CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

The Da Vinci Institute is an accredited private higher distance education provider offering qualifications on NQF levels five to ten, which are registered on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). This policy forms part of the institutional Integrated Quality Management System and details the principles for ensuring that programme offerings adhere to academic standards and empower students to contribute to the transformation of their communities, society, and the economy of the future. This approach is underpinned by the Business- and Community-based Action Learning discourse on the co-creation and distribution of relevant knowledge.

The strategic intent of The Institute is to strengthen the growth of agile, aligned and engaged leaders, who co-create innovative ecosystems and sustainable transformational societies. The Institute endeavours to do this by utilising a number of guiding principles and practices in the learning journey of each student, expecting students to conduct themselves in an ethical and professional manner.

The Institute's guiding principles and what is valued are informed by the Constitutional and Institutional values and the co-creation of some of the broad principles often associated with the visionary leadership of Nelson Mandela and innovative approaches of Leonardo Da Vinci to knowledge creation and dissemination.

The Da Vinci student community is required to take full responsibility for their own learning and progress within the course of their studies. This community consists of students from diverse backgrounds and is committed to foster the principles of ubuntu through representation, inclusion, and participation. It further commits itself to promote a culture of learning, research, and a disposition towards critical thinking. This is achieved by means of education intended to produce responsible citizens who contribute to society at large.

In its practice, The Institute is focused on the creation of knowledge that is trans-disciplinary in nature, socially relevant and accountable, and actively promotes diversity and heterogeneity. The Institute applies situated learning, problem probing and decision making as critical constructs to solve business- and community-based challenges. In doing such, The Institute intends to contribute towards the professional development of students, equipping them with the ability to promote and manage quality in innovative and meaningful ways, acknowledging the world as a set of inter-connected systems.

2. WHAT WE VALUE AT DA VINCI

2.1. Curiosity

Our insatiable curiosity manifests through our teaching, learning, research, community engagement and other scholarly activities, to advance The Institute's dream, purpose, and strategic intent. We acknowledge the multi-faceted relationship between curiosity and the production, discovery, and dissemination of diverse knowledge in advancing learning and innovation. By being curious, we become lifelong learners who are willing to challenge the status quo with open-mindedness and deep questioning.

2.2. Inclusivity

We place great value on, and strive towards, just, diverse, transformational, and inclusive societies where the rights, differences, and dignity of others are respected. DaVincians are encouraged to find their own voice, use their voices for the greater good, engage in open inquiry and infuse honesty and integrity in all dealings. On the road to responsible citizenship, we strive towards yielding a return on investment through research that seeks to address social, economic, and environmental imperatives.

2.3. Co-creation

We value our role in influencing the co-creation of sustainable societies by contributing towards the strengthening of the growth of agile, aligned and engaged leaders. These leaders are responsible for probing business- and community-based problems, collaborative innovation and advancing knowledge that contributes towards sustainable, inclusive, and transformative ecosystems. In our endeavours, we strive with commitment, purpose, and integrity to co-create relevant knowledge.

All DaVincians are further expected to be accountable for their actions and conduct in their communities and have a responsibility to contribute towards a community and society where people grow and develop through learning from one another.

2.4. Transdisciplinarity

The Institute encourages the production of knowledge that is transdisciplinary in nature, socially relevant and actively promotes diversity and heterogeneity. In doing so, we apply situated learning, problem-probing and decision-making as critical constructs to address business- and community-based problems. Complimentary to this, we strive towards the creation of new conceptual and theoretical frameworks as well as methodological and translational innovations that integrate and move beyond discipline-specific approaches.

3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR REMARKABILITY

In The Institute's quest for remarkability, the following guiding principles are promoted:

a) Being authentic, grounded and true to oneself
b) Being socially accountable, relevant and dynamic
c) Actively promote diversity and heterogeneity
d) Advocating and managing quality in meaningful ways
e) Acknowledging the world as a set of interconnected systems
f) Awakening the senses
g) Embracing holism and living harmoniously
h) Appreciating the shadow
i) Mastering balance with integrity
j) Having a distinctive voice.

4. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Academic misconduct	In a research context, academic misconduct entails any practice that constitutes a serious deviation from what is generally accepted within the scientific community in the submission, performance and reporting of research and all other relevant academic matters.
Ethics	The principles that govern the conduct of stakeholders of The Institute
Ethics Code	Expected behaviour conducted according to this policy
Misconduct	Unacceptable, wrongful, improper behaviour, unlawful conduct, and conduct that contravenes regulatory prescriptions

5. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is benchmarked against, and should be read in the context of, the relevant legislation underpinning the principles against which institutional policies and operational procedures are developed, implemented and maintained. These include:

A. Relevant Legislation
   i. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No 108 of 1996)
   ii. Criteria for Programme Accreditation: (CHE, 2004)
   iii. Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide. (CHE, 2014)
   iv. Employment equity act

v. Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997)
vi. Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) as amended.

