

# ISET

International School of Economics at TSU  
Policy Institute

## Code of Ethics and Conduct

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## **CHAPTER 1. General Provisions**

### **Article 1. Scope and purpose of the regulation**

- 1.1. The Code of Ethics and Conduct (hereafter 'Code') defines the obligatory norms of conduct and responsibility, and establishes rules for disciplinary proceedings in the event of misconduct, for academic, research, administrative and support personnel, invited lecturers and students of the International School of Economics at TSU (ISET) and the ISET Policy Institute (ISET-PI) (hereafter jointly referred to as 'ISET').
- 1.2. The Code aims to establish unified rules of conduct for ISET personnel, faculty and students. It fully complies with the Tbilisi State University (TSU) Code of Ethics and the TSU Regulations on Disciplinary Norms, as approved by TSU on 18 June 2009.
- 1.3. The Code was approved by the ISET Director on January 8, 2020 upon the endorsement of the Governing Board of the Partnership for Economics Education and Research (PEER) (the governing body of ISET).

### **Article 2. Core ethical principles**

- 2.1 All staff, faculty, researchers and students of ISET are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards in the performance of their duties and responsibilities, and are expected at all times to abide by the Georgian Law on Higher Education and other Georgian legislation.
  - 2.1.1 Any staff member, faculty or student facing an ethical dilemma related to this Code, or possessing knowledge of misconduct on the part of others, has the obligation to report these matters without delay to the ISET administration (Director or Deputy Director for HR) or their personal supervisor, who are responsible for bringing it to the attention of the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee. Misconduct may entail any behavior or activity that is illegal, unethical or inappropriate. Any such misconduct or ethical breach will be given the highest attention.
    - 2.1.1a A whistleblower is anyone who uncovers and reports misconduct or an ethical breach. The report (verbal or written) shall be addressed to the Deputy Director in charge of HR and Operations. To the greatest possible extent, all reports of possible misconduct will be treated confidentially. However, in the event that a whistleblower's identity becomes known or is suspected, the whistleblower will be protected from reprisal and retaliatory language and actions.
  - 2.1.2 Failure of a staff member, faculty or student to adhere to the ISET Code of Ethics and Conduct will result in disciplinary action, as specified in Chapter 4 and Annex 1 of this Code.
- 2.2 The basic principles of ethics embraced by ISET are integrity, truth, transparency, accountability, fairness, and respect for others.
  - 2.2.1 Integrity standards call for staff being honest and maintaining the highest professional standards at all times. The resources of PEER/ISET/ISET-PI and its partners should not be used for personal gain. Expense reports, timesheets, and other records must reflect actual expenses or work performed. Intentional information misinterpretation violates the principles of integrity.
  - 2.2.2 Anti-harassment policy calls for each member of staff, faculty and student to respect the rights of their co-workers, external colleagues, grantees, etc., including ISET/ISET-PI/TSU staff, students, and faculty. PEER/ISET-PI strictly prohibits any forms of harassment – including verbal, physical, or sexual – by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers, students, vendors, clients and customers.
  - 2.2.3 Any employee, faculty or student who believes that he/she has experienced harassment must notify their personal supervisor, the ISET administration or the Ethics & Disciplinary

Committee. Any member of the community (staff, faculty or student) determined to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary procedures as per Chapter 4 of this Code.

- 2.3 It is the responsibility of any individual aware of a violation of the Code occurring on the organization's premises, or in any other location in connection with the organization's business, conducted by an employee of the organization, contractor or consultant, to notify the ISET administration or the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee of any such instance.

