



Technical University in Zvolen

ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTIVE

No. 8/2021

**Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity
at the Technical University in Zvolen**

Zvolen 2021



TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY IN ZVOLEN

No. R-12163/2021

Organizational directive No. 8/2021

Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity at the Technical University in Zvolen

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SCOPE: Technical University in Zvolen

CHECKING COMPLIANCE WITH THE DIRECTIVE IS AUTHORISED BY:
Management of the Technical University in Zvolen

PROCESSED BY: Vice-rector for Science and Research

EFFECTIVE DATE: 14 December 2021

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Article 1

Introductory Provisions

1. The organizational directive Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity at the Technical University in Zvolen is part of the Internal Quality Assessment System for Higher Education at the Technical University in Zvolen (hereinafter referred to as “TU in Zvolen”) in accordance with Act No. 269/2018 Coll. on ensuring the quality of higher education and amending Act No. 343/2015 Coll. on public procurement and on the amendment of certain laws as amended, also in accordance with the Standards for the Internal Quality Assessment System (hereinafter referred to as “standards”), with the Methodology for evaluating standards, which were approved by the executive board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter referred to as “SAAHE”) and the organizational directive on the Assessing Creative Activities at the Technical University in Zvolen.
2. The purpose of the organizational directive Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity at the TU in Zvolen is to regulate the values, principles and rules of behaviour that are to be followed by employees during the performance of their profession at the University and by students during their studies at the University.

Article 2

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this directive, a set of terms from the structures of the Internal Quality Assessment System of the TU in Zvolen shall be defined:
 - a) Academic and scientific integrity is the primary condition for high-quality scientific work, based on thorough compliance with the highest professional and moral standards, transparency, conduct of research critically and without prejudice, and in the absolute integrity of the practice, teaching, and administration of science. Its opposite is understood as scientific misconduct and dishonesty.
 - b) Academic fraud is a dishonest and dishonourable act that is the opposite of research integrity and is in defiance of moral standards. This mainly concerns plagiarism, cheating and copying during exams, fabrication of research results, recording of fictional data, omission of unsuitable facts and data, falsification of research, deceitful practices when publishing results, not declaring a conflict of interests, misuse of information obtained during the process of assessment, fictitious authorship, desultory and low-quality assessment, systematic and conscious publication in magazines and publishing houses where there are signs of unfair practices (magazines and publishing houses that show signs of predatory practices).
 - c) Self-plagiarism means that authors publish the results of their work again and without adequate references or citing.
 - d) Contract cheating is the act of ordering and paying others for completion of seminar, semester, and final theses.
 - e) The Ethics Committee of the TU in Zvolen is a permanent advisory body to the rector which monitors the compliance of activities with ethics and integrity in science, research and education, and whose activities are regulated in this directive.
 - f) Fabrication is a creation of fictitious scientific results and their recording as if they were real.
 - g) Falsification is a form of manipulating research material, equipment or processes, or unjustified changing, omitting, or ignoring data or results.
 - h) Manipulative methods to increase the citation of publications are understood as violating the principles of correct citation through attaching citations that are not relevant to the content of the article to increase the citation rate of the author or journal.
 - i) Citing is a citation, review, or art criticism of a published work. Citation of an artistic activity is mainly a published citation of a work, presentation and artistic performance, a review or art criticism of a work, presentation or artistic performance, a reproduction of a work with a clear indication of the author in a foreign publication or domestic publication or media.

- j) Plagiarism is understood as usage of other people's work and ideas without a proper reference to the original source. This violates the rights of the original author or authors over the results of their creative mental activity.
- k) Questionable research practices represent further violations of the correct research practice, and they damage the integrity of the research process or researchers.
- l) The Board for the Internal Quality Assessment System of the TU in Zvolen is characterised within the internal regulation "Internal Quality Assessment System for Higher Education at the TU in Zvolen".
- m) The rector of the university is the representative of the university, manages it, represents, and acts in matters of the university. At the same time, he/she is the chairman of both the Scientific Board of the TU in Zvolen and the Board for the Internal Quality Assessment System of the TU in Zvolen.
- n) Creative activity is research activity, development activity, artistic activity, or other creative activity at a higher education institution, and it is relevant in terms of fulfilling the mission of such an institution, especially in relation to the aims and outcomes of education.

