

## **Code of Conduct for Research Students**

### **Introduction**

Indira Gandhi National Open University, established by an Act of Parliament in 1985 has continuously striven to democratize higher education. The University currently offers PhD and MPhil Programmes in regular mode in compliance with UGC Regulations as amended from time to time. Students enrolled in the Research Degree Programmes of the University (hereafter referred to as Research Students) are expected to conduct themselves in a responsible manner conforming to the norms stipulated by the University and the regulatory bodies.

### **IGNOU Act on Maintenance of Discipline among Students**

Section 20(2) of the IGNOU ACT, 1985 provides for maintenance of discipline among students of the University as under:

1. "The powers regarding discipline and disciplinary action in regard to the students of the University shall vest with the Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor may delegate all or any of his powers, as he may deem fit.
2. Without prejudice to the generality of his powers relating to the maintenance of discipline and taking such action as he may deem appropriate for the maintenance of discipline, the Vice-Chancellor may, in the exercise of his power, by order, direct that any student or students be expelled or rusticated for a specified period and not admitted to a course or courses of study in the University or a recognized institution for a stated period, or be punished with a fine for an amount to be specified in the order, or, debar him/ her from taking an examination or examinations conducted by the University or a recognized institution for one or more years or that the result of the student or students concerned in examination or examinations in which he or she has appeared to be cancelled.
3. The heads of recognized institutions shall have the authority to exercise all such disciplinary powers over the students in their respective institutions as may be necessary for proper conduct of such institution".

### **4. Short Title and Commencements**

- 4.1 These rules shall be called "Code of Conduct for Research Students of IGNOU," hereafter referred to as the "Code of Conduct".
- 4.2 The Code of Conduct shall come into effect from the date of Notification.

### **5. Application of Rules**

- 5.1 These rules shall apply to all Research Students of the University.

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- 5.2 All Research Students are expected to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and in a way that the rights, dignity, worth and freedom of each member of the academic community are respected. Violation of University policies/ rules/regulations, or federal, State, or local law shall be treated as violation of the 'Code of Conduct' and may result in imposition of penalties as decided by the university from time to time.
- 5.3 Any breach of discipline and conduct committed by a student inside or outside the University Campus shall fall under the purview of this Code of Conduct.
- 5.4 The University shall have the jurisdiction over the conduct of Research Students enrolled with the University and to take cognizance of all the acts of misconduct by Research Students.

**6. Authority for Student Discipline**

- 6.1 Without prejudice to the powers of the Vice-Chancellor and the Security Officer of the University, this Code of Conduct shall be framed.
- 6.2 The Vice-Chancellor may delegate such authority to University administrators or other officials to establish rules and procedure and impose sanctions for violations of Code of Conduct.
- 6.3 The Doctoral Research Committee (DRC) of concerned Discipline/ School Board of the concerned School of Study/ Research Council shall have the power to look into the act of misconduct.

**7. General Rules of Discipline – Standards of Classroom Behaviour, Behaviour with faculty, Fellow Students and Other Administrative Staff**

- 7.1 The primary responsibility of managing the classroom environment, whether in-person or online, rests with the concerned Course Coordinator /Programme Coordinator / Director of the School.
- 7.2 Research Student(s) engaged in any unlawful act or behavior that results in disruption of a class shall be reported to the Programme Coordinator and Director of the School for taking appropriate measures against the errant research student(s). This provision regarding classroom behavior is however, not to be used to punish a student with differing academic interpretations of course content or viewpoint, but to address behavior that is disruptive within the educational environment, including impact on other students.
- 7.3 Students shall restrain themselves from using insulting, inciting, threatening and derogatory language while interacting with fellow students/ faculty members and other staff of the University.
- 7.4 Attendance in MPhil/ PhD programmes other than course work period shall be governed by UGC/ IGNOU Research Regulations / Guidelines as amended from time to time.
- 7.5 Absence beyond a period of 15 days from the class shall be duly reported to the Course Coordinator/ Director of the School in advance.





- 7.6 Cancellation of registration in respect of a research student shall be initiated as per the IGNOU Research Regulations/ Guidelines.

