

APPROVED BY
Decision No. 7-4
of 29 November 2017
of Vytautas Magnus University
Senate

THE CODE OF ACADEMIC ETHICS OF VYTAUTAS MAGNUS UNIVERSITY

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Code of Academic Ethics (hereinafter referred to as the “Code”) of Vytautas Magnus University (hereinafter referred to as “VMU” or the “University”) shall outline the basic standards of professional ethics and basic human behaviour of VMU community members (students, teachers, and other employees) that are not directly regulated by the Legal Acts of the Republic of Lithuania, employment contracts, and VMU internal documents.

The Code shall be based on the Declaration of Human Rights, the provisions of European University Charter, the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, the Laws of the Republic of Lithuania, VMU Statute and the Codes of Ethics of other Lithuanian and foreign universities.

The Code shall define the basic standards and principles of ethics held by VMU community members and identify the measures ensuring that professional ethics and conduct comply with the requirements of the Code.

The Code shall be binding upon all members of the University: teachers and students, researchers, administrative and other staff.

The Code shall determine typical cases of violation of ethical standards, but the list shall not be exhaustive. Each case shall be conditioned by the circumstances of a particular occurrence, determining whether there is violation or not. The sequence of listing violations in the Code shall not imply their significance.

The Code should be amended and improved at the initiative of VMU community members or the Ethics Commission.

II. PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF ETHICS

The principle of academic freedom and responsibility

Standard: freedom of belief and expression, tradition of critical thinking and atmosphere of open discussion of debatable questions, based on goodwill and responsibility for one’s actions.

Violations:

- intolerance of students’ or colleagues’ differing opinions and reasoned criticism;
- disregard or deliberate limitation of the right of teachers and students to express their opinion and defend it when making decisions;
- disregard or deliberate limitation of the right to respond to criticism or accusation.

Standard: aspiration for high qualification and truth in one's field of research, and ethical research with regard to the object under investigation.

Violations:

- lack of teacher's qualification and unwillingness to improve, which visibly undermines the prestige of the University and fails to meet students' expectations;
- conscious spread of false information, knowledge, data, etc., and demagoguery;
- biased and unilateral interpretation of research results;
- participation in research or experiments that involve harm to humans, nature, society or culture.

Standard: loyalty towards the University and respect for its community, one expression of which is the priority given to problem-solving within the University community.

Violations:

- demeaning the name of a student, teacher or other staff member for their misconduct or violation of academic discipline;
- disclosure of confidential information;
- waste and misuse of VMU property and other resources;
- harm to VMU image;
- public consideration of the University problems without exhausting all opportunities to address them within the University.

The principle of academic integrity

Standard: respect for intellectual property.

Violations:

- plagiarism, falsification or biased interpretation of scientific data, and unreasonable imposition of co-authorship on younger colleagues or subordinates;
- denial or concealment of a contribution made by persons or organisations that assisted in performing research activities;
- unlicensed use of information technologies and other cases of copyright infringement.

Standard: separation of private and public interests.

Violations:

- a conflict of interest, manifested by patronage of a family member, relative or business partner, and manifestations of favouritism;
- misuse of official position for personal gain;
- use of material and financial VMU resources for political activity, private business or personal needs and misuse of VMU resources when carrying out projects;
- involvement in private business or financial activity that can make a negative impact on the studies and scientific research of University community members.

Standard: justice, objective assessment, and impartiality.

Violations:

- assessment based on personal or ideological relation, disregarding the quality of the

submitted work and professional qualities of the applicant;

- unfair professional competition between colleagues and escalation of conflicts and intrigues;
- participation in illegal and undignified transactions;
- veiling of information intended for all;
- fraudulent behaviour or tolerance of fraudulent behaviour, including but not limited to cheating, falsification of tests or other data or documents related to studies or research, use of outside help during examination or course credit, submission of someone else's written work as one's own, preparation of written assignments for other individuals, submission of the same written work in more than one course, etc.;
- corruption or tolerance of corruption, including but not limited to bribery, payoff or other reward for falsified research or study results;
- pressure on a teacher or student in order to receive undeserved evaluation or to hide dishonest academic behaviour;
- demanding or receiving of direct or indirect presents and non-academic or academic services from students.

The principle of ethical personal relationships

Standard: fostering equal rights and opportunities.

Violations:

- discrimination against students and colleagues, insulting their honour and dignity by language, actions or academic assessment on the grounds of their age, gender or sexual orientation, disability, appearance, race or ethnicity, religion or beliefs as well as tolerance of such discrimination or insults, and attempts to create intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive atmosphere;
- discrimination against students or colleagues on the grounds of their (non)participation in religious, political, social, cultural or sporting activity;
- attempts to undeservedly distinguish oneself or unjustified demand for exceptional rights.

Standard: collegiality and decency

Violations:

- humiliation of a University community member, especially using one's superiority as a teacher, researcher or administrator;
- any sexual harassment.

Standard: confidentiality and respect for personal dignity and autonomy

Violations:

- disclosure or public consideration of confidential personal information about students, teachers or other staff, their salary, academic evaluations or penalties, results of scientific work, career ambitions, personal affairs, etc.;
- use of private information about an individual for teaching or research purposes without their consent.

III. APPLICATION OF THE CODE

All members of VMU community shall undertake not to violate this Code and not to tolerate its violations at VMU, to ensure that this Code is upheld, and to eliminate its violations by means of moral sanctions: criticising, condemning, disassociating, and terminating cooperation.

The cases of violations of the Code by VMU community members shall be investigated by the Ethics Commission, the composition of which shall be approved by the Rector. The Ethics Commission shall be constituted for a period of two years and its activity shall be regulated by this Code and the provisions of the Ethics Commission.

VMU community members shall inform the Chairperson of the Ethics Commission about any violation of the Code in writing. Anonymous reports shall not be taken into account. Reports shall be considered as confidential information and the Ethics Commission shall ensure that no information about the person making the report will be disclosed.

Upon receiving a report in written form and determining the violation of ethics, the Ethics Commission shall make a decision and within five working days shall inform the Rector, the person who submitted the report and the violator of the Code.

Upon receiving the decision of the Ethics Commission and taking into account its recommendations regarding the application of sanctions, the Rector may take any sanctions against the violator of the Code within the limits of his/her authority or address any other administrative institution of the University with regard to the application of sanctions within the limits of their competence. The following sanctions shall apply (the list shall not be exhaustive):

- personal warning (without disclosing the information about the violation of ethics publicly),
- public warning (disclosing the information about the violation of ethics publicly),
- termination of employment contract without notice due to the employee's fault,
- expulsion from the University with the right to return to studies;
- expulsion from the University without the right to return to studies;
- non-certification of a teacher,
- other sanctions determined in the Study Regulations.

The Ethics Commission shall not impose sanctions on its own initiative; however, it shall recommend them, taking into account the gravity of the violation and previous ethical violations of the Code violator.
