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Islamic Principles of Academic Integrity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence A Study of Pakistani Universities

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence, particularly generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), has rapidly entered university education and research. Students and researchers increasingly use AI systems for writing, translation, summarization, information retrieval, data analysis, language improvement, and other academic tasks. These developments offer considerable educational benefits but also create serious concerns regarding academic dishonesty, plagiarism, and misrepresentation of authorship, fabricated references, examination misconduct, unreliable information, privacy violations, and the weakening of independent intellectual effort. The problem is not the existence of AI itself but the manner in which it is used within academic environments. This article examines academic integrity in the age of AI through the principles of Islamic ethics, with particular attention to Pakistani universities. It argues that Islamic teachings provide a coherent basis for determining the ethical limits of AI-assisted academic work through the principles of ṣidq (truthfulness), amānah (trust and responsibility), khiyānah (betrayal of trust), ‘adl (justice), ikhlās (sincerity), verification of information, respect for intellectual rights, protection of privacy, prevention of harm, and preservation of human intellect. These principles establish that academic work must represent the genuine intellectual contribution of the

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student or researcher, even when technological assistance is permitted. AI may support academic activity, but responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and ethical status of the final work remains with the human author. The article also considers Pakistan's contemporary higher education environment, particularly the Higher Education Commission's framework on the use of generative AI and the National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025. It proposes a practical Islamic framework for Pakistani universities based on permissible assistance, disclosure, verification, human authorship, examination integrity, research responsibility, privacy, and institutional accountability. The article concludes that academic integrity in the age of AI requires neither unconditional acceptance nor complete prohibition. It requires a principled distinction between legitimate assistance and dishonest substitution, ensuring that technological convenience does not undermine the fundamental purposes of higher education.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, Islamic Ethics, Pakistani Universities, Generative Ai, Amānah, Ṣidq, Plagiarism, Research Ethics, Higher Education

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has become an increasingly visible part of university education. Generative AI systems can produce written responses, summarize documents, translate languages, generate ideas, assist with programming, organize information, and support a wide range of academic activities. The rapid development of these systems has changed the conditions under which students write assignments, researchers prepare manuscripts, and teachers design assessment.

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has recognized this transformation and adopted a framework concerning the use of generative AI in higher education. The framework does not adopt a blanket prohibition. Instead, it seeks to protect academic

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integrity while allowing productive and responsible use of AI and emphasizes the need for institutions to develop policies suited to their educational contexts.¹

This approach reflects an important distinction: the ethical question is not simply whether AI is used, but whether its use supports or undermines the purpose of academic activity.

Academic integrity is based on honesty in the production, presentation, assessment, and transmission of knowledge. It requires students to represent their work truthfully, researchers to report their findings accurately, teachers to assess students fairly, and institutions to protect the standards of scholarship. The emergence of AI has not removed these principles. Rather, it has made their application more important.

The central concern is particularly significant in Pakistan because AI tools have become readily accessible while institutional practices concerning their use are still developing. The National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025 places considerable emphasis on AI development, education, research, skills, and innovation, indicating that AI will increasingly become part of Pakistan's educational and professional environment.²

Universities therefore need not only technological competence but also a clear ethical basis for determining acceptable use.

Islamic teachings provide such a basis. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes truthfulness, fulfilment of trusts, justice, verification of information, and avoidance of deception. These principles are directly relevant to academic work. A student who submits machine-generated material as entirely personal work may create a false representation of intellectual contribution. A researcher who accepts fabricated AI references without verification may compromise the reliability of scholarship. A teacher who relies upon an automated system without appropriate human judgment may make an unjust academic decision.

The issue, therefore, is fundamentally one of academic responsibility. Technology may change the means through which knowledge is produced, but it does not change the moral responsibility of the person who presents that knowledge.

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Islamic ethics consequently provides a useful framework for distinguishing between legitimate AI assistance and academic misconduct. The use of AI for language correction, preliminary organization, translation, or explanation may be ethically different from using AI to write an examination, fabricate research findings, generate false references, or conceal the actual source of academic work.

The basic principle of this article is therefore that AI may assist academic work, but it cannot assume the academic and moral responsibility of the student, researcher, teacher, or institution.

Academic Integrity in Islamic Perspective

Academic integrity is a modern institutional expression, but its fundamental values are deeply consistent with Islamic ethical teachings. Islam places considerable emphasis on truth, trust, justice, sincerity, responsibility, and the proper transmission of knowledge.