**8 Participation in Activities**

The Research Students of the University shall not indulge in the following activities:

- 8.1 Interaction with media representatives on issues related to the University and / or making audio-visual clips of any activity of the Campus including classroom teaching/ providing University related information on the social media without prior permission of the University authorities in writing.
- 8.2 Ragging inside / outside the Campus is a serious offence. IGNOU follows anti ragging measures as notified by the UGC from time to time. The IGNOU anti ragging policy shall be applicable *mutatis mutandis* to the Research Students of the University.
- 8.3 Unauthorized entry to the office of officers / faculty members / staff members
- 8.4 Arranging meeting/ function of any kind, other than academic discussions, in the University Campus without the written permission of the Registrar (Administration)
- 8.5 Smoking, use of drugs/ alcohol, drunk driving in the Campus, damaging the property of the University, theft or causing damage to University resources and/ or unauthorized access to resources of the University
- 8.6 Engaging in any attempt at wrongful confinement of any member of the faculty, staff or student in the Campus or outside the Campus
- 8.7 Involvement of a student directly or indirectly in eve-teasing, stalking or domestic violence act
- 8.8 Indulging in such other activities which the University treats as unbecoming of a research student.

**9 Uploading of Thesis in Shodhganga Repository**

- 9.1 As per the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the University with the UGC-INFLIBNET under the Shodhganga project, it is mandatory for submission of thesis/ dissertation online in the Shodhganga repository.
- 9.2 Every research student shall submit an undertaking along with the acceptance of offer letter for admission, to abide by the rules and regulations concerning employment status, discipline, attendance, plagiarism, institutional ethics as prescribed by the University and amendments made thereto from time to time.

**10 Plagiarism**

Research Students shall not resort to plagiarism in their thesis/ dissertation or research publications. Plagiarism includes the following actions:

- 10.1 Quoting directly another person's language, data, illustration, tables, etc. without due acknowledgement of the source.

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- 10.2 Copying a section of a book/ article/ report/ monograph/ dissertation/ thesis without proper citation
- 10.3 Paraphrasing the work of others without due acknowledgement
- 10.4 Submitting material in whole or part for academic evaluation that has been prepared by another individual(s).

#### **11. Exclusion from Plagiarism**

As per clause 7 of UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2018, the following shall be excluded from plagiarism:

- 11.1 All quoted work reproduced with all necessary permission and/or attribution
- 11.2 All references, bibliography, table of content, preface and acknowledgements
- 11.3 All generic terms, laws, standard symbols and standard equations
- 11.4 Quantification of plagiarism for the purpose of definition shall be done as per clause 8 of UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2018.

#### **12. Processing of Cases of Plagiarism**

In conformity with UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations 2018, the University shall make provisions for processing of reported plagiarism cases. Any instance of plagiarism shall be reported to DRC of the concerned Discipline which will examine the case. In case the matter does not get resolved at the level of DRC, it should be referred to the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of the University as provisioned at clause 16 of these guidelines. The IEC shall submit its report to the Vice-Chancellor whose decision shall be final.

#### **13 Penalties for Plagiarism**

Penalties in case of plagiarism shall be imposed on a Research Student only after all avenues of appeal are exhausted. Imposition of penalty is categorized as under:

##### **I In case of Plagiarism in submission of Thesis/ Dissertation**

- a. Level 0: Similarities up to 10% - Minor similarities. No penalty.
- b. Level 1: Similarities above 10% to 40% - Such student shall be asked to submit a revised script within a stipulated time period not exceeding 6 months
- c. Level 2: Similarities above 40% to 60% - Such student shall be debarred from submitting a revised script for a period of one year.
- d. Level 3: Similarities above 60% - The registration of such students in that discipline shall be cancelled.





- e. Such student committing repeated plagiarism, the penalty shall be one step higher than the previous level committed by him/her.
- f. In case plagiarism of the highest level (level 3) is committed, then the punishment for the same shall be operative.
- g. In case of plagiarism proved on a date later to award of degree, the degree shall be kept in abeyance for a period recommended by the Institutional Academic Integrity Panel (IAIP) and approved by the Vice Chancellor.

## II Penalties in case of plagiarism in academic and research publication

- a. Level 0: Similarities up to 10% - Minor similarities. No penalty.
- b. Level 1: Similarities above 10% to 40% - Such student shall be asked to withdraw manuscript.
- c. Level 2: Similarities above 40% to 60%. Such student shall be debarred from submitting a revised script for a period of one year.
- d. Level 3: Similarities above 60% - Such student's registration in that discipline shall be cancelled.

