

Some Reflections on UGC Regulations on Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism

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UGC Regulations titled Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions, Regulations, 2018 dated 23rd July, 2018 (UGC, 2018) can be considered as a revolutionary step towards ensuring truth and justice in the learning-teaching processes in the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the country. Though UGC took a tough stand against plagiarism even before, comprehensive regulations on the matter are for the first time. Besides, the regulations emphasise the promotion of Academic Integrity, a term which is not that familiar to our academic community, but which has an enormous influence on the academic life of faculty and students of HEIs abroad, especially, in developed countries like UK and USA.

What is Academic Integrity?

The term Academic Integrity denotes a set of core values that the members of an academic community, including the faculty, students, and administrators should practice while performing their respective duties. According to the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI), a non-profit organisation that promotes academic integrity, it is a commitment to six fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Fairness, Respect, Responsibility and Courage (Fishman, 2012). In other words, in order to achieve and maintain academic integrity, every member in the academic community should involve in scholarly activities with honesty, fairness, responsibility, mutual trust and respect, and they should have the courage to act on these values.

The violation or breaching of academic integrity is known as Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism, an academic menace widely discussed in India in recent times, is considered as the most heinous form of academic dishonesty. Other fraudulent practices such as copying during examinations, helping others for copying, giving proxy class attendance for someone else, multiple submission of assignments and term papers, falsification of research data and fabrication

of research findings, act of taking someone else's examination, preparing fake educational documents and certificates, stealing or destroying of other's intellectual works, getting the research works and documents prepared by others and illegally availing educational benefits also come under the purview of academic dishonesty. Disciplinary actions against academic dishonesty in HEIs in the western countries range from a warning to expulsion/ termination from the organisation depending upon the nature and severity of the case.

The ICAI suggests the following steps for establishing a climate of integrity in educational institutions:

- Develop and publicize clear, fair, academic integrity policies, procedures, and statements that can be effectively understood and consistently implemented.
- Promote positive aspects of academic integrity amongst all segments of the campus community. Promotional activities should include discussions of the fundamental values, development of ethical decision-making capacities, and highlighting the link between academic integrity and broader ethical concerns.
- Educate all members of the community about academic integrity standards so that expectations are well understood as integral components of the community culture.
- Practice the actions described in campus policies consistently and fairly. Provide support to those who follow the policies and uphold standards.
- Develop, explain, and administer equitable, transparent systems for adjudicating integrity violations.
- Stay abreast of current developments in technology and educational practices in order to anticipate increased risks and address potential problems.
- Regularly assess the effectiveness of academic integrity policies, procedures, and practices. Revise and revitalize as necessary to update and improve. (Fishman, 2012, pp 30-31).

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