

# **BOLGATANGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY**



## **ETHICS POLICY**

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>1.0</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Academic Freedom.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Intellectual Integrity.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>STAFF–STAFF RELATIONS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>STUDENT–STUDENT RELATIONS.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>STAFF–STUDENT RELATIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>UNIVERSITY–PUBLIC RELATIONSHIP.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>PROCEDURE FOR SANCTIONING.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>ETHICAL PRINCIPLES THAT ADDRESS STAFF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Research and Development.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Plagiarism.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>Leakage of Examination Questions.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>Fabrication or Falsification of Data.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8.5</b>	<b>Conduct of Research and Conflict of Interest.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>8.6</b>	<b>Non-Discrimination and Fair Evaluation.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>9.0</b>	<b>ALLEGATIONS OF ETHICAL MISCONDUCT.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10.0</b>	<b>STUDENTS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>10.1</b>	<b>Ethical Principles.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10.2</b>	<b>Plagiarism.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10.3</b>	<b>Fabrication or Falsification of Data or Information.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10.4</b>	<b>Violation of Ethical Standard.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>10.5</b>	<b>Cheating and Other Forms of Academic Dishonest.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>11.0</b>	<b>OTHER CONCERNS OF ETHICS.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>11.1</b>	<b>Community Relations.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>12.0</b>	<b>ADHERENCE TO THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES.....</b>	<b>15</b>

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Bolgatanga Technical University (BTU) in pursuing the training of skilled tertiary level manpower for the socio-economic development of the country is committed to ensuring that its staff and students conduct themselves in such a manner that promotes mutual trust as well as public confidence in the University. Staff and students of the University are responsible for one another in exhibiting the highest ethical standards and for avoiding any impropriety or semblance of improper behaviour that might reflect negatively upon the image of the University. The University aspires to maintain acceptable ethical standards and behaviour and will therefore strive to achieve its vision by educating its members to exhibit exemplary ethical behaviour, character, excellence and citizenship.

Specifically, this Policy is to:

- i. ensure that best practices are adhered to in order to guarantee public confidence in the University at all times.
- ii. provide standards to guide and protect the conduct of students, staff and affiliate groups within the University.
- iii. give assurance to external bodies that in their dealings with the University, the appropriate ethical standards will be applied.
- iv. ensure that the rights of staff, students and other stakeholders of the University are adequately protected.
- v. educate staff, students and other stakeholders of the University on issues that constitute ethical standards and behaviour in the conduct of their duties.

## **2.0 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

As members of the University community, staff and students have a responsibility to abide by ethical principles regarding academic freedom, intellectual integrity and, fair and respectful treatment of others.

### **2.1 Academic Freedom**

The University acknowledges the right to freedom of expression in teaching, learning and research in line with the ethical policies of the University without any hindrance.

### **2.2 Intellectual Integrity**

Intellectual integrity involves using sound and ethical methods in the pursuit of knowledge as well as embracing honesty in the dissemination of knowledge.

Individuals' expectations of fair and respectful treatment by faculty and students apply not only to interactions with one another, but also to other staff with whom they interact in their roles as members of the University. Fair and respectful treatment also extends to the evaluation of students' academic work and colleagues' scholarly work.

The ethical principles that guide the behaviour of academic and support staff within this Policy drives inspiration from:

- i. the University Statutes.
- ii. the University's Student Handbook, and
- iii. the National Board for Professional and Technician Examination (NABPTEX) Students Guide to Higher National Diploma (HND) Examinations in Ghana.

### **3.0 STAFF–STAFF RELATIONS**

Staff of the University shall maintain a morally acceptable relationship. Staff of the University shall not:

- i. receive or give bribe of any form or accept to be an agent of any person who intends to bribe or corrupt a member of the University.
- ii. accept gifts that may influence their judgment in relation to academic and other related issues.
- iii. use insulting language or exhibit intimidating behaviour against a superior, a colleague or a subordinate.
- iv. defame or slander one another.
- v. release confidential information such as: employees' records, disciplinary records, salaries of employees and any other privileged information.
- vi. take narcotic drugs or drink alcoholic beverages during official working hours. Working under the influence of alcohol is an offence.

Actions of staff that contravenes any of the above and any other morally unacceptable behaviour shall be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Statutes of the University.

### **4.0 STUDENT–STUDENT RELATIONS**

- i. A student of the University shall behave ethically and respectfully in his/ her dealings with other students of the University.
- ii. A student shall respect the rights and welfare of other students of the University.

