ethics Committee will produce a report stating: the procedures under which the formal investigation was conducted, 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 Academic Council what action, if any, should be taken pursuant to the investigations. Henceforth, the matter will be escalated to the Management for implementation and necessary action. The respondent has a right to appeal, against the decision and/or sanctions made by the Academic Council.

Reference Document:

Patwardhan B., Desai A., Chourasia A, Nag S., Bhatnagar R. 2020. **Guidance Document: Good Academic Research Practices**, New Delhi: University Grants Commission.