



IAU-MCO Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education

The International Association of Universities and the Magna Charta Observatory have jointly drawn up the following Guidelines for an Institutional Code of Ethics in Higher Education (hereafter Guidelines) to encourage the adoption of comprehensive Institutional Codes of Ethics by higher education institutions where no such ethical code exists or to assist in the review of existing institutional codes. These Guidelines will be periodically reviewed and revised, as appropriate, to meet the needs of the changing higher education environment.

1. *Preamble*

1.1 Higher education and research are in a constant state of change. Societal demands and expectations of what knowledge should deliver are multiple and expanding. Research in higher education institutions is continuously pushing back the frontiers of discovery. In many nations the growth in the number of higher education institutions is unmatched in history.

The pace and scope of these worldwide changes are unprecedented. They are fuelled by the conviction that the Knowledge Economy/Society offers the best path to wealth and well-being, and they are influenced by the process of globalization, technological advances and market forces.

The formative and socializing role of higher education in educating ever-increasing number and often a culturally more diverse group of students, and the far-reaching, at times unpredictable consequences of scientific and intellectual enquiry, place additional responsibility on the entire academic community to deepen ethical self-awareness, to act with integrity and to examine continuously the ethical underpinnings and implications of their actions in the wider community.

In this context of rapid change and expansion, members of the academic community – higher education leaders, faculty members, staff and students – must be prepared to face and resolve ethical dilemmas of great complexity.

- 1.2 The legitimacy, credibility, support, and autonomy of higher education institutions rest on the quality of their activities and services related to teaching and learning, research and outreach, as well as the integrity and transparency of their procedures.
- 1.3 Yet, many higher education institutions do not have an institutional code of ethics that articulates how, as institutions, they promote academic integrity and prevent academic dishonesty and unethical behaviour in the academic community.
- 1.4 While ethical principles may be embedded in a specific historical period, context and culture, there are certain fundamental and universal core values and principles that guide higher education and academic work. These ethical values and principles need to be made explicit by higher education institutions in an Institutional Code of Ethics.
- 1.5 Institutional Codes of Ethics in higher education serve to complement codes of conduct defined by national or international learned or professional societies. The codes need to recognize that members of the academic community may also have allegiances to particular religious, philosophical or cultural traditions. Most importantly, such Institutional Codes exist alongside, but do not replace, national and international legislation pertaining to the protection of human rights or other rights and obligations affecting higher education.
- 1.6 All higher education institutions are invited to develop and adopt an Institutional Code of Ethics and to raise awareness in society of the decisive role that they play in promoting ethical values and integrity by their exemplary conduct, in their educational and research functions, and through the discussion of ethical subjects they stimulate.

2. Underlying values and principles

- 2.1 The universal core values that define higher education institutions have been enshrined in the Constitution of the International Association of Universities, in its more recent Policy Statement entitled Academic Freedom, University Autonomy and Social Responsibility as well as in the Magna Charta Universitatum. These values have further been enshrined by UNESCO Member States in the 1997 Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel. Together, these documents recognize academic freedom, institutional autonomy and the related responsibilities to society as the *condicio sine qua non* for the unfettered pursuit of truth and the free dissemination of knowledge by and within higher education institutions, and reaffirm the fundamental grounding of the responsibility for oversight of and adherence to these values within the higher education sector itself.
- 2.2 Recognizing this responsibility, a shared understanding of what constitutes ethical academic behaviour inherent in these core universal values should form the basis of the Institutional Code of Ethics which must, in addition, promote the following principles:
 - i. **Academic integrity and ethical conduct of research**
 - ii. **Equity, justice and non-discrimination**
 - iii. **Accountability, transparency and independence**
 - iv. **Critical analysis and respect for reasoned opinions**
 - v. **Responsibility for the stewardship of assets, resources and the environment**
 - vi. **Free and open dissemination of knowledge and information**
 - vii. **Solidarity with and fair treatment of international partners**

3. Procedure, Practices and Actors

3.1 All Institutional Codes of Ethics in Higher Education should be elaborated following a transparent and inclusive process of consultation of the diverse groups that make up the academic community – faculty members, students, staff and governing bodies/leadership - respecting the rights and noting the responsibilities of each.