The Qur'an commands:

“O you who believe, fear Allah and speak words that are right.”³

Truthful communication is not restricted to ordinary conversation. It encompasses every context in which a person communicates information or represents a matter to another person. Academic writing, research, examination answers, citations, and scholarly claims therefore fall within the ethical requirement of truthful representation.

A university student who submits work represents that the submitted material satisfies the academic requirements attached to the task. If substantial work has been generated by AI and presented without disclosure where disclosure is required, the issue is not simply technological assistance. It becomes a question of whether the academic record accurately represents the student's intellectual contribution.

The Qur'an also commands:

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due.”⁴

The concept of amānah is particularly important for academic integrity. A degree, research project, examination, thesis, or scholarly publication carries responsibilities.

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Students are entrusted with learning; researchers are entrusted with the honest production of knowledge; teachers are entrusted with fair assessment; and universities are entrusted with maintaining academic standards.

From this perspective, academic dishonesty is not merely a violation of university regulations. It may also constitute a breach of trust.

Truthfulness and Honest Representation

Truthfulness is the first principle for determining the ethical use of AI in academic work. The problem created by generative AI is that it can produce highly convincing material without guaranteeing its truth.

AI systems may generate inaccurate information, invented citations, incorrect quotations, or apparently authoritative statements that have no reliable source. Consequently, the responsibility of the user does not end when an AI system produces an answer.

The Qur'an provides an important principle of verification:

“If there comes to you a disobedient person with information, investigate.”⁵

The ethical significance of this command extends beyond its immediate context. Information should not be accepted without appropriate verification. In the academic environment, this means that AI-generated information must be checked against reliable sources before being incorporated into scholarly work.

This requirement is especially important for research involving historical information, Qur'anic interpretation, Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, scientific data, statistics, legal claims, and quotations from published sources. An AI system may provide a useful starting point, but it cannot become the final authority merely because its response appears fluent.

The principle of truthfulness also applies to disclosure. If an institution requires students to identify substantial AI assistance, concealing that assistance creates a false representation. Honesty therefore requires compliance with institutional rules concerning disclosure.

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Academic integrity in the age of AI begins with a simple principle: what is presented as the student's or researcher's work must truthfully represent the nature of that person's intellectual contribution.

Amānah and Intellectual Responsibility

The Islamic concept of amānah provides perhaps the strongest foundation for academic integrity. Academic work is not simply an arrangement between a student and a university. It involves a responsibility toward teachers, institutions, readers, and society.

A researcher who publishes an inaccurate finding may influence subsequent scholarship. A student who submits dishonest work may receive an academic qualification without acquiring the knowledge that the qualification represents. A university that ignores academic misconduct may weaken public trust in its degrees.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned against deception:

“Whoever deceives us is not one of us.”⁶

The principle is directly relevant to academic misconduct. Technology does not change the moral nature of deception. If AI is deliberately used to create the false impression that a student independently produced work that was substantially generated by a machine, the ethical problem remains.

At the same time, not every use of AI constitutes deception. A student may use an approved tool to correct grammar or identify weaknesses in expression without falsely claiming that the machine possesses the student's intellectual understanding. Similarly, a researcher may use software for translation, transcription, coding, or data organization while retaining responsibility for the scholarly interpretation.

The decisive question is therefore not simply whether AI was used, but what intellectual function AI performed and how that use was represented.

This distinction is essential for university policy. A rule that treats every form of AI assistance as misconduct would be unnecessarily restrictive. Conversely, a policy that

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permits unrestricted AI-generated academic work would undermine the meaning of assessment and authorship.

Academic Originality and Plagiarism

Originality is a fundamental component of scholarly work. Academic originality does not necessarily mean that every sentence must be completely unprecedented. Rather, it requires that a scholar honestly distinguish between personal intellectual contribution and material derived from other sources.

AI creates a new dimension to this issue because generated text may not have a conventional identifiable author. A student may ask an AI system to produce an essay and then submit the result as personal work. Even if the text does not reproduce a particular published source word for word, the submission may still misrepresent the student's intellectual contribution.

Islamic ethics reinforces the importance of honest attribution. The Qur'an condemns false representation and commands believers to uphold justice and truth.⁷ In scholarship, this means that ideas, evidence, quotations, and intellectual contributions should not be falsely attributed.

AI therefore should not become a means of bypassing the intellectual labour that an assignment is designed to assess.

