SAMBHOTA TIBETAN SCHOOLS SOCIETY

VIGILANCE POLICY
FOR
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- 2026 -

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the context of an educational institution like Sambhota, vigilance signifies a continuous, proactive effort to uphold integrity, discipline, and transparency in academic and administrative operations. It involves maintaining an oversight system to prevent and detect misconduct, irregularities, and practices that may adversely affect the institution, its students, or its reputation. A vigilance mechanism ensures integrity and transparency in a professional workspace and mitigates potential risks.

This Policy will be called the Vigilance Policy for the Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS) 2026, and will come into effect from "1st October 2026".

II. OBJECTIVES OF VIGILANCE MECHANISM AND POLICY

The basic objectives of the vigilance mechanism are to promote integrity and ensure transparency in the entire functioning of the society:

1. To promote integrity, transparency, and accountability in the organisation and to prevent corruption and unethical practices.

2. To ensure a structured mechanism for reporting and examining misconduct.

3. To safeguard and not hound the interests of honest employees. By preventing them from being victims of circumstances, by sensitizing them about risks and consequences that may arise if proper systems and procedures are not followed.

4. To ensure an environment of integrity and discipline without causing demoralisation or risk aversion.

5. To frame guidelines to structure an efficient and effective vigilance system in the organisation, for the larger interest.

6. To uphold the standard of ethical practices and to mitigate risks through monitoring and assessing.

7. To implement a common policy for all the schools and their offices under the administration of STSS.

III. APPLICABILITY

This policy will apply to all the Teaching and non-teaching staff of Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society. It further extends to former employees regarding actions taken during their tenure, and to third-party associates, partners, vendors, contractors, and consultants engaged with the Society under any form of contractual agreement, including but not limited to a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), service contract, or purchase order.

DEFINITION

1. **Vigilance:** The action or state of keeping careful watch for possible risks, danger, or difficulties.

2. **Misconduct**: Unacceptable or improper behaviour, especially by an employee or professional person.

3. **Vigilance Complaint:** Any allegation of wrongdoing received in writing or through authorised channels.

4. **Competent Authority:** The authority empowered to take final decisions under this Policy.

   - *For all school-level teaching, non-teaching staff and HQ administrative staff: The Director of STSS, subject to the powers delegated to the Director and any matter requiring reference to a higher or other competent authority.*

   - *For Headquarters executives or senior officials: The Governing Body of STSS, or such other authority as may be competent under the applicable administrative framework.*

   - *Reference to Higher or Appropriate Authority: Where a matter falls beyond the delegated powers or jurisdiction of the designated Competent Authority, or the nature of the matter requires approval or decision by a higher or other authority, the matter shall be referred to such authority for appropriate decision. In such cases, the authority referring shall not be deemed to have final decision-making authority over the matter.*

5. **Verifiable facts** - Objective evidence including, but not limited to, specific dates, times, locations, names of individuals involved, digital trails, or document references that can be independently confirmed, as distinguished from mere hearsay, rumours or speculation.

IV. SCOPE OF VIGILANCE MATTERS

1. Financial irregularities:

Any intentional act or omission designed to deceive, resulting in a loss to the Society or a wrongful gain to an individual. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Misappropriation of funds: *The unauthorized diversion or personal use of the Society's cash, bank balances, or physical assets for personal gain or unauthorized institutional expense.*

- Falsification of accounts: *The intentional alteration, forgery, omission, or manipulation of financial records, ledgers, and books.*

- Misuse of grants or institutional fraud: *Utilizing restricted funding or earmarked donor grants for unauthorized purposes, or systemic institutional deception.*

- Fraudulent financial claim: *Presenting false, inflated, or fabricated invoices, bills, or receipts for reimbursement or payment.*

2. Abuse of official position

- Misuse of authority/ Favouritism

- Exercising Undue influence or coercion

- Improper acceptance or use of donations, sponsorships, or external financial support where such support is intended, or is permitted, to improperly influence recruitment, procurement, admissions, financial decisions, appointments, or other institutional matters.

- Failure to disclose a personal or financial conflict of interest in recruitment, procurement, or admissions.

- Organising, influencing, or mobilising employees for an improper purpose in a manner that disrupts institutional discipline, operations, or legitimate decision-making processes.

3. Fraud and Misrepresentation

- Submission of false information
- Tampering with official records
- Forgery or falsification of records

4. Institutional defamation

Dissemination of false, misleading, or unverified information verbally, in writing, or through digital/media platforms that damages or has the potential to damage the reputation, functioning, or credibility of STSS.

5. Breach of confidentiality

Unauthorised disclosure of sensitive and confidential institutional information, including but not limited to:

- Student & staff records- personal data, disciplinary records, service-related information, or financial aid information.

- Administrative decisions (both at schools & HQ) and institutional deliberations, including decisions of schools and Headquarters, meeting minutes, internal communications, and proposed policy or administrative changes, before their authorised disclosure or official announcement.

- Vigilance and inquiry-related information, including complaints, investigation records, statements or testimonies, evidence, findings, and the identity of complainants, whistleblowers, witnesses, or other persons involved in an inquiry, except where disclosure is authorised or required by law.

- Any other information expressly classified as confidential, restricted, or privileged by STSS or applicable law.

- *Provided that information required to be disclosed or published under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, the Income-tax Act, 1961, or any other applicable law, regulation, statutory direction, or lawful order shall not be treated as confidential merely by virtue of its being institutional information. Further, disclosures made in good faith through authorised internal grievance, vigilance, or whistleblower channels, or to a competent statutory, regulatory, investigative, or judicial authority as permitted or required by law, shall not constitute an unauthorised breach of confidentiality.*

6. **Other serious misconduct**

- Any conduct detrimental to the interests and reputation of STSS
- Other Serious Misconduct (including but not limited to):
  - Physical misconduct: including but not limited to assault, altercation, or any unauthorised use of physical force against colleagues or other members of the community.