Article 3

Code of Ethics for employees at the Technical University in Zvolen

I. Relations at the Technical University in Zvolen

1. Respect for people - basic principle of interpersonal relations

- a) Employee relations among themselves, as well as the relationships between upper- and lower-level employees, are based on respect for the dignity of each person and on respect for basic human rights as declared in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- b) Every employee is required to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and fellowship. Without these it is not possible to cooperate and achieve excellent results on a long-term basis within the field of education, research, development, art, and other creative activities.
- c) No physical, psychological, or sexual harassment shall be tolerated at the TU in Zvolen. No form of abuse, humiliation, bullying, defamation of a human being, discrimination on the grounds of race, age, gender, mental or physical health, sexual orientation or political opinion is acceptable.
- d) Every employee of the TU in Zvolen bears responsibility for their actions. Employees should behave in a way that does not harm their co-workers, does not complicate work of others or does not hinder their colleagues' initiative.
- e) Academic employees do not disparage the pedagogical and scientific procedures of their colleagues and respect different scientific opinions. Employees comply with the principles of intellectual property protection, do not appropriate work results of others, are not involved in plagiarism and forgery. Employees assess applications for projects, drafts of works, professional and qualification theses, reports, and other documents unbiasedly and impartially.
- f) Anyone who thinks they can contribute to the improvement in any area has the right to be heard.

2. Protection of university reputation and property

- a) Every employee of the TU in Zvolen acts not only as a private individual, but also as a representative of the university. Therefore, even in public, employees should mind the reputation of the university, protect its interests, and should not commit anything that could harm the university in any way possible.
- b) Every employee complies with the ban on the consumption of alcoholic beverages, drugs and other narcotic and psychotropic substances within the workplaces and premises of the TU in Zvolen during working and non-working hours, as well as the ban on the arrival to work under influence of these.
- c) Every employee is obliged to protect the intellectual and material property of the university. Every employee uses tools and equipment in accordance with the university internal regulations.

- d) The Technical University in Zvolen pledges to create a hygienically harmless, and suitable working environment. Employees are obliged to respect all safety regulations and see that they do not endanger themselves, their co-workers, or other people and do not cause any material damage.
- e) University employees do not give or accept any kind of bribe in connection with their work performance.
- f) University employees behave responsibly towards the environment.

3. Dispute resolution ethics

- a) Employees should behave so as to prevent disputes. In the event of a dispute or conflict arising at the workplace, they resolve it in a refined manner, non-violently, through dialogue, with all involved parties participating.
- b) In the event of a serious dispute, the parties involved must show responsibility and use all negotiating possibilities to ensure a smooth operation at the university.

II. Relations with students at the Technical University in Zvolen

4. Honest and correct approach

- a) An honest and correct approach to students, satisfaction of their needs and interests are prerequisites for a successful and lasting mutual relationship.
- b) Academic employees do not misuse their teaching authority towards students, they do not behave arrogantly towards them and do not demand activities from students that are not the subject of their standardised obligations.

5. Objectivity and impartiality

- a) Behaviour in relation to students is discreet, polite, without any favouritism, prejudice, and discrimination. The university pledges to create equal conditions for all students.
- b) When evaluating study results, teachers proceed in an objective, impartial and transparent manner.

Article 4

Code of Ethics for students at the Technical University in Zvolen

I. Relations to the Technical University in Zvolen

1. 1. Honest and decent behaviour

- a) Students behave honestly and politely towards others, they protect the university property and facilities, and their behaviour does not contradict the generally accepted moral principles and ethical rules.
- b) Students express their opinions freely and politely, do not use violence or threat of violence. They respect everyone's origin, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or health conditions, etc.
- c) Students actively oppose all manifestations of extremism, racism, discrimination, social intolerance, and everything that can be offensive to human dignity.
- d) Within the premises of the university, students comply with the principles of social interaction and hygiene. They attend classes and exams in clean and appropriate clothing which does not appear provocatively or distracting to others.