The same concern applies to research publications. If AI generates substantial portions of a manuscript, researchers must follow the relevant journal and institutional requirements concerning disclosure and authorship. AI should not be presented as an independent scholarly authority, and responsibility for the final publication remains with the human researcher.

Verification of AI-Generated Sources

One of the most serious academic risks associated with generative AI is the production of unreliable references. An AI system may generate a citation that appears genuine but contains an incorrect title, author, journal, page number, or publication date. This creates

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a particular problem for researchers who rely on references without checking the original source.

The Islamic principle of tabayyun, or verification, provides a direct ethical response. Information must be examined before it is relied upon.

The researcher should therefore verify every significant AI-generated reference against the original publication. Quotations should be checked against the source text. Page numbers should be confirmed. Hadith references should be verified from reliable collections. Qur'anic quotations should be checked against the Qur'an. Legal and policy documents should be consulted in their original form.

This is not merely a technical recommendation. It is a requirement of academic trustworthiness. A reference that does not exist should never be included simply because an AI system generated it.

Academic Assessment and Examination Integrity

The purpose of academic assessment is to determine whether a student has acquired the knowledge, skills, and understanding expected from a course or programme. AI-assisted examination misconduct therefore raises a fundamental ethical problem.

If a student secretly uses an AI system during an examination in which independent responses are required, the student is not merely using technology. The student is presenting an ability that the assessment was intended to measure but that may not actually have been demonstrated.

This is inconsistent with the principle of amānah and with justice toward other students who complete the assessment honestly.

The Qur'an commands believers to uphold justice even when it conflicts with personal interest.⁸

Academic assessment is an obvious area in which this principle applies. A student who obtains an unfair advantage through undisclosed AI assistance affects not only personal academic standing but also the fairness owed to other students.

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Universities should therefore distinguish clearly between assessments in which AI assistance is permitted and assessments in which independent work is required.

Where AI is prohibited, unauthorized use should constitute academic misconduct. Where AI is permitted, the rules should specify its permissible role. Where an assessment aims to evaluate personal reasoning or oral competence, universities may use supervised writing, presentations, interviews, oral examinations, and other direct forms of assessment.

The objective should not be to wage a technological battle against AI. It should be to ensure that assessment continues to measure the intended learning outcomes.

AI and Research Integrity

Research integrity extends beyond plagiarism. It includes accurate data collection, honest reporting, responsible interpretation, proper citation, and transparency concerning research procedures.

AI can support many stages of research. It may assist with literature organization, translation, transcription, coding, data classification, language editing, and preliminary analysis. These functions can save time and improve efficiency.

Nevertheless, researchers must not transfer responsibility for research findings to an AI system.

The researcher must verify the data, assess the reliability of sources, evaluate AI-generated interpretations, and ensure that conclusions are supported by evidence. AI-generated analysis cannot substitute for scholarly judgment.

This principle is particularly important in Islamic Studies. AI tools may generate interpretations of Qur'anic verses, Hadith references, juristic positions, historical claims, or biographical information. Such material requires verification from recognized primary and authoritative secondary sources.

The existence of an AI-generated explanation does not establish its scholarly validity.

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A researcher who uses AI to assist with a study therefore remains responsible for every substantive claim made in the final work. The machine may assist the process; it does not become the bearer of the academic trust.

Justice and Equality in AI-Assisted Academic Decisions

Academic integrity also requires fairness in the use of AI by institutions. Universities increasingly have access to automated systems for assessment, student support, plagiarism detection, admissions, and administrative decision-making.

Such systems may offer efficiency, but efficiency alone is not justice.

The Qur'an commands:

“Indeed, Allah commands justice.”⁹

If an automated system produces discriminatory or inaccurate results, the university cannot avoid responsibility by claiming that the decision was made by software.

UNESCO's global framework on AI ethics similarly places human dignity, fairness, transparency, and human oversight at the centre of responsible AI use.¹⁰

These principles are particularly relevant when AI systems affect students' academic progression or institutional opportunities.

An Islamic approach therefore requires meaningful human review of significant academic decisions. AI may provide information or recommendations, but final decisions should remain subject to responsible human judgment.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Academic integrity also includes the responsible handling of information. Students and researchers frequently work with confidential material, including examination papers, student records, research participants' information, unpublished manuscripts, institutional correspondence, and personal data.

Uploading such information to an external AI system without authorization may violate privacy and institutional trust.

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The ethical principle of amānah requires that information entrusted to a person be protected. The convenience of an AI system does not remove this responsibility.