### 14 Role of Library

The Library shall be the facilitator in the operation of the anti-plagiarism software. The Library shall conduct sensitization/ orientation sessions periodically for Research Students as well as faculty members on the use of the anti-plagiarism software as adopted by the University.

### 15 Institutional Ethics

Responsible research entails accounting for the consequences of one's research upon others and making grievance redressal mechanism available to the aggrieved. Therefore, the institution's responsibility in addressing ethical concerns in research studies shall take into account the following:

#### I. Objectivity

- a. Formulation of research study, process of data collection, interpretation and presentation of data should remain objective and bereft of prejudice. Research Students shall uphold objectivity in research without fear or expectation of favour.
- b. In order to minimize subjectivity and ensuring free inquiry, research students shall declare situations of conflict of interest (if any) at the outset. Research supervisors shall monitor and review the study in light of such disclosure.
- c. Research should not, in any way, generate, support or promote discrimination of any kind including that based on age, colour, caste, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, economic condition, sexual orientation, marital status, and/or physical or mental disability. Research studies should not be influenced by bias or discrimination on account of the above.

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**II. Obtaining Informed Consent**

- a. Research Students shall disclose objectives, research methods, outcome(s), and sponsorship (if any) of the study to research participants
- b. Research Student shall present clear statement of objectives and expected outcome of the study to research participants and community and obtain their consent before commencing the study. No false promises of gain or benefit to individual or community shall be made.
- c. In case the study involves psychological/ physical testing or intervention, the likely impact of such testing or intervention should be made known to research participants at the outset. The intervention should be carried out only on those research participants who willingly agree. Prior written consent of research participants should be obtained in such cases. Research Student should not coax, lure or compel research participants to make themselves available for psychological/ physical testing or intervention.
- d. Research Student should confine themselves to data provided willingly by the research participants/ community willingly. Any kind of pressure or unfair means shall not be used to obtain data.

**III. Protecting Right(s) of Research Participants/ Community**

- a) Research Students should respect research participants/ community and ensure that their personal and public interests are protected.
- b) Research Students should be aware of and abide by the ethics, beliefs, values and code of conduct of the community/ institution/ organization in which they carry out the study.
- c) Research Students should ensure that research participants' request for anonymity (if any) is upheld in all discussions and writings.
- d) No photographic, audio or video recordings should be made without obtaining permission of research participants.
- e) In disciplines that involve experimentation, Research Student should ensure that human beings/animals serving as subjects in an experiment are fully protected from any harm. Research Students in such cases should ensure that research is carried out in accordance with the universal principles of bioethics.
- f) Research participants should be free to leave the experiment whenever they want. Autonomy of research participants should not be compromised at any stage.
- g) Research Students should respect the time schedule of research participants and make up for any financial loss that accrues due to the study.

**IV. Upholding Peace and Harmony**

- a) Research Student should make sure that the process of data collection in no way becomes the source of or leads to rift, disharmony or violence within a community or between communities
- b) Research Students should be aware of the ethics, beliefs, and code of conduct of the community. They should keep in mind the aspect of cultural relativism and abide by conventions and norms of the community/institution/ organization in which they carry out their study.

**V. Collecting Authentic Data**

- a) Data collected by Research Student must be authentic and reliable.
- b) Research Student shall refrain from tampering or manipulating data even if it contradicts the expected outcome.
- c) Data should not be interpreted out of context and in a way that facts get distorted.

**VI. Making Use of Data**

- a) The use of primary data collected for the study should be confined to the purpose for which it was collected.
- b) Data collected for the study should be made use of for academic purposes only.
- c) Research Students should ensure that it is not used for commercial purposes or made available for third party use unless written permission from research participants/community is obtained.

**VII. Acknowledging the Contribution of Others**

- a) Research Students should explicitly provide reference to others' work that they use. This includes work that may not have been cited verbatim. The provisions under Clause 5 of these guidelines may be referred.
- b) Research Students shall report sources of social, political and/or financial support (if any).
- c) Research Students should mention the contribution of persons who have contributed towards data collection (e.g., translator, photographer), data analysis (e.g., statistician), and data presentation (e.g., language editors) even if an honorarium is given to them in lieu of their services.
- d) Any dispute / clarification regarding ethics in research would be referred to the Grievance Redressal Committee as mentioned at point no.10 of these guidelines may be referred.