3.2 The Institutional Code, articulating the ethical standards of conduct, should outline how these apply to each group and all members of the academic community. Furthermore, specific focus should be given to:

a. Promoting academic integrity in teaching and research by:

- i. Establishing, disseminating and monitoring policies and procedures related to integrity issues;
- ii. Providing sufficient information, support and recognition to all members of the academic community to uphold ethical practices;
- iii. Ensuring that institutional research policies stress, within the framework of academic freedom, individual and group responsibilities for ethical conduct of research;
- iv. Sanctioning academic misconduct.

b. Development of educational programs to uphold ethical values and academic integrity by:

- i. Integrating academic integrity discussions as part of the curriculum;
- ii. Encouraging extracurricular awareness raising activities concerned with modern ethical dilemmas;
- iii. Underlining the vital significance of academic integrity and its importance to the broader societal role of higher education.

c. Upholding equity, justice, equal opportunity, fairness and non-discrimination both as an employer and as an institution of higher learning by:

- i. Fully and publicly adhering to and applying the principle of fairness in all dealings and interactions with members of the academic community;
- ii. Establishing clear standards, practices and monitoring procedures concerning hiring, promotion and dismissal of all personnel, as well as for student admissions and related activities;
- iii. Ensuring that all complaints and appeals are heard and dealt with fairly and in a timely and transparent manner.

d. Obligation of accountability and transparency in all operations and when investigating cases of academic misconduct, by

- i. Putting in place clear and transparent internal mechanisms for quality enhancement and disseminating information regularly on performance and achievements both internally and externally to the wider community;
- ii. Interpreting the principle of confidentiality so as to allow for thorough and objective research of all data and analysis in cases of possible academic misconduct;
- iii. Applying such rules of conduct equally to the institution and to individual members of the academic community.

- e. Pursuit of individual and/or institutional reputation and publicity** which is based on and guided by:
- i. A commitment to the provision of accurate and factual information;
 - ii. The stated institutional mission and principles of academic freedom;
 - iii. Sanctions for the use of inappropriate, illegal or untruthful means to enhance personal or institutional prestige or to seek other material rewards.
- f. Avoidance of all abuse of power** by any member of the academic community for political, economic or personal gain by:
- i. Developing and disseminating clear definitions and rules governing conflict of interest, abuse of power, including political, economic, sexual and/or moral harassment;
 - ii. Establishing mechanisms that all members of the academic community can use in confidence to lodge complaints of such abuses and know that investigations will follow.
- g. Promoting critical analysis, freedom of speech and reasoned debate** with others by
- i. Guaranteeing academic freedom within the profession and allowing all members of the academic community to express themselves freely as professionals and otherwise as engaged members of society;
 - ii. Instilling in students the capacity for reasoned dialogue, argument and debate.
- h. Encouraging social responsibility at the institutional and individual level**, including, the responsibility for promoting equity in access and success in higher education; sustainable development; human rights and democratic citizenship, among others, by:
- i. Ensuring that these issues form an integral part of the educational and research activities as well as institutional governance;
 - ii. Raising public awareness, including within the institution, on these topics;
 - iii. Sensitizing all members of the academic community as to their individual and collective responsibility to lead by example in these critical areas.
- i. Exercising vigilance with regard to applications for and receipt of external funds** and securing independence from the market to avoid any curtailment of academic freedom or the freedom of disseminating research results by:
- i. Setting out clear rules and procedures to be followed by all individuals applying for external financial support for research, teaching and outreach services;
 - ii. Providing an environment of openness and transparency for contracts entered into between the academic community and external partners, and ensuring these relationships do not interfere with or negatively influence the academic integrity of the institution;
 - iii. Spelling out the risks and potential dangers to avoid when accepting external funds;
 - iv. Informing all members of the academic community of their individual responsibility to ensure, prior to accepting funds from external sources, that they are in compliance with relevant institutional rules.
- j. Fair management of intellectual property** and promotion of free and open dissemination of knowledge and information by:

- i. Putting in place a clear, comprehensive and fair legal framework to regulate intellectual property and to prevent internal and external abuses;
- ii. Facilitating and rewarding implementation of the principles of open access.

k. Promoting solidarity, respect for diversity and equitable international partnerships and collaboration by:

- i. Building international linkages and cooperation on the basis of core values of academic freedom, institutional autonomy and related local and global responsibilities to society;
- ii. Ensuring that short-term as well as long-term impacts on each participant and wider society are taken into consideration when collaboration is being planned;
- iii. Placing shared interests, pursuit of mutual benefits and avoidance of adverse effects at the core of all international exchanges.