- iii. A student may engage in legitimate academic debate on any issue; however, the language must be decent.
- iv. A student shall respect the views or opinions of others.
- v. The principle of academic honesty of the University applies to all students.
- vi. Cheating, plagiarism, impersonation, misrepresentation, fabrication or falsifications of data are not acceptable.
- vii. A student shall dress decently while on campus.
- viii. No student diagnosed with a contagious disease shall deliberately or wilfully infect other students of the University with the disease.
- ix. No student shall disclose the health status of others unless compelled under the appropriate laws or authority to do so. However, a student may disclose the health status of other students to the Counselling Unit, if his/her silence may put others at risk.
- x. No student shall discriminate against a fellow student diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.
- xi. No student shall intentionally threaten or cause physical or emotional harm to other students.
- xii. No student shall indulge in the sale and use of narcotic and alcoholic beverages on campus or at the halls of residence.
- xiii. No student shall steal the property of other students.
- xiv. No student shall ridicule or use abusive language against any other student.
- xv. No student shall incite other students to demonstrate without exhausting all the avenues for resolving the problem.
- xvi. No student shall engage in gambling on campus.

- xvii. No student shall force other students into dangerous or reckless activity for the purpose of initiation into any organization or group.
- xviii. No student shall engage in occultism on campus.
- xix. No student shall discriminate against any student on the bases of gender, race, religion, ethnicity and political affiliation.
- xx. No student shall engage in any mob action or instant justice against fellow students or any member of the society.

## **5.0 STAFF–STUDENT RELATIONS**

- i. Senior Members (Teaching) shall make available and/ or direct students to various relevant sources of information on programmes and courses to assist them cultivate the habit of seeking information on their own.
- ii. Teaching staff shall prepare and hand over to students’ course outline and related references at the beginning of every semester.
- iii. Teaching staff shall employ the delivery process of lecture, case-study and discussion approach in addition to other relevant approaches to lead students towards independent, critical and divergent reasoning.
- iv. Teaching staff shall not dictate notes or pin students to various compiled sources such as pamphlets or handouts which could result in narrow-minded scholarship.
- v. Staff of the University shall always dress decently and formally to serve as role models and leaders for students to emulate.
- vi. A high level of tolerance shall be employed in dealing with students’ participation by way of questions and contribution

- during lectures. Under no circumstances should a staff ridicule or use abusive language on students who provide inaccurate answers during discussions.
- vii. Teaching staff should desist from using National Service Personnel to lecture students or take over completely the delivery of a course.
  - viii. Under no circumstances should a National Service Personnel mark examination scripts.
  - ix. Teaching staff shall not conduct lectures earlier than 7:30 am and shall not go beyond 7:30 pm in the case of regular students. For evening students, lectures should not start earlier than 4.00 pm and should not go beyond 9.00 pm, unless otherwise authorized by the Academic Board.
  - x. The staff of the University shall not meet students at Hotels, Pubs and Clubs for academic discussions.
  - xi. Staff shall make themselves available to students during working hours in their offices or appropriate lecture halls and not in their homes.
  - xii. Staff of the University shall not intimidate and/or verbally abuse students; instead, they are expected to be always of good behaviour. To avoid confrontation, academic staff should walk out of lectures if students are not cooperating. Under no circumstances should a staff fight students physically.
  - xiii. No staff or student should falsely report misconduct of any sort of another staff or student for the purpose of discrediting or harming his/her reputation. Any staff or student guilty of such abuse will be subject to disciplinary action.
  - xiv. Members of the University shall ensure confidentiality in the



handling of students' records so as to respect the rights of students.

- xv. Lecturers shall regularly assess students through presentations, quizzes, projects and assignments and the results shall be communicated to the students.
- xvi. The University shall institute mechanisms to evaluate the teaching of various courses by lecturers through the use of student appraisal. To do this, students shall assess the performance of lecturers at the end of every semester.
- xvii. Evaluation of students by lecturers and the award of credit must be based on academic performance, participation in lectures, effective contribution in class discussions and not on matters such as gender, personality, relationship, race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation and friendships.
- xviii. The compulsory sale of pamphlets by lecturers to students is illegal.
- xix. Staff shall not trade marks for sex, money or other inducements.
- xx. Teaching staff shall reschedule lecture periods that they have missed only at the convenience of the students and the lecturer.
- xxi. Without prejudice to one's faith, beliefs and practices, no student shall invoke curses on staff or vice versa on campus.

## **6.0 UNIVERSITY–PUBLIC RELATIONSHIP**

In order to protect and uphold the good image of the University, students and staff shall not disclose any confidential information about the University to the general public without approval by the Vice Chancellor of the University or his/her authorised representative.

