

Approval:

- University Council 15th Mtg 3 Nov 2025

Unified Code of Ethics & Integrity

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1. Purpose & Scope

This Unified Code of Ethics integrates existing ethical standards across teaching, research, and administration to foster a cohesive culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability. It is designed to ensure that all members of the Alfaisal University community uphold the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct in alignment with the university's values, Saudi Arabian laws, and global academic norms.

This policy applies to:

- Faculty and researchers
- Administrative and support staff
- Students (undergraduate and graduate)
- Consultants, visitors, and external collaborators
- All governance bodies and academic units

2. Core Ethical Principles

Alfaisal University affirms the following foundational values:

- *Integrity*: Acting honestly and upholding moral and professional standards in all activities.
- *Transparency*: Ensuring open communication, fairness in decision-making, and access to relevant information.
- *Accountability*: Taking responsibility for actions, decisions, and their consequences.
- *Respect*: Honoring human dignity, and local cultural and religious values.
- *Social Responsibility*: Aligning research, teaching, and administration with the broader interests of society and ethical good.

3. Ethical Standards in Teaching

Faculty and instructional staff shall:

- Foster academic honesty, scholarly rigor, and mutual respect in the classroom.
- Uphold academic freedom within the boundaries of Saudi law, and institutional values.
- Maintain professionalism in all student interactions and avoid discriminatory, exploitative, or harassing behavior.
- Provide fair and merit-based evaluation of students and protect student privacy.
- Adhere to all curriculum regulations including proper syllabus provision, office hours, and student rosters.
- Acknowledge student contributions to research through co-authorship or formal recognition.
- Refer students with sensitive personal issues to Student Affairs counselors.

4. Ethical Standards in Research

4.1. Research Conduct

Faculty and researchers must:

- Conduct research with honesty, rigor, and scholarly integrity.

- Avoid fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct.
- Comply with the university's *Research Misconduct Procedures* and national research laws (<https://research.alfaisal.edu/storage/app/media/pdf/Research-Policies-&-Procedures-2025.pdf>).

4.2 Human and Animal Subjects

- All research involving living creatures (humans, animals, plants) must obtain approval from the Alfaisal *Institutional Review Board* (IRB) in accordance with the Saudi Law of Ethics of Research on Living Creatures (<https://irb.alfaisal.edu/>).
- IRB approval is required before conducting or publishing such research.
- Non-compliance will be considered a serious ethical breach and may be subject to external legal action.

4.3 Use of Academic Data

- Use of course-based data (grades, feedback, evaluations) does not require IRB approval unless intended for publication or public presentation.

4.4 Conflict of Interest in Research

- Faculty must disclose any personal, financial, or professional conflicts of interest in research funding, collaborations, or publication.
- A Conflict-of-Interest Declaration must be submitted with IRB applications, if applicable.

4.5 Research Integrity Risk Index (RI²)

- RI² is the world's first empirically grounded, composite metric designed to identify and profile institutional-level risks to research integrity (<https://sites.aub.edu.lb/lmeho/ri2/about/>).
- Created in response to growing concerns about how global university rankings incentivize volume- and citation-based publishing at the expense of scholarly integrity.
- RI² evaluates institutions based on three independent, verifiable indicators:
 - *D-Rate*, the percentage of an institution's publications appearing in journals that were recently removed from Scopus or Web of Science for failing to meet quality or publishing standards
 - *R-Rate*, the number of retracted articles per 1,000 publications, capturing evidence of serious methodological, ethical, or authorship violations.
 - *S-Rate*, the percentage of citations to an institution's articles that originate from the same institution, emphasizing citation practices aimed at artificially boosting institutional metrics rather than reflecting genuine scholarly influence.
- Coverage window is three years, with indicators normalized and averaged to produce a 0-1 score.
 - Each institution is placed into one of five risk tiers (from Red Flag to Low Risk) based on a fixed reference group of 1,000 most publishing universities worldwide.
- RI² is diagnostic, not punitive.
 - A "red flag" or "high-risk" designation is not an accusation of misconduct, but rather a signal to reflect, investigate, and strengthen institutional safeguards.
 - Intended to encourage constructive reform and informed dialogue, especially in systems where structural and contextual challenges affect research governance.

- Currently Alfaisal University is in the “*Low Risk*” category in the *Medical Sciences & Health* field indicating strong adherence to publishing integrity norms.

5. Ethical Administration & Business Conduct

Administrative and operational staff shall:

- Act with fairness, honesty, and impartiality in all official duties.
- Ensure that university records, audits, and financial practices are accurate and transparent.
- Avoid any form of corruption, favoritism, or abuse of authority.
- Protect confidential information and use data responsibly.
- Implement procurement and HR practices that are inclusive, legal, and merit based.

6. Conflict of Interest Policy

All employees must:

- Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, especially those involving university decisions or resources.
- Not engage in business dealings (directly or indirectly) with university contractors if they hold personal financial interest.
- Not influence procurement decisions for personal gain.
- Not accepting gifts of more than nominal value* from any external entity doing business with the university.
- Not misuse university funds or resources.
- Not hold controlling interest in any firm doing or intending to do business with the university.
- Not engage in outside work unless permitted under university policy and without conflict with institutional responsibilities.
- Report all potential conflicts in accordance with HR and research policies.

Violations of this policy are grounds for immediate dismissal without benefits, and where applicable, referral to Public Prosecution.

7. Academic Freedom & Legal Boundaries

Faculty are entitled to academic freedom in teaching and research but must:

- Respect legal restrictions under Saudi law.
- Not introducing inappropriate or unrelated content in classrooms.
- Refrain from illegal activities, including possession or use of banned substances or materials.

8. Ethics Oversight & Reporting

8.1. Institutional Review Board (IRB)

- Handles all research ethics matters involving living creatures.
- Reports to the *National Committee of BioEthics (NCBE)* (<https://ncbe.kacst.gov.sa/en/>).
- The IRB is independent of the university

9. Reporting Violations

- All members of the university community may report misconduct confidentially.
- Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation under university policy (*UC approval 30 Sept 2025*).

10. Training & Compliance

- Mandatory ethics training for all faculty, staff, and researchers.
- Orientation for new faculty to include academic freedom within local context, IRB process, and professional expectations.
- Refresher courses conducted periodically by HR and the Office of Research.

11. Sanctions for Violations

Violations of this unified code, including research misconduct, conflicts of interest, or abuse of authority, may result in:

- Academic penalties (for students)
- Disciplinary actions or termination (for faculty/staff)
- Loss of research privileges or funding
- Referral to external authorities where applicable

12. Review & Updates

This Code shall be:

- Reviewed every three (3) years by the IRB and HR.
- Updated based on stakeholder feedback, legal developments, and changes in academic standards

****Nominal Value:** Employees may accept occasional gifts, meals, or promotional items of nominal value not exceeding SAR 500, provided such items are not cash or cash equivalents, do not create an appearance of favoritism or influence, and are reported if there is any doubt about their appropriateness*