3.3 The ethical standards of conduct articulated in the Institutional Code should apply **to all members of the academic community, including institutional leadership, faculty members, administrative staff and students**. Each member of the community should be made aware of his/her rights but also of their personal responsibility to comply with the Code, especially in regards to the following:

- i. Upholding of academic integrity and independence, based on the principle of the honest and open search for and dissemination of knowledge free from internal institutional censorship and from all external pressures from social movements, industrial lobbies, governments and political and/or religious groups that compromise or threaten this principle;
- ii. Avoiding fraud of any kind, including plagiarism, deliberate fabrication or falsification of data, unauthorized duplication and unwarranted authorship, piracy of thesis or projects, and the use of ghost writers and unwarranted co-authorship;
- iii. Promoting decision-making based on merit along with ability and performance as the key criteria in the standards used for the selection, compensation and promotion of faculty members, technical and administrative staff as well as students;
- iv. Avoiding conflict of interest in all areas of policy and decision-making concerning, for example, research, student admission and evaluation, faculty performance, promotion, compensation, etc;
- v. Ensuring policies and resources are in place that uphold a high quality of teaching, proper student supervision and fair and transparent evaluation of student performance according to criteria available in advance;
- vi. Promoting and safeguarding mutual respect between teacher and student, non-discrimination, trustworthiness and avoiding all abuse of power and harassment;
- vii. Preventing all corruption, including the sale or receipt of favours for admissions, favourable examination results, granting of qualifications, hiring and promotion, etc.;
- viii. Maintaining high level of confidentiality by protecting the integrity and security of university information systems including student records, employee files, patient records, and contract negotiation documents;

- ix. Ensuring that university resources, staff time, supplies, equipment, services, and travel budgets are used solely for university-related purposes;
- x. Respecting and protecting university property;
- xi. Avoiding misrepresentation of institutional interests when establishing international collaborative partnerships or pursuing international cooperation projects;
- xii. Giving all members of the academic community access and the right to a fair hearing in all cases of alleged abuse or misuse of power, discrimination or harassment as well as the right to appeal;
- xiii. Promoting a high level of commitment to institutional and individual social responsibility.

3.4 Notwithstanding the above listing of rights and responsibilities applicable to all members of the academic community, the Institutional Code should include, or refer to, a specific set of rights and responsibilities of students, as new entrants into the higher education community, to behave with dignity and respect toward teachers, staff members and fellow students, while being treated in the same manner, to internalize a culture of academic honesty and ethical behaviour and social responsibility, and to respect institutional property and facilities.

4. *Implementation of an Institutional Code of Ethics, awareness raising and sanctions*

- 4.1 It is necessary but insufficient for higher education institutions to elaborate and adopt an Institutional Code of Ethics. Higher education institutions need to go beyond declaring the values and principles they protect and promote by integrating these fully into their institutional strategies, curriculum, management processes and relations with outside stakeholders including international partner institutions, while continuously updating their Code and monitoring its application to ensure relevance and currency.
- 4.2 In line with the underlying values and principles mentioned above, implementation of the Institutional Code, monitoring of compliance and the preparation of related texts, including definitions and relevant glossaries of terms, is the responsibility of the institutional leadership, assisted as appropriate by an institution-wide committee and in consultation with and active participation by all groups of the academic community and external partners. To further transparency, accountability and constructive dialogue in support of building a culture of values and principles, institutions should adopt a periodic self-evaluation of compliance with the Institutional Code in place, including public reporting and discussion of findings, recommendations and any resulting changes in policy or practice.
- 4.3 It is the responsibility of individuals or groups to seek guidance on and, if necessary, approval for any activity which might be ethically sensitive. The Institutional Code should set out clear and specific review and approval procedures for members of the academic community to follow in this regard.
- 4.4 The Institutional Code needs to be disseminated widely within the institution to ensure understanding and ownership by all. Reference to the Code and its underlining ethical principles should be included in the University Statute and on the website.

- 4.5 Regular discussion and training seminars for faculty members, technical and administrative staff and students, including international students, should be held to promote and uphold the principles of the Institutional Code and to provide clear information about expected conduct by all members of the academic community.
- 4.6 Institutional accountability requires that all types of academic malpractice and misconduct be identified and investigated and that sanctions be applied whenever necessary. Information about what constitutes such academic misconduct and investigative procedures, including 'safe' reporting mechanisms and disciplinary actions must be widely available to the whole academic community.

It is the responsibility of each higher education institution, accountable to society for the provision of quality education and research, to safeguard and promote the highest level of integrity and ethical behaviour.

By adopting an Institutional Code of Ethics, the institution demonstrates its commitment to implementing these values and principles.