- i. Unless specifically authorised, students, staff and affiliate members of the University shall not communicate either directly or indirectly to the press any information obtained by virtue of their office.
- ii. The University honours creativity and scholarly contribution to national development. It shall, therefore, encourage its students, staff and affiliate members to contribute to public debate as concerned citizens.
- iii. In making contributions such as speaking publicly in professional or expert capacities, chairing a function or contributing to public debate, members may identify themselves by the official titles of their the University appointment or qualifications and may for that purpose, use the name of the University. However, they have to specify that the views expressed are entirely theirs and not necessarily the views of the University, unless mandated by the University to do so.
- iv. All members of the University who may want to comment on public issues or contribute to public debate, other than doing so in their professional or expert capacities must not use the name of the University or identify themselves as members of the University.
- v. Staff, students and affiliate members of the University shall be good ambassadors of the University wherever they find themselves.
- vi. The name of the University shall not be used arbitrarily. Members of the University shall not use the name of the University or shall not attach the name of the University in promoting or advertising

any commercial product without prior approval of the University.

## **7.0 PROCEDURE FOR SANCTIONING**

Staff and students of the University are bound by this Policy and the University shall be responsible for its enforcement. In dealing with issues relating to reported violations of this policy, fairness shall be the underpinning principle.

- i. All reported cases of violation shall be investigated promptly in accordance with laid down regulations of the University and procedures as may be determined by the University Statutes.
- ii. No one shall be deemed to be responsible for or culpable of any reported unethical behaviour until the appropriate process of investigation has reached a conclusion.
- iii. Depending on the magnitude of the violation of this Policy, the University shall adopt the Statutes of the University, the Students' Handbook, and other relevant policies as a way of disciplining the person who violates any provision of this policy.
- iv. In an instance where the breach of this Policy constitutes criminality, such shall be reported to the appropriate security agency.

## **8.0 ETHICAL PRINCIPLES THAT ADDRESS STAFF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staff are guided by ethical principles that address their professional responsibilities as teachers, scholars, support staff, and more generally, members of the University community. While some aspects of

documents concerning ethical standards describe the behaviour to be embraced, others make clear what action must be avoided.

The following ethical standards apply to staff.

### **8.1 Research and Development**

The University is committed to promoting a vibrant Research and Development culture through technology and innovation centres, school laboratories and collaboration with industries. As research and development work gathers momentum, there is the continuous need for the research community within the University to look into the ethical issues of research work (refer to the Research Ethics Policy).

### **8.2 Plagiarism**

Presenting the ideas, words, or data of another person or persons as one's own constitutes plagiarism. Hence, a person's words, ideas, or data, whether published or unpublished, must be acknowledged as such.

Staff of the University especially teaching staff who conducts joint studies with students shall co-publish with the students. Where the student is not interested in the joint publication, the staff concern can proceed with the publication but must acknowledge the student.

Plagiarism is a serious crime within the academic community. Therefore, any staff or student of the university who indulges in it shall be liable to disciplinary sanctions.

### **8.3 Leakage of Examination Questions**

Staff are to protect examination questions they set such that unauthorised

persons shall not have any knowledge of them. Failure to protect the examination questions shall lead to sanctions as prescribed by the statutes of the University.

#### **8.4 Fabrication or Falsification of Data**

Fabrication or falsification of data or results constitutes a violation of ethical standards. While fabrication is defined as “making up data or results”, falsification is “changing or misreporting data or results”. These actions can undermine trust within and outside the University. Culpable staff and students shall be sanctioned in line with the provisions of the University statutes.

#### **8.5 Conduct of Research and Conflict of Interest**

Staff (teaching and supporting) must conduct their research in a manner consistent with ethical standard for investigation in their respective disciplines. For instance, faculty members who agree to serve as reviewers of manuscripts, grant proposals, or other scholarly submission should evaluate those materials in a fair, objective, professional and timely manner.

#### **8.6 Non-Discrimination and Fair Evaluation**

In the discharge of their duties, members of the academic community should not engage in discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious orientation, disability, socio economic status or any basis proscribed by law.

- a. With regards to employment, members of the academic community should not discriminate in recruitment, hiring, promotion, salary, treatment or any other conditions of

employment or career development.

- b. These standards are also applicable to the evaluation of students' academic work. Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive for learning and to even-handed treatment in all aspects of the teacher-student relationship.
- c. The principle of fair and respectful treatment also applies to interactions with and evaluation of the work of other members of the academic community.

