**Academic Integrity and its Importance in Higher Education**

Ethical lapses during one's education may carry over into a person's career and personal life. With the growing number of corporate scandals, educational institutions could increasingly be held accountable for providing training in ethical behaviour. Academic integrity is defined as the commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values:

1. Honesty
2. Trust
3. Fairness
4. Respect
5. Responsibility

From these values flow principles of behaviour that enable academic communities to translate ideals into action.

1. **Honesty**

Honesty is the foundation of teaching, learning and research, and the prerequisite for full realization of trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Honesty begins with oneself and extends to others. In the quest for knowledge, students and faculty alike must be honest with themselves and with each other, whether in the classroom, laboratory, or library, or on the playing field. Cultivating honesty lays the foundation for lifelong integrity, developing in each of us the courage and insight to make difficult choices and accept responsibility for actions and their consequences, even at personal cost.

1. **Trust**

An academic community of integrity fosters a climate of mutual trust, encourages the free exchange of ideas, and enables all to reach their highest potential. Trust is promoted by faculty who set clear guidelines for assignments and for evaluating student work; by students who prepare work that is honest and thoughtful; and by institutions that set clear and consistent academic standards and that support honest and impartial research. Only with trust can we believe in the research of others and move forward with new work. Only with trust can we collaborate with individuals, sharing information and ideas without fear that our work will be stolen, our careers stunted, or our reputations diminished. Only with trust can our communities believe in the social value and meaning of an institution’s scholarship and degrees.

1. **Fairness**

Fair and accurate evaluation is essential in the educational process. For students, important components of fairness are predictability, clear expectations, and a consistent and just response to dishonesty. Faculty members also have a right to expect fair treatment, not only from students but also from colleagues and their administration. All campus constituencies have a role in ensuring fairness, and a lapse by one member of the community does not excuse misconduct by another. Rationalizations such as “everyone does it” do not justify or excuse dishonesty.

1. **Respect**

To be most rewarding, teaching and learning demand active engagement and mutual respect. Students and faculty must respect themselves and each other as individuals, not just as a means to an end. They must also respect themselves and each other for extending their boundaries of knowledge, testing new skills, building upon success, and learning from failure.

Students show respect by attending class, being on time, paying attention, listening to other points of view, being prepared and contributing to discussions, meeting academic deadlines, and performing to the best of their ability. Being rude, demeaning, or disruptive is the antithesis of respectful conduct.

Members of the faculty show respect by taking students’ ideas seriously, providing full and honest feedback on their work, valuing their aspirations and goals, and recognizing them as individuals.

All must show respect for the work of others by acknowledging their intellectual debts through proper identification of sources.

1. **Responsibility**

Every member of an academic community — each student, faculty member, and administrator — is responsible for upholding the integrity of scholarship and research. Shared responsibility distributes the power to effect change, helps overcome apathy, and stimulates personal investment in upholding academic integrity standards. Being responsible means taking action against wrongdoing, despite peer pressure, fear, loyalty, or compassion. At a minimum, individuals should take responsibility for their own honesty and should discourage and seek to prevent misconduct by others. This may be as simple as covering one’s own answers during a test or as difficult as reporting a friend for cheating, as required by some honor codes. Whatever the circumstances, members of an academic community must not tolerate or ignore dishonesty on the part of others.

**Importance of academic integrity**

Having academic integrity is important for several reasons. First, having academic integrity means that others can trust us. The people with whom we deal know that they can rely on us to act honestly and to do what we say we will do. When people know that we believe in doing the right thing, and that our behavior is consistent with that belief, they trust us.

Additionally, trust is one of the key characteristics of a successful leader. These individuals develop good reputations by being honest, fair, and trustworthy, for example. Individuals who are successful in business understand the benefits of acting with integrity.

Our world is based on our ability to trust each other. Therefore, developing good ethical habits now, while we are in higher education, will help us as we enter the workplace and face ethical issues (which most certainly will happen).

Second, having academic integrity is important because it provides value to our degree. Employers prefer to hire graduates whom they believe to have high personal integrity. They would rather invest in developing the human capital of someone who will be a positive influence on the organization and on someone whom they can trust to carry out the company’s mission.

Finally, having academic integrity is important because it can offer us peace of mind knowing that we believe in doing the right thing, and always try to act consistently with those beliefs. Acting with integrity can reduce a lot of unnecessary stress in our life, making us happier, healthier, and more productive.

**Developing strong program for academic integrity**

The call to promote academic integrity places responsibility upon everyone in the educational community to balance high standards with compassion and concern. From its study of the processes and practices of successful academic integrity programs, the Center for Academic Integrity, Duke University, USA has developed seven recommendations that are appropriate to every institution of higher education. An academic institution should:

1. Have clear academic integrity statements, policies, and procedures that are consistently implemented.
2. Inform and educate the entire community regarding academic integrity policies and procedures.
3. Promulgate and rigorously practice these policies and procedures from the top down, and provide support to those who faithfully follow and uphold them.
4. Have a clear, accessible, and equitable system to adjudicate suspected violations of policy.
5. Develop programs to promote academic integrity among all segments of the campus community. These programs should go beyond repudiation of academic dishonesty and include discussions about the importance of academic integrity and its connection to broader ethical issues and concerns.
6. Be alert to trends in higher education and technology affecting academic integrity on its campus.
7. Regularly assess the effectiveness of its policies and procedures and take steps to improve and rejuvenate them.

**Methods for Promoting Academic Integrity**

1. Orientation sessions for all new faculty and students should incorporate a discussion of academic integrity.
2. Formulation of policies and procedures on Academic Integrity
3. Packets containing information explaining the policy, the procedures that are in place, and examples of violation of the rules should be distributed. These packets should be readily available, throughout the academic year, in the appropriate offices of the Institute and the locations of those offices should be widely publicized. Institutions using additional resources to detect plagiarism should publicize these resources widely.
4. All Institution related academic publications, student handbooks, prospectuses and official website should include the academic integrity policy and the consequences of not adhering to it.
5. All syllabi and schedules of classes should make reference to the Institution’s academic integrity policy and where they are published in full.
6. A “Faculty Report” form should be used throughout the Institute to report incidents of suspected academic dishonesty. The faculty member should report all such incidents by completing and submitting the form to the Head of the Institute.
7. The Institute should have a Student Guide to Academic Integrity.