Universities should therefore establish clear categories of information that may and may not be entered into AI platforms. Sensitive personal information, confidential examination material, unpublished research data, and protected institutional documents should receive particular safeguards.

This requirement is consistent with broader international AI governance. UNESCO identifies data governance, privacy, human dignity, and responsible use among the important areas requiring ethical attention.¹¹

In Pakistani universities, privacy policies should therefore form part of AI-use policies rather than being treated as an entirely separate technological issue.

Preservation of Intellect and Independent Learning

One of the most important Islamic considerations concerns the preservation and development of human intellect.

Education is not merely the accumulation of information. It involves understanding, reflection, reasoning, memory, judgment, and the ability to distinguish between sound and unsound knowledge.

The extensive use of AI can create intellectual dependency if students begin to delegate reading, writing, reasoning, and problem-solving to machines.

This does not mean that technology is inherently harmful. AI can help students understand difficult concepts, provide alternative explanations, support language learning, and facilitate access to information. The concern arises when assistance becomes substitution.

The maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah provide a useful framework for understanding this distinction. The preservation of intellect is among the fundamental objectives traditionally identified in Islamic legal thought. Contemporary maqāṣid scholarship has further emphasized the

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importance of considering purposes, consequences, and the wider effects of legal and ethical decisions.¹²

From this perspective, an AI practice that strengthens learning may serve educational benefit, while one that systematically eliminates intellectual effort may undermine an important purpose of education.

The appropriate objective is therefore not maximum AI use but beneficial and responsible AI use.

Maṣlaḥah, Harm, and the Ethical Limits of AI

Islamic legal and ethical reasoning recognizes both benefit and harm. AI can produce considerable educational benefits, but it can also produce deception, misinformation, privacy violations, inequality, and intellectual dependency.

The legal maxim associated with the Prophetic principle states:

“There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm.”¹³

This principle provides an important basis for determining limits. A practice that provides convenience but causes significant academic harm should not be accepted simply because it is technologically advanced.

Similarly, a practice that provides genuine educational benefit but carries manageable risk may be permitted with appropriate safeguards.

This approach supports a balanced institutional policy. Universities should evaluate AI applications according to their actual academic function rather than categorizing all AI use as either permissible or prohibited.

For example, using AI to correct grammar may carry relatively limited academic risk when the intellectual content remains the student's own. Using AI to generate an entire thesis and submitting it as original work presents a substantially different ethical problem. The distinction is therefore one of purpose, degree, and consequence.

The Pakistani University Context

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The development of AI policy in Pakistan provides an important institutional setting for applying these principles. HEC's framework explicitly seeks to protect academic integrity while enabling productive AI use and recognizes that institutions need policies responsive to their particular educational environments.¹⁴

This approach is compatible with Islamic ethical reasoning because it recognizes that responsible use requires distinctions rather than blanket prohibition.

Pakistan's National Artificial Intelligence Policy 2025 also reflects the country's intention to expand AI-related education, research, skills, innovation, and applications.¹⁵

As AI becomes increasingly embedded in the country's educational infrastructure, universities will require institutional rules that address not only technological capacity but also academic responsibility.

The Islamic ethical contribution can be especially valuable in this context because concepts such as *amānah*, *ṣidq*, *ʿadl*, verification, and prevention of harm are already familiar within Pakistan's educational and cultural environment.

The objective should not be to create a completely separate ethical system disconnected from contemporary AI governance. Rather, Pakistani universities can strengthen existing academic-integrity principles by interpreting them through Islamic ethical concepts alongside national and international standards.

A Proposed Islamic Framework for Academic Integrity

An effective framework for Pakistani universities can be organized around eight principles.

1. Honest Representation

Students and researchers must accurately represent the nature and extent of AI assistance in accordance with institutional requirements.

2. Human Authorship and Responsibility

The person submitting or publishing academic work remains responsible for its accuracy, originality, interpretation, and ethical status.

3. Verification

AI-generated facts, quotations, references, statistics, and interpretations must be independently verified before academic use.

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4. Respect for Originality

AI should not be used to conceal plagiarism, bypass intellectual effort, or falsely represent machine-generated work as independent academic achievement.

5. Examination Integrity

Where independent work is required, AI use should be prohibited unless expressly authorized. Where AI is permitted, its role should be clearly defined.

6. Research Integrity

AI may support research processes but cannot replace the researcher's responsibility for evidence, methodology, analysis, findings, and conclusions.