## **CHAPTER 2. Rules of Ethics Governing the Conduct of Staff and Academic Personnel**

### **Article 3. General rules and obligations of administrative staff, academic personnel and invited lecturers**

- 3.1 Staff, academic personnel and invited lecturers (hereafter 'Employees') are prohibited from using ISET equipment for private purposes, to include commercial activity of any kind, and any other forbidden activity.
- 3.2 While performing their professional obligations, Employees should be thorough, honest and impartial.
- 3.3 Employees should promote democratic, fair and respectful values in ISET that are grounded in human rights.
- 3.4 Employees must protect the confidentiality of information relating to students and their colleagues and/or information provided by them in accordance with Georgian legislation.
- 3.5 All ISET and ISET-PI personnel engaging in academic research are expected to abide by national and international legislation, internationally recognized best practices and fundamental ethical principles with respect to the planning, conduct, reporting and publication of research and all other activities related to that research.
- 3.6 Employees should not use professional or institutional privileges for personal purposes.
- 3.7 Employees must respect all other persons employed at ISET equally, regardless of their professional or personal qualities.
- 3.8 Employees must respect students and their views and should create conditions for them to express their ideas and opinions freely.
- 3.9 Employees must provide equal treatment to all students, regardless of their race, skin color, language, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political or other views, nationality, ethnicity and social origin, property, status, or place of residence. Employees should ensure that all students obtain a quality education, despite any special education needs or limited physical capacity students may have.
- 3.10 Employees must refrain from making inappropriate ISET-related public speeches/statements through social networks and/or mass broadcasts and from conveying messages that directly or indirectly damage the honor, reputation or dignity of ISET.
- 3.11 PEER/ISET/ISET-PI does not engage in political activity. Employees who engage in external political activity shall in no way participate in such activities in their capacity as ISET employees. Such individuals are responsible for making it publicly known that they are engaging in such activities as individuals and not on behalf of PEER/ISET/ISET-PI. Employees are absolutely prohibited from using PEER, ISET-PI or ISET facilities, equipment, or faculty, students, or staff for any political or associated activity.
- 3.12 ISET recognizes the individual right of its staff members to petition his/her government regarding its past, current, or expected future activities. While doing so, however, such individuals are responsible for making it publicly known that they are engaging in such activities as individuals and not on behalf of PEER/ISET/ISET-PI. It is also the responsibility of each Employee to seek advice from the ISET & ISET-PI Director or Chair of the PEER Board prior to engaging in lobbying if there is any possibility that such action could be construed as an attempt by PEER to influence the introduction, modification, or enactment of, or the decision to sign or veto, pending legislation.

- 3.13 Any and all products resulting from employment with PEER/ISET/ISET-PI, including but not limited to research or other work output that may be submitted for copyright, trademark, or patent, with the exception of academic papers/publications and other materials expressly produced for ISET's use, shall remain the property of PEER/ISET-PI, unless other arrangements are specified in advance and approved in writing by PEER/ISET-PI management.
- 3.14 Confidentiality: Employees have a duty not to disclose any confidential information obtained during the course of their work. They have a professional obligation to protect confidential relationships with employees, consultants, grantees, donors, institutional partners, and vendors. Employees should refer any requests for information about current or former employees to the ISET Director or the Chair of the Board.
- 3.14.1 No officer, trustee, or staff member shall use, for financial or other advantage, confidential or proprietary information obtained or accessed by virtue of his or her position with PEER. Information does not need to be marked as "proprietary" or "confidential" before this policy applies. Types of information PEER considers proprietary or confidential include, but are not limited to, computer programs and databases, personnel files, research and development information, strategic plans, technical information, the communications of PEER or its agents, financial information, and the advice of accountants and legal counsel. Only those individuals to whom proprietary and confidential information must be disclosed for the performance of their duties may access this information.
- 3.15 Gifts and favors: Employees must not accept gifts or favors from any student, applicant, relative of a student or applicant, customer, supplier, grantee, institutional partner, client, or competitor. It is unlawful to accept anything of value in exchange for a promise to influence a decision in the selection of a grantee, institutional partner, vendor, or other collaborator. Gifts or souvenirs expressing general appreciation (not presented as compensation for favors or services) and with value of less than 20 USD may be accepted.
- 3.16 Policy on outside activities: Employees may not engage in consulting or other outside activities that may interfere or come into conflict with their responsibilities to ISET without the approval of the ISET Director or the Executive Board.
- 3.17 Conflicts of interest: The members of the Governing Board, the principal officers, and members of any committees with Board-delegated powers have a duty of care and loyalty to PEER/ISET/ISET-PI. To identify and resolve conflicts of interest, any such persons shall disclose to the Board any situations or areas in which they have, either directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family an actual or potential ownership, investment or compensation, a conflict of interest. Individuals with conflicts of interest shall not vote on such matters, and unconflicted persons shall determine the extent to which a person with a potential conflict of interest may participate in any discussion. Before entering into any such transaction or arrangement, PEER shall determine whether it is fair, reasonable, and in the best interests of PEER/ISET/ISET-PI.
- 3.17.1 No staff member, director, officer, consultant or grantee should partake in any activity or association that creates, or appears to create, a conflict between that person's personal interests and PEER/ISET/ISET-PI's interests. Normally, no staff member, or any member of a staff member's family, may receive financial remuneration or other financing under a PEER grant or contract (other than through the staff member's employment contract).
- 3.17.2 No Employee shall participate in the selection and/or administration of a contract or grant if a real or apparent conflict of interest would be involved. Such a conflict would arise when the Employee or any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization that employs, or is about to employ, any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in the organization selected for the award.