B. Applicable Da Vinci documents
  I. D15 - Conducting Ethical Research Policy
  II. D18 - Invigilated Examination Policy
  III. E1-P1 - Code of Conduct Procedure
  IV. E2 - Plagiarism Policy
  V. E4 - Student Representative Council (SRC) Policy.

6. SCOPE

This Code of Conduct Policy applies to students, faculty, staff and other stakeholders of The Institute.

7. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Code of Conduct Policy is to:

a) Reflect what The Institute values and, therefore, seek to enhance and anchor the policies, procedures, and processes of The Institute and influence the behaviour of students, faculty and other relevant stakeholders
b) Create a safe and conducive learning environment in which all students are able to derive full benefit from the growth and learning opportunities presented by The Institute
c) Increase awareness of professional conduct amongst members of the Da Vinci community fostering fundamental elements of practical business ethos.

8. PROVISIONS

Provisions of the Code of Conduct address the following areas:

8.1. General Conduct

The Institute encourages stakeholders to display high levels of professionalism, responsibility, and integrity in all their dealings with The Institute and therefore commit to:

a) Not disrupt, or attempt to disrupt, teaching, learning, research, administrative or other activities of The Institute
b) Defend the lawful exercise of freedom of speech by students, faculty and other stakeholders of The Institute or by visiting speakers
c) Not obstruct any officer, employee or agent of The Institute in the performance of their duties
d) Protect any property of, or in the custody of The Institute or of any students, faculty and other stakeholders of The Institute
e) Ensure proper use of property or facilities of The Institute
f) Act honestly by not forging, altering, falsifying, or misusing any official institutional documentation, qualification or certificate or knowingly make false

statements concerning standing or results obtained, or supply false information to The Institute

g) Not engage in actions that are likely to cause injury or to impair safety
h) Not engage in violent, indecent, disorderly or disruptive, threatening, or offensive conduct
i) Not engage in abusive and offensive language
j) Obey a reasonable instruction given within their authority by one of the authorities of The Institute
k) Not engage in the harassment or abuse of any visitor, students, faculty, support or administrative staff and other stakeholders of The Institute
l) Comply with any other relevant policy, procedure, or rule of The Institute.

Students are required to:
m) Engage actively in tuition and support sessions and therefore not engage in unrelated activities during these sessions that cause distractions from learning and engagement
n) Be punctual and manage deadlines effectively
o) Give feedback, channel concerns or suggestions regarding The Institute's delivery of the programme to the Programme Convener/Coordinator or via the Student or Class Representatives.

8.2.   Ethical Conduct
Ethical conduct includes the following measures:

Promoting:
a) The constitutionally compliant policies, rules and laws of the country and The Institute
b) Ethical treatment of people and the environment
c) Ethical practices including fulfilling obligations of teaching/learning
d) Fair and accountable assessment, research, and supervision
e) Ethical use of resources and property.

Preventing:
f) Plagiarism and all forms of intellectual dishonesty
g) Favouritism and nepotism
h) Corruption
i) Violation of confidentiality.

8.3.   Respectful Conduct
Respectful conduct includes promoting:
a) Human rights
b) Social responsibility
c) Equity and equal opportunity

d) Academic freedom and freedom of expression
e) Honesty
f) Integrity
g) Fairness
h) Courtesy
i) Tolerance and respect for diversity and/or differences of people's ideas and opinions.

Preventing:
j) Discrimination or harassment on the basis of ethnicity, race, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, age, pregnancy, marital status, ethnicity, social orientation, religion, belief, culture, language, employment and socio-economic status
k) The abuse of power
l) Disrespect for persons and property.

8.4. Responsible Conduct
Responsible conduct includes the following measures:
Promoting:
a) Transparency
b) Inclusivity
c) Accountability
d) Good practice
e) Safety, security, health, and well-being
f) Lawful and regulatory conduct.

Preventing:
g) Causing disrepute to The Institute's name or that of its stakeholders
h) Misuse of personal and institutional information, property, and the name of The Institute
i) Improper financial dealings and/or improper conflicts of interest
j) Practices threatening safety, security, health or well-being and actions that impinge on the rights of others.