2. Respect for rules and regulations

- a) Students are aware of their responsibility for their own actions during the teaching process, they comply with the rules of study and other regulations issued by the university. They accept and

help to solve problems of their fellow students. Students approach their studies responsibly and use the acquired knowledge for the benefit of the society.

- b) Students do not disturb the teaching process or exams by arriving late or leaving early, they do not use information and communication tools for their own purposes during classes. Video or audio recordings within the teaching process can only be made with the teacher's consent.
- c) Students do not come to classes under the influence of alcohol or other narcotic substances, they do not disturb, eat, or sleep during classes.
- d) When working on final, seminar or semester theses, students do not plagiarise, they do not use contract cheating, do not fabricate results, and do not falsify research material. Students comply with legal and ethical requirements established for the use of other literary sources. Students cite the sources correctly and indicate the used literature. In exams, written papers, or tests, students do not copy from others, they do not cheat, and only use aids allowed by the examiner.
- e) Students respect objective evaluation of their results as given by the teacher. In the event of discontent, they handle the situation respectfully, addressing the teacher directly, or they have the right to contact the head of the relevant department (workplace) to review the evaluation.

3. Partners to teacher

- a) Through their attitude and behaviour, students become equal partners to their teacher. In relation to university employees, the public and colleagues, they behave with respect and dignity, respecting the same rights for everyone else.

II. Mutual relations among students at the Technical University in Zvolen

4. Personal aspect and responsible approach to studies

- a) Students show respect for their fellow students as well as for themselves and they respect basic human rights. Students are role models for others as far as speaking in the public and maintaining their appearance are concerned.
- b) Students use all the facilities of the academic campus to acquire free and objective knowledge that contributes to the formation of their professional growth.

Article 5

Obligations for employees to comply with scientific and academic integrity

The duties of TU employees in Zvolen reside in complying with correct academic and research practice in the following areas:

1. Education, control, and professional supervision:

- a) Researchers and academics throughout their careers, from beginners to the most experienced employees, educate themselves in the field of academic and scientific integrity.
- b) Researchers and academics, heads of research, principal investigators and supervisors lead the members of their teams, advise, and provide them with professional training. In this way, they guide the development of their research activity, its concept and structure, and they strengthen the culture of academic and scientific integrity by their personal example.

2. Research processes:

- a) In their research, researchers and academics take into consideration the latest knowledge generated in the given field.
- b) Researchers and academics design, conduct, analyse and document research thoroughly and deliberately.
- c) Researchers and academics use the financial resources intended for research properly, efficiently, economically, and responsibly.

- d) Researchers and academics publish the results and interpretation of research openly, honestly, transparently, and accurately; in justified cases, they maintain the confidentiality of data or findings.
- e) Researchers and academics report on research results in accordance with the standards of their field. Where possible, the results are presented in a way that makes it possible to verify and reproduce them.
- f) Researchers and academics must be aware of their responsibility for the quality of research and credibility of obtained results and they act in accordance with good scientific practice and principles of scientific integrity defined in the publication.
- g) Researchers and academics conduct their research exclusively through scientific methodology, complying with rules that are specific for the respective scientific discipline.
- h) Researchers and academics rely on systematic scepticism, they are open to doubts, rational and reasoned criticism.

3. Ethical measures assuring safety and protection:

- a) Researchers and academics comply with the codes and regulations related to their scientific field.
- b) Researchers and academics treat their research subjects with respect, care and in accordance with legal and ethical rules, irrespective of whether these subjects are human beings, animals, or objects of a cultural, biological, environmental, or natural character.
- c) Researchers and academics are considerate of health and safety of the society, their co-workers and other people involved in the research.
- d) Researchers and academics are aware of and monitor potential harm and risks that may arise from their research activities.
- e) Researchers and academics actively oppose all manifestations of extremism, racism, discrimination, social intolerance, and everything that can threaten human dignity.
- f) In public presentations aimed at dissemination of scientific knowledge and achieved results, researchers and academics follow the professionalism that enables them to carry out their research, developmental, innovation, or teaching activities. Doing so, they also distinguish between a professional opinion and their personal opinion, and they communicate information in accordance with the principles of scientific integrity.