**16. Institutional Ethics Committee**

The Institutional Ethics Committee shall be constituted by the Vice Chancellor.

- 16.1 The Institutional Ethics Committee shall be multidisciplinary and multi sect oral in nature. It shall comprise internal members from various fields and external members as nominated by the Vice Chancellor. One of the internal members shall be the Chairperson nominated by the Vice Chancellor and the Director, Research Unit shall be the convenor. The tenure of the Committee shall be for a period of three years.

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The composition of the Committee shall be as under :

- One director of School - Chairperson (Nominated by VC)
- Two internal members from various fields - Members (Nominated by VC)
- One External Member - Member (Nominated by VC)
- Director, Research Unit – Member Convenor (Ex-officio)

16.2 The Doctoral Research Committee (DRC) of a discipline, while going through the research proposals of Research Students, shall look into ethical issues as prescribed in these guidelines. In case the DRC feels that institutional ethics are being compromised, the DRC should suggest corrective measures to the Research Student. If the issues could not be resolved at the DRC level, the research proposal shall be referred to the Institutional Ethics Committee through the Research Unit.

16.3 All research proposals referred by the DRC on ethical issues shall be reviewed by the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC) of the University so as to safeguard the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of all research participants.

16.4 While vetting the proposals, the Ethics committee must ensure that the necessary guidelines of the concerned Regulatory bodies are followed. Compliance of the specific norms prescribed by the concerned Regulatory Bodies shall be the responsibility of the concerned School.

#### **17. Ethical Review**

- a) Ethical review procedure is mandatory as per the stipulations of the concerned Regulatory bodies.
- b) IECs shall be entrusted with the initial review of research proposals, referred by DRC prior to their initiation, and also have a continuing responsibility to regularly monitor the approved research to ensure ethical compliance during the conduct of research.
- c) The IEC should be competent and independent in its functioning.
- d) The Ethics Committee shall frame SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) and also advise the researchers about the “informed consent” to be obtained from the subjects, and “confidentiality” to be maintained vis-à-vis subjects.

#### **18. Procedure for Reports of Misconduct / Violation of Rules of Discipline, Sanctions and Grievance Redressal**

A person may report alleged misconduct by a student or a student group/ organization to the Research Unit of IGNOU. The Research Unit in the first instance shall refer the matter to the concerned Director for placing the matter before the DRC. The recommendation of the DRC may be reviewed, if need be, by the Grievance Redressal Committee as mentioned in Cl. 19 of the Code of Conduct. The decision of the Vice Chancellor in the matter shall be final.

## 19. Grievance Redressal Mechanism

There shall be a Grievance Redressal Committee' duly constituted by the Competent Authority to examine general rules of discipline. Any grievance by or against a research scholar relating to general rules of discipline shall be referred by a concerned DRC, to the Grievance Redressal Committee. The composition of the Committee shall be as under:

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. One Director of School (nominated by the VC)         | Chairperson     |
| 2. Two teachers of the University (nominated by the VC) | Member          |
| 3. Director, SSC (ex-officio)                           | Member          |
| 4. Director, Research Unit (ex-officio)                 | Member Convener |

The tenure of the members of the Committee shall be three years. The Research Unit shall be the coordinating the activities of the Grievance Redressal Committee. Notwithstanding the penalties prescribed by the UGC Regulations on Academic integrity 2018, this Grievance Redressal committee shall recommend the kind of penalty/ sanction (minor penalty/ major penalty depending on the severity of misconduct) to be imposed on the erring research student(s).

## 20. Interim Actions

In the eventuality of certain misconduct by research student(s), the University may take interim actions while the matter is under examination by the relevant bodies.

## 21. Interpretations and Review

- a Any question of interpretation of the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Vice Chancellor and the decision of the Vice-Chancellor shall be final.
- b The Code of Conduct shall be reviewed every three years. The Research Unit shall initiate the Review.

## 22. Affirmative Actions

- a The University in an endeavor to orient the research students with the code of conduct/ academic integrity as expected of them should arrange counselling sessions, conduct induction programme and initiate remedial measures. The Research Unit shall organize such orientation/ sensitization programmes exclusively for Research Students at least once a year.
- b The University shall train researchers and staff for using plagiarism detection tools and reference management tools through arranging training programmes.
- c The Coursework curriculum in MPhil/ PhD shall include elements of responsible conduct of research and publication as a compulsory module.