

Viridis Graduate Institute

Ecopsychology and Environmental Humanities

INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Non-Discrimination Statement

Viridis Graduate Institute admits students of any race, color, national origin, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at VGI. This Institute does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship programs, and other school-administered programs.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

It is the policy of Viridis Graduate Institute to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Viridis Graduate Institute is an Equal Opportunity Educational institution and is committed to providing access to students with disabilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). VGI will provide auxiliary aids and services to students with hearing, speech or vision impairments in accordance with 28 C.F.R. 36.303, and otherwise make reasonable modifications to its policies and practices in accordance with 28 C.F.R. 36.302, in order that its programs are accessible to individuals with a disability. If you have a need for auxiliary aids or services, or other modifications please contact Viridis Graduate Institute Office of the Registrar at: vgi.registrar@viridisedu.org.

Applicants, prospective students, or current students with disabilities have the following rights and responsibilities:

- Have the right to equal access to all programs.
- Disability records will be maintained separately from academic records; disability records will be used solely to determine appropriate services.
- Have the responsibility to give advance notification of accommodations needed prior to the beginning of enrollment.
- Have the responsibility to submit both documentation of their disability and a request for services.
- Have the responsibility to initiate the request for services or accommodations; requests should be addressed to the Registrar (vgi.registrar@viridisedu.org). Students must communicate to the Registrar the nature of their disability and any necessary and reasonable accommodations to allow them full participation in programs.
- Students must meet the requirements of the academic program of study with or without reasonable accommodation.

Students are encouraged to disclose and submit a **Special Needs Request Form** for any disability requiring accommodation immediately following enrollment and prior to starting

classes. All students seeking accommodation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or the ADA must submit documentation of the physical or mental disability from qualified medical or testing personnel.

Sexual Harassment

It is the goal of Viridis Graduate Institute to promote an educational environment, whether online or face-to-face at VGI residencies, that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of students, faculty, or staff occurring anywhere in the Viridis Graduate Institute environment is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment, or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Gender-based Discrimination

Viridis Graduate Institute promotes an educational environment that is free of gender-based discrimination. Gender-based discrimination is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about gender-based discrimination, or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a gender-based discrimination complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. Any inappropriate conduct will be dealt with if encountered by students, faculty, or staff.

Educational Records

FERPA applies to all records that fall within its broad definition of “educational records.” Student educational records at Viridis Graduate Institute include all records directly related to a student that are maintained by or for Viridis Graduate Institute. Records can be in any medium, including handwritten notes, paper files, email, electronic files, video, or audio files. The records are not limited to those in “official” files and include records maintained in any Viridis Graduate Institute office or file. With limited exceptions, a student can see educational records at Viridis Graduate Institute that are directly related to that student during normal business hours and when requested in advance.

English Language Requirement

Course materials are supplied only in English. Students are expected to be proficient in the oral and written use of the English language. International students are subject to the same admission requirements, fees, and responsibilities as domestic students. International students are reminded that Viridis Graduate Institute provides course materials and instruction only in English. Oral and written proficiency of the English language is presumed. See TOEFL Requirements (under Admissions).

Cyber Awareness

Students, faculty, and staff are required to take the **Cyber Awareness Training** (included in Student and Faculty Welcome Packets) and agree to adhere to the following policy:

- Students, faculty, and staff are required to read and follow recommendation made in the Cyber Awareness Training and submit a signed copy of the completed Cyber Awareness Training;
- Students, faculty, and staff are required to communicate with each other, share non-personal data, or submit assignments using Viridis Gmail accounts;
- Faculty and students are required to communicate on all course and assignment questions, requesting information, or sharing ideas using Viridis Gmail accounts.
- Students, faculty, and staff are required to change VGI passwords periodically.
- Students are required to follow the Ethical Computer Use Institutional Policy found in the Catalog and Student Handbook.

Executive Staff only

- The Executive Team will encrypt all student educational records that are shared electronically, housed on personal computers or housed on VGI OCEANS.
- Viridis Graduate Institute does not share student data, information, or educational records with anyone. ONLY the student may request information pertaining to their educational records as stated in FERPA Laws in VGI Institutional Policies.

Ethical Computer Use

All students have the responsibility for ethical computer use. This means that users agree to abide by the following conditions and any other situations that require common sense. If students have any questions about what constitutes ethical computer use beyond what is mentioned here, they have a responsibility to inquire with VGI administration before proceeding or be subject to a policy violation.

1. The integrity of the systems must be respected. Users of VGI systems (OCEANS, VGI Gmail, ZOOM) will not divulge passwords, pins, private keys or similar elements to anyone else, and they will not exploit sessions left open or otherwise misappropriate or steal the “identity” of another user.
2. Privacy of other users must not be intruded upon at any time.
3. Users must recognize that certain data are confidential and must not share that information.
4. The rules and regulations governing the use of VGI Internet and Gmail access must be respected.
5. Persons responsible for computing devices connected to the network will ensure that those devices are maintained in a secure state in accord with related policy.
6. No one shall obtain unauthorized access to other users’ accounts and files.
7. The intended use of all accounts, typically for VGI instruction and administrative purposes, must be respected.
8. Commercial use is prohibited.