4. Data processing and management:

- a) Researchers and academics ensure adequate management, method of acquisition, processing and organisation of all data and research material, including unpublished data and material, as well as their safe keeping for a reasonable period of time.
- b) Researchers and academics shall assure that the access to the data is as open as possible considering the inevitable limitations and, in case of necessity, it follows the principles of FAIR data management (findability, accessibility, interoperability and reusability).
- c) Researchers and academics shall assure transparent access and use of their data and research material to others.
- d) Researchers and academics consider the data as legitimate research results that can be cited.
- e) Researchers and academics shall assure that all contracts or agreements concerning the research results contain fair terms of use, ownership, and protection of research results in accordance with intellectual property rights.

5. Cooperation and coordination:

- a) Partners within a research cooperation are responsible for the integrity of their joint research.
- b) At the beginning of the cooperation, partners within a research cooperation shall agree on objectives of the research and on a transparent and open way of its presentation.
- c) At the beginning of the cooperation, partners within a research cooperation shall formally agree on rules and applicable codices in the field of research integrity, on laws to be applied and on other legal regulations, on protection of intellectual property of the respective co-workers and on the method of solving potential conflicts and cases of possible violating the ethical rules of research.

- d) Partners within a research cooperation are properly informed about the submission of research results for publishing purposes and this procedure is to be consulted with them in advance.

6. Publication and dissemination of information:

- a) All authors are fully responsible for the entire content of their publication, unless stated otherwise.
- b) All authors shall agree on the order in which their authorship shall be listed, and they also acknowledge that the authorship is based on using the criteria to assess the significance of the contribution to the research concept, collection of relevant data or analysis or interpretation of the results.
- c) All authors shall agree on the percentage share of individual authors if the publication features co-authors. The sum of shares must equal 100%.
- d) Authors shall assure that their work is available to colleagues in a timely, open, transparent, and accurate manner, unless agreed otherwise.
- e) When communicating with the public, as well as in print and social media, they act honestly and in full accordance with the principles of academic and scientific integrity.
- f) Authors appropriately acknowledge the importance of work and intellectual contribution of other scientists, including their co-workers, assistants, and supporters of the research, who had an impact on the given research, and they also cite the related works correctly.
- g) All authors shall declare any conflict of interests and financial or other support that was received for the research purposes or for publishing the research results.
- h) If necessary, authors shall publish a correction of their work or they withdraw the work or they arrange a quick implementation of corrections in their publications, by using clearly defined procedures and stating clear, unambiguous, and true reasons for their actions.
- i) Researchers and academics always comply with the criteria stated above, irrespective of whether they publish in paywalled or open access journals, or they use any other alternative form of publishing.
- j) Researchers and academics do not publish dubiously, and they do not make use of untrustworthy publication platforms, such as the so-called predatory journals and conferences.
- k) Without delay, authors shall fill out a form to record their publication activities and citations and deliver the given documents to the Slovak Library of Forestry and Wood Sciences in Zvolen.

7. Assessment, evaluation, and editorial activity:

- a) Researchers and academics understand the full seriousness of their commitment to the academic community, and they participate with responsibility in the assessment and evaluation of research and decision-making processes.
- b) Researchers and academics assess and evaluate contributions waiting to be published, funding applications, appointment proposals, career advancement or financial rewarding transparently and with adequate justification.
- c) Reviewers, editors, members of boards and committees who have a conflict of interests shall not participate in decisions concerning publishing, funding, appointing, promoting, financial rewarding or awarding.
- d) Reviewers maintain confidentiality if they do not have the author's or proposer's prior consent for publishing.
- e) Reviewers and editors respect the authors' and proposers' rights, and they shall require their approval to use their ideas, data, or interpretations.

Article 6

The Most serious violations against scientific and academic integrity

1. Serious violation of academic and scientific integrity:

- a) Fabrication is the creation of fictitious results and their recording as if they were real.
- b) Falsification is the act of manipulating the research material, equipment or processes, or unjustified changing, omitting, or ignoring of data or results.