## **9.0 ALLEGATIONS OF ETHICAL MISCONDUCT**

Alleged ethical violations on the part of staff must be dealt with in a number of ways:

- i. A staff member may choose to approach the staff member thought to have engaged in ethical misconduct.
- ii. An individual could report to the Grievance Committee. In such a case, the informant shall be treated as a whistle-blower. A hearing on the matter is one of the possible outcomes.
- iii. Staff accused of ethical misconduct are entitled to academic due process. This implies that the University should follow a set of procedures already in existence or in place for dealing with such allegations. The alleged misconducts must be also handled within the confines of the University and the frameworks of the professional associations.

## **10.0 STUDENTS**

Students are guided by the same general ethical principles as staff regarding their academic work. Ethical standards for students may

be found in the Student Handbook and the Statutes of the University. These documents embody shared beliefs that are to guide students.

### **10.1 Ethical Principles**

Academic honesty and intellectual integrity are central in the educational process. These two principles apply to academic work, including, but not limited to, papers, project work, assignment, laboratory reports, examinations, quizzes, oral presentation, exhibits, and performances.

### **10.2 Plagiarism**

Students can avoid plagiarism by proper citation of the source of information. Acknowledgement of contributions of others means appropriately recognising and crediting those who have contributed to the scholarly work whether the work is a manuscript, exhibit or performance.

### **10.3 Fabrication or Falsification of Data or Information**

Students shall not engage in the fabrication or falsification of sources, data, results, etc. If students work on a project together, the work of those students should be equitably acknowledged.

### **10.4 Violation of Ethical Standard**

Violation of ethical standards would be grounds for action against a student. The situational context of the violation along with the instructional norms and regulations affect the path of action. Although some situations involving a student's alleged violation of ethical standards may warrant action on the part of a staff, other situations may warrant a hearing by a duly constituted committee to determine

whether the alleged act occurred as well as the appropriateness of the sanctions.

### **10.5 Cheating and Other Forms of Academic Dishonesty**

Cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are violations of ethical standards. They are addressed by using the codes of ethics stipulated in the University Student Handbook, the University Statutes and the National Board for Professional and Technician Examinations (NABPTEX) Students Guide to HND Examinations in Ghana. The codes typically obligate students to practice academic integrity and avoid engaging in academic misconduct. They also stipulated actions to be taken when students are believed to have engaged in academic misconduct.

- i. All examination malpractices shall be dealt with in accordance with the provisions stipulated in Part III of the NABPTEX Act, 1994 (Act 492) and the Criminal Code of 1960, Act 29 and 30 as well as the approved internal examination regulations of the University Student Handbook and the University Statutes. These include:
  - Illegal prior possession, knowledge or use of examination papers;
  - Leakage of examination papers.
  - Impersonation at examination.
  - Copying at examination.
  - Communication either verbally or in writing during examination.
  - Insult and assault on invigilators, supervisors and inspectors



before, during and after examination.

- ii. The penalties for committing these examination offences are stipulated in the University Students Handbook, the University Statutes, and the NABPTEX Students Guide. The action taken by a fellow student who witnesses the ethical digression can range from directly confronting the alleged perpetrator to reporting the alleged act to individuals acting on the situation, who may find it appropriate to convene a hearing panel for a judicial process in which students play an important role.

## **11.0 OTHER CONCERNS OF ETHICS**

### **11.1 Community Relations**

Some ethical standards apply to members of the academic community in their relationship with wider society. Society trusts that the results of research reflect an honest attempt to describe the world accurately and without bias. Many codes of ethics for professional disciplinary associations specifically recognize the consequences of research beyond its intended goal. Both staff and student need to be aware that their ideas and implications of their research may reach well beyond their own immediate goal.

## **12.0 ADHERENCE TO THE ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

Socialization to ethical principles needs to be more explicit and the mechanisms of social control within academic profession need to be strengthened in order to improve staff adherence to ethical principles.

To improve staff adherence to ethical principles, the academic and

administrative staff need to:

- i. Better articulate and codify the norms of professional behaviour.
- ii. More explicitly socialise students about the professions and their ethical obligations.
- iii. Impose sanctions for violation of those standards, when necessary.

Students need to be made more aware of the expectations for their behaviour as well as the consequences of the failure to meet those expectations.

Ethical standards are made explicit so that members of the academic community might be more likely to act in accordance with such standards and speak out against the ethical misconduct of others in the academic community. However, allegations of misconduct may require certain type of confidentiality because of the situations, or the parties involved.

The University shall not deal with these ethical misconducts in a clandestine manner. This enables newcomers to distinguish between ethical and unethical behaviour.

To improve staff adherence to ethical principles, it is suggested that academic and support staff and students are briefed on them. This policy should also be made available to staff for their discussion.