9. Users shall become familiar with and abide by the guidelines for appropriate usage for the systems and networks that they access.
10. Students specifically agree that they will not utilize email addresses obtained through using Viridis Graduate Institute's services (VGI Gmail) to transmit the same or substantially similar unsolicited messages to 10 or more recipients in a single day, unless such messages specifically pertain to coursework and are communication to a teacher, faculty members, or other students.
11. Students are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all of their login identification, name/numbers, passwords, and similar information. Students must immediately notify Viridis Graduate Institute of any unauthorized use of their registration name/numbers, passwords, or similar information.

Online Etiquette

Distance Education via the World Wide Web presents communicators with an ethical task. When participating in Distance Education, it is important to remember several points of etiquette that will smooth communication between the students and their instructors:

1. Avoid language that may come across as strong or offensive. Language can be easily misinterpreted in written communication. If a point must be stressed, review the statement to make sure that an outsider reading it would not be offended, and then post the statement. Humor and sarcasm may easily be misinterpreted as well, so try to be as matter-of-fact and professional as possible.
**Note: Non-violent Communication is an important component of Viridis Graduate Institute's communication practice.*
2. Keep writing to a point and stay on topic. Online courses require a lot of reading. When writing, keep sentences poignant and brief so that readers do not get lost in wordy paragraphs and miss the point of the statement.
3. Read first, write later. It is important to read all posts or comments of students and instructors within the course discussion before personally commenting to prevent repeating commentary or asking questions that have already been answered.
4. Review, review, then send. There is no taking back a comment once it has been sent, so it is important to double-check all writing to make sure that it clearly conveys the exact intended message.
5. An online classroom is still a classroom. Though the courses may be online, appropriate classroom behavior is still mandatory. Respect for fellow classmates and Instructors is mandatory at VGI.
6. The language of the Internet. Though still a fairly young type of communication, certain aspects of this form of communication are becoming conventional. For example, do not write using all capital letters, because it will appear as shouting. Language should be respectful at all times.
7. Consider the privacy of others. Do not give out a classmate's email address or other information.
8. Keep attachments small. If it is necessary to send pictures, change the size to an acceptable 100k.

9. No inappropriate material. Do not forward virus warnings, chain letters, jokes, etc., to classmates or instructors. The sharing of pornographic or any form of discriminatory or inflammatory material is forbidden.

Drug & Alcohol Use

Viridis Graduate Institute prohibits the use of alcohol, drugs, drug activity and/or paraphernalia used in illicit drug activity by any of its students, faculty, or administration at all ReWilding Residencies, or any other of its activities. Any violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from Viridis Graduate Institute's programs.

Institutional Policy Violations

Sexual Harassment

It is unlawful to harass a person because of that person's sex. Harassment can include sexual harassment or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general. Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.

Gender-based Discrimination

Gender discrimination means discrimination based on a person's gender or sex, which more often affects girls and women. Because of gender discrimination, girls and women do not have the same opportunities as boys and men for education, meaningful careers, political influence, and economic advancement. Gender discrimination involves treating someone unfavorably because of that person's sex. Sexual discrimination also can involve treating someone less favorably because of his or her connection with an organization or group that is generally associated with people of a certain sex. Discrimination against an individual because of gender identity, including transgender status, or because of sexual orientation is discrimination because of sex in violation of Title IX.

If any student believes that they have been subject to sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination in any form, they have a right to file a complaint, either written or oral, to the President of Viridis Graduate Institute. The complaint should include dates, times, places, witnesses, and specifics of what was said and done to whom and by whom. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law, and will be revealed only on a "need to know" basis (i.e. access to the information is necessary to the investigation and/or the safety of the accused and the accuser or required by law).

A complaint of sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination will be promptly investigated by the President in a fair and expeditious manner to ascertain if there is enough evidence to report to the Grievance Committee. If so, the committee will convene to review the complaint and make its recommendations to the President. If dissatisfied with the resolution, the person against whom the complaint was filed or the person who filed the complaint may appeal to the

President, who will take the issue to the Board of Trustees Executive Committee. The appeal will be based upon the written complaint and response contained in the investigative record of the Grievance Committee. The appeal should be resolved within ten (10) business days of the date of the filing of the appeal. The decision of the Executive Committee will be final and no more appeals will be granted.

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Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from Viridis Graduate Institute's programs.

All Other Institutional Policy Violations

Any other violations, complaints, grievances, or questionable behavior in regard to Viridis Graduate Institute's institutional policies will be referred to the Grievance Committee for review and recommendation for action. The appeal of the committee's recommendation is referred to the President, who has the final decision.