- c) Plagiarism is the usage of other people's work and ideas without providing appropriate citation of the original source. This violates the rights of the original author or authors over the results of their creative mental activity.
- d) Manipulative methods or manipulative citation is characterised by increasing the citation rate of publications, i.e., violating principles of correct citing by attaching citations that are not relevant to the content of the article to increase the citation rate of an author or journal.
- e) Contract cheating is the act of ordering and paying others for completion of seminar, semester, and final theses.
- f) Questionable research practices represent another form of violating the correct research practice and they damage the integrity of the research process or researchers.

2. Other questionable research practices (hereinafter referred to as "QRP") concerning the data:

- a) Incorrect/inconsistent management of research data.
- b) Incorrect storage of primary data.
- c) Unjustified refusal to provide access to primary data, including information on how these data were obtained, or disposal of such data before the prescribed mandatory retention period.

3. QRP concerning publication and conference activities and submission of grant proposals:

- a) Manipulating the authorship or disparaging the credits of other researchers within publications.
- b) Re-publishing substantial parts from one's own previous publications, including translations, without properly stating or citing the original (so-called auto-plagiarism).
- c) Selective citing with the intention to support one's own findings or pleasing editors, reviewers, or colleagues.
- d) Establishing or supporting journals that violate the quality control of research (so-called predatory journals).
- e) Providing false, inaccurate, or partial information in submitted grant proposals, as these may disadvantage competitive proposals.
- f) Organising/supporting the so-called predatory conferences and participating in them.

4. QRP concerning research methods/practice:

- a) Using inappropriate (harmful, dangerous) research methods, incorrect/inconsistent research design.
- b) Not adhering to the protocol (human research subjects).
- c) The so-called bias design – selecting methods that are aimed at achieving desired results.
- d) Use of inappropriate statistical methods.

5. QRP associated with the work of the evaluator:

- a) Breach of confidentiality.
- b) Perfunctory, low-quality, uncritical and unobjective assessment.
- c) Not acknowledging a conflict of interests.
- d) Misusing information obtained in the process of assessment.
- e) Bias, either against the researcher or the assessed subject.

6. QRP concerning the behaviour of an academic employee:

- a) Threatening the independence of the research process or reporting its results in a biased manner in favour of research funders/supporters.
- b) Inadequate management or research conduct.
- c) Unjustified expansion of the bibliography.
- d) Not providing research results or their deliberate misrepresentation (exaggerating the importance and practical application of research results).
- e) A dilatory approach or unreasonable obstruction of the work of other researchers.
- f) Abuse of seniority for purposeful violation of research integrity.
- g) Ignoring or concealing violations of academic and scientific integrity.
- h) Inadequate/inappropriate supervision of students.

- i) Sabotage of research activities, special cases of damaging the necessary research instruments, documents, hardware, software, chemicals that other researchers need for their research.
- j) Creating obstacles in career advancement of young researchers who, in good faith, have reported potential academic fraud and dishonesty of their colleagues.