- 3.17.3 In the case of the employment of spouses or other close relatives of staff members in the institution, relatives are not allowed to be in charge of the organization's finances or assets together, or may they supervise each other's job or performance.
- 3.17.4 Where any officer, trustee, or staff member, or any spouse (or other person with whom one cohabits), or lineal descendant or ascendant of the same, is an officer, director, or staff member of, or has a financial interest in, any other corporation, partnership, association or other organization (including any vendor of goods or services) with which PEER has entered into, or is considering entering into, any contract, grant, or other transaction, such officer, trustee, or staff member shall disclose to the ISET Director, in writing, all material facts as to the nature of the relationship or interest. Individuals with conflicts of interest must recuse themselves from participating in any part of decisions related to the transaction giving rise to the conflict.
- 3.17.5 If an Employee fails to abide by these obligations, disciplinary action, up to and including termination of contract, may be taken by PEER/ISET/ISET-PI.
- 3.17.6 Officers, trustees, and staff are required to complete a Conflicts of Interest Questionnaire annually, disclosing information on matters such as board memberships, institutional affiliations and memberships, and controlling interests, whether for profit or not-for-profit, along with any other potential personal conflicts of interest, including those of any spouse (or other person with whom one cohabits), or lineal descendant or ascendant. Whenever any material change occurs to the information submitted in the questionnaire, the Employee should provide updated information to PEER. The completed questionnaires are reviewed by the Chair of the Board or his or her designee.

## **CHAPTER 3. Rules of Ethics Governing the Conduct of Students**

### **Article 4. General rules of ethics and the conduct of students**

- 4.1 Students should fully share and strictly follow the provisions and values of ISET's mission, regulations and Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- 4.2 Students are obliged to respect the name of ISET and to protect its reputation and authority.
- 4.3 Students are obliged to respect the personnel and faculty of ISET and their fellow students and their personal rights.
- 4.4 It is prohibited to discriminate against or treat with intolerance other people, regardless of their race, skin color, language, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political or other views, nationality, ethnicity and social origin, property, status, or place of residence.
- 4.5 The general obligations of students are:
  - 4.5.1 To act in good faith when studying and while conducting academic work.
  - 4.5.2 To refrain from actions that interrupt or disrupt the professional activities of ISET personnel and/or of the educational process, including the access of other students to ISET resources (libraries, etc.).
  - 4.5.3 To refrain from performing any actions that may directly or indirectly cause or encourage discrimination to ISET personnel and other students.
- 4.6 The following actions carried out within the territory of ISET are considered inappropriate behaviors and are in violation of general ethical norms:
  - 4.6.1 Disrupting the education process through any activity. As an international school, ISET requires that the language spoken during classroom activities should be English at all times.
  - 4.6.2 Disrupting other student(s) in the process of study or research by hiding, stealing or destroying resources.