8.5. Diligent Conduct
Diligent conduct includes the following measures:
Promoting:
a) Efficiency
b) Effectiveness
c) Excellence in performance
d) Competence
e) Proper use of time
f) Taking personal responsibility as part of self-mastery.

Preventing:

    g) Unprofessional conduct.

9. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The following gives voice and meaning to the Code of Conduct:

    a) Any student or staff member found contravening the Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action, including, but not limited to, suspension or other penalties such as student de-registration

    b) Students can request to be represented by a member of the Student Representative Council in the case of a disciplinary action.

10. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Regular review and amendment of this policy will be done in line with the approved institutional policies and regulatory requirements. This will take place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at departmental and institutional level, under the auspices of the official custodian of this policy, namely the Registrar.

11. APPENDIX A – PROCEDURE FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST STUDENTS

11.1. Introduction

Any student found contravening the Code of Conduct may face disciplinary action.

11.2. Disciplinary Committee

A disciplinary committee is constituted by the Registrar when the following infractions occur:

    a) Breach of the Code of Conduct including ethical and academic misconduct or dishonesty

    b) Breach of the terms and conditions of the student contract

    c) Bringing The Institute into disrepute.

Core members of the committee will consist of the Registrar (chair), a member of the SRC (if relevant to the proceedings), and an Executive Dean, or senior academic who is a member of Senate. In addition, where relevant, the appropriate Programme Coordinator or Programme Convener can form part of the committee. This committee will function as a subcommittee of the Senate.

11.3. Disciplinary Procedure

a) All disciplinary procedures will be conducted in the official language of The Institute and will be minuted.

b) Any case of alleged misconduct by a student must be reported to the Registrar

c) The Registrar will investigate the allegation against the student, collect the evidence and present it to the disciplinary committee if the allegation is found to be valid

d) The student/s will receive notice of a disciplinary hearing no less than 48 hours before the hearing

e) The notice will indicate the attendees, allegation against the student/s, the time, venue and an outline of the proceedings in the language of The Institute

f) The student has the right to be represented by a member of the SRC should they so elect

g) In the hearing, the Registrar will present the charge and the evidence collected and allow the student the opportunity to defend themselves. Students may opt to retort in a language of their choice on condition that they provide their own interpreter to attend the proceedings

h) The Disciplinary Committee will consider the allegation against the student, and will consider both oral testimony and written reports

i) Both the Registrar and the student can call witnesses if relevant to the proceedings

j) The Disciplinary Committee will deliberate on the evidence presented before reaching a verdict

k) If the finding is 'not guilty', the finding will be presented to the student in writing

l) Should the student be found guilty of misconduct:
   I. The Disciplinary Committee may impose penalties deemed appropriate
   II. The student will be informed of the finding, penalty and appeals procedure in writing

m) Students can appeal the decision by the disciplinary committee by following the appeals procedure:
   I. Students must respond in writing within seven days to the Executive Dean: Academic
   II. If the student does not appeal within seven days, the findings of the disciplinary committee is deemed final
   III. The appeal will be overseen by the Executive Dean: Academic and a member of Senate
   IV. The imposition of the penalty is suspended pending the outcome of the appeal
   V. The Appeals committee will consider the evidence, the minutes and additional submissions
   VI. The Appeals decision is final.

11.4. Penalties

The Disciplinary or Appeals committee may impose any of the following penalties mentioned below:

   a) Written warning
   b) Suspension from The Institute for a specified period of time
   c) Expulsion from The Institute
   d) Forfeiture of a qualification obtained in a dishonourable manner
   e) Written apology to a specified person or body
   f) Reimbursement for, or repair of, damage caused by a student.

11.5. General Provisions

   a) Any person involved in alerting the Registrar to a case of misconduct against a student, or providing evidence, may not be a member of the Disciplinary Committee presiding over the case of misconduct
   b) The Chairperson of the Disciplinary Committee will have the deciding vote should there be no agreement on the outcome or a deadlock
   c) The Disciplinary Committee has the discretion to abandon or suspend the disciplinary investigation for a reasonable period
   d) Any deviation from these procedures may be condoned by the Disciplinary Committee if such deviations will not cause any material injustice
   e) The student/s who are charged with alleged misconduct, will be provided with a copy of the disciplinary procedures
   f) The Chairperson of the Disciplinary Committee may delegate their authority should they be unable to fulfil their duty
   g) A student will be entitled to student representation (SRC) as appropriate
   h) If a student is found guilty of misconduct, it will be reflected on their academic record. This may affect the issuance of a letter of good standing.