Article 7

Ethics Committee of the Technical University in Zvolen

1. The Ethics Committee is an independent advisory body to the rector of the TU in Zvolen, it is impartial in its decisions and activities, and is not subject to individual or institutional interests.
2. The aim of the Ethics Committee is, inter alia, to release statements and investigate objections concerning unethical behaviour of academic community members, researchers, university teachers and students and forward file documentation, conclusions, and recommendations to the rector of the TU in Zvolen, the Board for the Internal Quality Assessment System of the TU in Zvolen or the corresponding disciplinary committee for students.
3. The Ethics Committee has 7 members. Members of the Ethics Committee are appointed and dismissed by the rector, with the proposed members giving their consent. One member shall be proposed by the Management of each of the individual faculties of the TU in Zvolen, one member shall be proposed by the University Management of the TU in Zvolen, and one member shall be proposed by representatives of the other organisational parts of the TU in Zvolen. One member is the lawyer of the TU in Zvolen. Membership in the Ethics Committee is incompatible with the office of rector, dean, bursar, or head of an organisational part of the university. The chairman of the Ethics Committee is elected by the very members of the Committee with more than half of all the votes (simple majority). The term of office of the Committee members is four years. Membership in the Ethics Committee can also be terminated by resignation from membership or termination of employment. The members of the Ethics Committee have adequate professional qualifications, their professionalism is related to the activity of the Ethics Committee.
4. All members of the Ethics Committee, upon receiving the appointment decree, shall sign a declaration of confidentiality regarding the discussed objections during the term of office and after its termination.
5. Ethics Committee:
 - a) The Committee is vigilant about compliance with the generally known and accepted moral and ethical principles of integrity in science, research and education that are based on morality. In more detail, these are regulated in this directive.
 - b) The Committee proposes preventive measures to the rector primarily through professional training, supervision, and guidance, as well as through the development of a positive and stimulating academic and research environment.
 - c) The Committee assesses and discusses written objections coming from the academic community, employees, researchers as well as the public. An objection concerning a violation of principles must be specific and factual, i.e., it must contain the name and surname of the person who violated the ethical principles, a description of the violation of ethical principles and the name of the notifier. If the notifier wants to remain anonymous, they shall say so in their objection.
 - d) In justified cases, anonymous submissions are also investigated.
 - e) The negotiations of the Ethics Committee are closed to the public. Negotiations, materials, and written records (minutes) related to the activity of the Ethics Committee are confidential.
 - f) The Ethics Committee is quorate if 5 members are present. Members are obliged to excuse their absence from the meeting to the chairman in advance. Decisions are approved by a two-thirds majority of members present.
 - g) The Ethics Committee shall assess an objection as follows: non-violation, minor violation, or serious violation of the Code of Ethics.

- h) Every objection concerning a violation of principles of academic and scientific integrity is recorded in the book of objections. The lawyer of the TU in Zvolen keeps this book of objections.
 - i) The chairman of the Ethics Committee shall forward the submission to the members of the Ethics Committee within 7 days from the date of delivery. For each meeting, the lawyer of the TU in Zvolen shall send a written invitation and documents to the members of the Ethics Committee no later than 7 days before the meeting. The Ethics Committee shall assess the objection no later than one month from the day the submission was delivered to the chairman of the Ethics Committee.
 - j) The lawyer of the TU in Zvolen takes minutes for each meeting of the Ethics Committee.
 - k) The chairman of the Ethics Committee informs the persons concerned about the results of the negotiation no later than two weeks after the objection was discussed in a meeting of the Committee.
 - l) At the request, the Committee gives a professional opinion on solving ethical problems.
6. The Ethics Committee releases a statement on conclusions of the investigation (report on the result of the investigation). To make a final decision, this statement and the Committee recommendation shall be forwarded to the rector of the TU in Zvolen or to the respective disciplinary committee for students of the TU in Zvolen.
7. The rector of the TU in Zvolen or the chairman of the respective disciplinary committee for students of the TU in Zvolen are obliged to inform the Ethics Committee about their decision.
8. In a brief annual report produced by January 31 of the following calendar year, the Ethics Committee shall present information about all cases together with the corresponding conclusions to the Board for the Internal Quality Assessment System of the TU in Zvolen as well as to the Management of the TU in Zvolen.
9. The meeting of the Ethics Committee can be held physically or via video conference or by other means of information and communication technology, without physical presence.

Article 8

Final provisions

1. The organizational directive Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity at the TU in Zvolen applies to all employees and students at the University. Everyone is obliged to become familiar with the Code of Ethics, to comply with the Code of Ethics and to act in accordance with provisions of the Code of Ethics and to support it.
2. The organizational directive Code of Ethics and Academic Integrity at the TU in Zvolen was discussed by the Academic Senate of the TU in Zvolen on 23 November 2021 and it was approved by the Scientific Board of the TU in Zvolen on 14 December 2021.
3. Any changes and amendments to this organizational directive can only be performed by written amendments, signed by the rector of the TU in Zvolen.
4. This organizational directive no. 8/2021 repeals the Code of Ethics for employees and students of the TU in Zvolen, approved on 20 October 2014 and registered under number R-11019/2014.

In Zvolen, on 20 December 2021

Dr.h.c. prof. Ing. Rudolf Kropil, PhD.
Rector of the TU in Zvolen