- 4.6.3 Smoking tobacco/electric cigarettes within the organization’s buildings or territory outside of formally designated smoking areas.
  - 4.6.4 Engaging in the use, sale and/or distribution of illegal drugs
  - 4.6.5 Engaging in the introduction, distribution or consumption of alcoholic beverages within the organization’s buildings or territory, unless an event is organized or permitted by the university.
  - 4.6.6 Engaging in any type of gambling (including playing cards for money).
  - 4.6.7 Using or transferring of firearms or other proscribed weapons, as defined by the Law of Georgia “on weapons”.
  - 4.6.8 Using, distributing or transferring explosive or flammable items and substances that may create a real threat of fire or explosion.
  - 4.6.9 Engaging in verbal or physical abuse of another person (bullying).
  - 4.6.10 Exerting psychological pressure, threatening or intimidating other persons, including use of offensive language.
  - 4.6.11 Creating excessive noise that may cause disruption on ISET’s territory.
  - 4.6.12 Engaging in actions that may promote or result in the discrimination of another person, in particular of ISET personnel and/or students, or that might prevent them from practicing their rights as defined by Georgian legislation, because of their race, color, language, sex, age, nationality, origin, birthplace, place of residence, property or status, religion or beliefs, national, ethnic or social belonging, profession, marital status, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, political or other opinion or any other characteristics.
  - 4.6.13 Using ISET computers, equipment and property for private purposes (to carry out private functions or use for entertainment purposes).
  - 4.6.14 Engage in activities resulting in the infringement, damage or destruction of another person’s property; also, restricting another’s right of property in an unlawful manner.
- 4.7 Academic falsification is considered inappropriate and unethical, in particular:
- 4.7.1 Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the use of another’s words, ideas, or creative products without properly crediting the original source. Students are responsible for knowing and understanding the definition of plagiarism, as accepted in internationally reputable academic institutions, and for avoiding plagiarism. In the first year of their studies, every student will be asked to sign a “plagiarism declaration” attesting to his/her knowledge of the rules and his/her agreement to abide by those rules. This declaration will be placed in the student’s file for future reference, as necessary.
  - 4.7.2 Cheating: (Annex 1 describes the Cheating Policy in greater detail) Cheating is the use of unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. Examples include the use of books, notes, mobile phones and calculators during any test or examination (unless the instructor has authorized their use); copying information from someone else’s examination or talking about answers during examinations; using hidden notes or formulas or looking at another person’s work during an exam; submitting substantial parts of the same essay, exercise or other assignment for credit in more than one course, without instructor approval; representing someone else’s work as your own; allowing others to do research or to prepare or write any work for you.
    - 4.7.2.1 Assisting someone else to cheat is considered cheating and is strictly prohibited.
    - 4.7.2.2 Students are expected to submit original work for any course assignment. Students who wish to submit a paper, written text, or presentation for which they have already received credit in another course are required to receive permission from the instructor in advance of submission; failure to do so will be considered a violation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

4.7.3 The following are considered violations of confidentiality:

- The use of confidential information, including obtaining or disseminating confidential information about an exam, is considered a violation of confidentiality.
- The principle of free exchange and open dissemination of ideas and information sometimes comes into conflict with the principle of intellectual property and privacy. At certain stages information that is not yet ready for public dissemination may be treated as confidential.
- Potential abuse of confidentiality is most likely to arise in relation to ideas in research proposals or manuscripts that the originator is still in the process of developing.
- Falsification of ISET data; distribution of information containing false data on the activities of ISET, its students or other persons employed at ISET.