7. Privacy and Confidentiality

Confidential academic, personal, research, and institutional information should not be entered into AI systems without appropriate authorization and safeguards.

8. Human Oversight

AI-assisted institutional decisions should remain subject to accountable human review, particularly when decisions affect academic progression, assessment, discipline, employment, or research.

These principles transform academic integrity from a purely disciplinary concept into a positive ethical framework.

Institutional Responsibilities of Pakistani Universities

The responsibility for academic integrity does not rest exclusively with students. Universities themselves must create conditions in which ethical AI use is possible.

First, every university should develop a clear AI-use policy applicable to students, faculty, researchers, examiners, and administrative staff.

Second, institutions should classify AI use according to academic purpose. The policy should distinguish between acceptable assistance, assistance requiring disclosure, and prohibited use.

Third, universities should provide AI literacy training. Students should understand that AI-generated information may be inaccurate and that fluent output does not constitute evidence.

Fourth, faculty members should be trained to redesign assessments where necessary. Assessment methods should focus increasingly on reasoning, application, explanation,

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discussion, and demonstrated understanding rather than relying exclusively on easily generated written responses.

Fifth, universities should establish clear procedures for handling allegations of AI-related academic misconduct. Students should have an opportunity to explain their use of AI, and disciplinary decisions should be based on evidence rather than assumptions.

Sixth, research policies should address AI-generated content, data handling, disclosure, authorship, and verification.

Seventh, institutions should periodically review their policies because AI technology changes rapidly. HEC itself notes the need for flexibility and regular review in response to technological developments.¹⁶

The purpose of institutional regulation should therefore be educational as well as disciplinary. Students should be taught why academic honesty matters, not merely warned about punishment.

Role of Islamic Studies Departments

Islamic Studies departments have a distinctive role in developing an ethical culture surrounding AI in Pakistani universities.

Their contribution should extend beyond issuing general statements about the permissibility or impermissibility of technology. Islamic ethics can provide principles for evaluating actual academic practices.

- The concept of ṣidq addresses truthful representation.
- The concept of amānah addresses academic responsibility.
- The prohibition of khiyānah addresses betrayal of trust.
- The principle of ‘adl addresses fairness.
- The requirement of tabayyun addresses verification.
- The principle of daf‘ al-ḍarar addresses prevention of academic and social harm.
- The concept of maṣlaḥah addresses beneficial technological use.

The preservation of ‘aql addresses the need to protect independent intellectual development.

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These concepts provide a coherent ethical vocabulary for discussing AI within Pakistani higher education. They can also contribute to faculty training, student orientation, academic-integrity policies, research ethics, and institutional seminars.

Such a contribution would demonstrate that Islamic Studies is capable of engaging contemporary technological questions through established principles rather than remaining confined to historical discussion.

Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence has changed the academic environment, but it has not changed the ethical responsibility attached to scholarship. The fundamental requirements of academic integrity—truthfulness, honesty, originality, fairness, accountability, and respect for knowledge—remain essential.

Islamic teachings provide a strong ethical foundation for these requirements. *Ṣidq* requires truthful representation; *amānah* requires responsible handling of academic work; *‘adl* requires fairness; *tabayyun* requires verification; prevention of harm requires attention to the consequences of AI use; *maṣlahah* allows beneficial technological development; and preservation of intellect requires protection of independent human learning.

For Pakistani universities, the appropriate response is neither unrestricted adoption of AI nor complete prohibition. A more effective approach is to distinguish between legitimate assistance and dishonest substitution.

AI may be used to support learning, research, language improvement, translation, organization, and other legitimate academic purposes where institutional policies permit. However, students and researchers must remain responsible for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and ethical status of their work. AI-generated information must be verified; substantial assistance should be disclosed where required; confidential information must be protected; and AI should not be used to circumvent examinations or falsely represent intellectual achievement.

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Universities should therefore establish clear AI policies, strengthen AI literacy, redesign assessment where appropriate, protect research and personal data, and maintain human oversight of consequential academic decisions. Islamic Studies departments can make a valuable contribution by grounding these policies in principles already established within Islamic ethical thought.

The central principle can be stated simply: academic integrity cannot be delegated to Artificial Intelligence. A machine may assist in producing academic work, but the human being who uses, verifies, presents, and submits that work remains responsible for it.

In the age of Artificial Intelligence, therefore, the real test of academic integrity is not whether technology can produce knowledge, but whether human beings continue to use knowledge with truthfulness, trust, justice, responsibility, and intellectual honesty.

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