## **CHAPTER 4. Disciplinary Proceedings**

### **Article 5. Disciplinary misconduct and grounds for imposing disciplinary penalties**

- 5.1 Employees, students and invited personnel of ISET may be subject to disciplinary penalties for committing disciplinary misconduct or for violating the Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- 5.2 Disciplinary penalties can be imposed for the following:
- Violations of the ethical norms defined by this Code;
  - Violations of applicable legislation;
  - Failure to follow requirements as defined by ISET regulations, provisions and other regulatory acts.
- 5.3 Disciplinary penalties shall be recommended by the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee and shall be issued by the Director.

### **Article 6. Types of disciplinary penalties for staff and faculty**

- 6.1 For Employees, the following types of disciplinary penalties may be applied:
- Disciplinary warning/note;
  - Reprimand;
  - Withholding of salary (to compensate for any damage where applicable);
  - Termination of contract and/or dismissal from work.

### **Article 7. Disciplinary actions for students**

- 7.1 Any violation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct will be permanently noted on a student's record at ISET. Individual files on students, including any documentation related to violations of the ISET Code of Ethics and Conduct, are maintained by the Academic Affairs Office.
- 7.2 In the event of a violation of the Code, the penalty will be proportionate to the offence. In cases of severe violations, the Ethics and Disciplinary Committee may decide to apply penalties that may include interruption of student status, following the adopted rules of TSU. Other lesser violations will result in a warning from the ISET administration upon the first offence. In the event of repeated or other violations, penalties may be imposed that could involve an interruption of student status, following the adopted rules of TSU.

### **Article 8. Adjudication procedures for instances of cheating (see Annex 1)**



## **Article 9 Adjudication procedures for instances of plagiarism**

- 9.1 The course instructor has an obligation to report every incident to the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee. The Committee shall decide on the relevant penalty for plagiarism, or may decide to delegate the decision to the course instructor as part of a student's course evaluation.
- 9.2 Beyond such cases as defined in 9.1, if an instructor, proctor, or relevant body believes that a student, faculty member or researcher of ISET/ISET-PI is involved in plagiarism and has violated the Code of Ethics and Conduct, they shall report the suspected case to the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee ([ec@iset.ge](mailto:ec@iset.ge)): submitting the case description, evidence, and all relevant details.
- 9.3 In the case of violations by students, the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee will decide whether the Code of Ethics and Conduct has been violated and, if so, what actions shall apply. They operate with the approval of the Head of Graduate Studies and/or Undergraduate Studies (as relevant), and the decision by the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee will be final; it cannot be appealed or overturned.
- 9.4 The penalty for students found guilty of plagiarism by the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee is as follows:
  - First reported offence: a score of zero on the assignment (if applicable), being placed on probation for the full course of study at ISET, and a letter to that effect being placed in the student's file.
  - Second reported offence: dismissal from the program.

## **CHAPTER 5. Ethics & Disciplinary Committee**

### **Article 10. The duties and powers of the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee**

- 10.1 Any violation of the ISET Code of Ethics and Conduct will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will not be tolerated. The Ethics & Disciplinary Committee is in charge of all allegations related to cheating, plagiarism, and any violation of this Code at ISET.
- 10.2 The Ethics & Disciplinary Committee has been established in order to review any misconduct of Employees and students and to ensure the enforcement of applicable disciplinary measures. The composition of the Committee is defined by the ISET Director. The Committee will include a minimum of 3 and a maximum of five members, appointed for a 2-year term, and will be composed of:
  - One Deputy Director (mandatory member) and one representative from administration;
  - Two representatives from the Faculty (one is mandatory);
  - One Lead Economist of the Policy Institute (mandatory member).
- 10.3 A meeting of the Committee is considered valid if at least three members are present. The Committee has a right to designate subcommittees based on the nature of particular cases.
- 10.4 The Committee elects a Chairperson from its members for a term of one year.
- 10.5 The Committee gathers in response to any ISET-related case, raised by any party (in writing), that qualifies as a violation of ethical norms or behavioral standards. In order to discuss the issue, to determine the nature of the violation and to recommend applicable disciplinary measures, the Committee gathers within three working days after a case has been reported. The subject student/staff/faculty involved in the case will be given an opportunity to present their own explanations.
- 10.6 The decision concerning the nature of the violation and the recommendation of appropriate disciplinary measures shall be made by a majority vote of the Committee members at a face-to-face session and shall be documented in writing, outlining the recommended disciplinary measure to be applied (or possibly waived). In the event of an equal number of votes, the deciding vote shall be given to the Chairperson of the Committee.
- 10.7 The Ethics & Disciplinary Committee shall, in all cases, identify the fact of a violation of the ethical norms envisaged by this Code (if applicable) and develop a recommendation on imposing a penalty,

which will be submitted to the ISET Director for final confirmation. The Director will issue the decision on the disciplinary penalty.

- 10.8 At the recommendation of the Ethics & Disciplinary Committee and the Director's decision, disciplinary measures shall be applied within 30 days of the date that the information about the misconduct was first disclosed to the Committee.
- 10.9 It is not permissible to impose two or more disciplinary penalties for a single instance of disciplinary misconduct.
- 10.10 In the event of any crime being committed, as defined by the criminal Code of Georgia, ISET will immediately refer the action to relevant law enforcement bodies.

## Annex 1: Cheating and Probation Policy

### Student Behavior During Exams

1. The student is obliged to arrive at the exam location 15/30 minutes before the exam, take their seat according to the seating chart, and register before the exam starts (Seating charts will be uploaded on Moodle and posted on the doors).
2. Students will only be admitted late to the exam room within 15 minutes of the start time, otherwise they will be denied entry.
3. The student is obliged to have ID or other documents to prove their identity (photo identification), otherwise identification will be made with the help of ISET administration\*.
4. During the exam, the student is allowed to have a bottle of water, a cup, pens, pencils, eraser, eyeglasses, handkerchief, and a calculator. If a calculator is not required for a specific exam, the student will be notified in advance. Also, student is allowed to have at the exam any other items officially permitted by the course instructor (help sheets, distribution tables, etc.).
5. The student is obliged to verify the exam paper and if the paper is defective (e.g., illegible or pages are missing), the student may ask the proctor to receive a non-defective exam sheet.
6. After the start of the exam period, it is forbidden for the student to leave the room until the exam is completed and submitted.
7. Content questions will not be answered. In case of procedural or technical questions, the student should ask the proctor/observer\*.
8. Students exhibiting unruly behavior, such as: talking, cheating (copying) or helping others to cheat, turning around, leaving the assigned room, or passing a calculator will receive a warning stamp on the exam sheet/booklet. Subsequent disciplinary actions may be assessed.

Any forbidden aid listed above will be recorded as a warning.

Warning Stamps will have the following implications for the assignment grade:

- Receiving a first Warning Stamp on a given proctored assignment will result in a 10% penalty from the grade received in that assignment.
  - Receiving a second Warning Stamp on a given proctored assignment will result in a 50% penalty from the grade received in that assignment (an additional 40% reduction).
  - Receiving a third Warning Stamp on a given proctored assignment will result in a 100% penalty (an additional 50%) from the grade received in that assignment.
9. It is forbidden to hold/use/bring a mobile phone, smart watch, or other electronic device to the exam, as well as any item containing information about the topic of the exam. Exceptions may be made for materials explicitly allowed by the instructor, and about which the proctors are notified in advance.
  10. The student will be required to turn in his/her cell phone to the proctor before the exam starts. If any forbidden aid or device (like a mobile/smart phone, smart watch, or hidden notes or formulae) are subsequently found in the student's possession, the student will receive a grade of zero on that exam, and will be required to leave the exam room immediately.
  11. Any breach of discipline may be the basis for removal from the exam room.
  12. 15 minutes before the end of the testing period, the observer/proctor will notify the students of the time remaining.
  13. After completing the exam, the student must hand in the exam booklet/sheet to the proctor.

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\* This article refers only BA Program Students