  - Acts of gross indiscipline that wilfully disrupt or paralyse institutional functioning, including but not limited to insubordination, instigating unlawful strikes, sabotaging institutional property, or obstructing staff and students from entering campus premises.

  - Formation or participation in unauthorised unions/associations that interfere with administrative functioning or violate service conditions.

  - No employee of STSS shall, during the period of their employment, seek, accept, declare, pursue, or undertake any political or electoral candidature, whether for a local, regional, State, Central, or community-level elected office, or engage in campaigning, canvassing, mobilisation of support, solicitation of votes, or any other activity intended to promote or facilitate such candidature. This restriction shall apply irrespective of whether the employee has formally filed a nomination, has been formally declared a candidate, or has been selected, nominated, endorsed, elected, or otherwise authorised by any person, community, organisation, political party, or other body to contest an election. Any employee intending to pursue or accept such candidature shall resign from STSS employment before accepting, declaring, seeking, or otherwise pursuing such candidature and before undertaking any campaign, canvassing, mobilisation, or other electoral activity. For the avoidance of doubt, this provision shall not prohibit an employee from exercising their lawful right to vote, expressing personal political views in their private capacity, or participating in ordinary civic activities, provided that such conduct does not involve electoral candidature, campaigning, canvassing, solicitation of votes, mobilisation of support, misuse of STSS position or resources, or interference with official duties.

- Spreading false, misleading, or unverified information within or outside the institution, including through social media, which may harm institutional discipline or reputation.
- Instigating, coercing, or actively mobilising staff or students to engage in boycotts, unlawful protests, or strikes that deliberately disrupt the academic, administrative, or normal operational functioning of the institution.
- Any conduct that undermines authority, discipline, or harmony within the institution.

V. <u>VIGILANCE FRAMEWORK</u>

1. Vigilance authority

The society shall establish a two-tiered vigilance structure to ensure compliance, transparency, and accountability across all administrative levels:

- The institutional vigilance mechanism shall be administered centrally by the Headquarters Legal & Vigilance Officer (LVO), who shall function as the sole central authority for all vigilance, inquiry, and compliance matters across the Society.
- To support the central authority, the Society may designate a school-level Nodal Officer on an as-needed basis. These Nodal Officers shall act strictly under the direct operational instructions of the Headquarters LVO to assist in local data gathering and evidence preservation, bypassing local school channels to maintain confidentiality.

2. Power and functions

The Vigilance Officer shall have the authority and responsibility to:

- Receive, register, and confidentially scrutinise all complaints regarding misconduct, corruption, or malpractice within the society.

- Initiate and conduct preliminary inquiries or fact-finding investigations to determine if a prima facie case exists.

- Requisition and secure relevant official records, documents, or digital evidence from any department or school within the society during an active inquiry.

- Recommend formal disciplinary proceedings, administrative measures, or coercive actions to the competent authority based on inquiry findings.

- Monitor and track the progress of all ongoing vigilance cases and disciplinary actions to ensure timely resolution.

- Advise the management on systematic improvements, policy revisions, and preventive vigilance measures to eliminate institutional vulnerabilities.

VI. PREVENTIVE VIGILANCE MECHANISM

Preventive vigilance is a proactive approach to reducing opportunities for misconduct through systematic improvements and regular monitoring.

1. Systemic Improvements & Audits

- Periodic Review of Sensitive Posts: Employees holding sensitive posts involving finance, procurement, admissions, or the administration of an institution, including Principals and Rectors, shall be subject to periodic review, having regard to administrative requirements, continuity of institutional functioning, and vigilance considerations. Where warranted, the competent authority may order rotation, transfer, or redistribution of responsibilities.

- Surprise inspections: The Vigilance Officer may conduct periodic or risk-based surprise inspections of financial records, cash and fee records, procurement documents, inventory and stock registers, attendance records, assets, and other relevant institutional records to identify irregularities and strengthen internal controls.

- Digitisation: STSS shall prioritise digital record-keeping for all financial transactions and approvals to ensure a transparent audit trail.

2. Awareness and Training

- Workshops: STSS and its schools shall undertake appropriate awareness and sensitisation measures, as and when required, to familiarise employees with the STSS Code of Conduct, financial rules, vigilance requirements, and other applicable policies. Such measures may include orientation programmes, circulars, advisories, workshops, meetings, or other suitable means, having regard to the nature of the subject and the requirements of the institution.

- Integrity Pledge: All staff shall sign an "integrity pledge" affirming their commitment to the organisation's ethical standards.

- Annual Vigilance Week & Vigilance Day Observation: STSS and all the schools under its management shall observe Vigilance Week every year (aligned with the national/central framework or as designated by the STSS administration).

- A dedicated Vigilance Day shall be observed during this week to conduct awareness activities, workshops, and the mass administration of the integrity pledge for both staff and students to foster a culture of honesty and transparency.

- Mandatory reporting: Within 15 days of the conclusion of the vigilance week, the Head of each school must submit a comprehensive compliance report, detailing the activities conducted and the number of participants, to the STSS vigilance officer at Headquarters.

3. Strengthening Recruitment and Procurement

- Background Verifications: Strict verification of credentials and past employment records is mandatory for all new hires.

- Transparent Tendering: All major institutional purchases/procurement must follow the relevant rules of society and the bylaws of the host country.

4. Conflict of Interest

- Every employee shall perform their duties objectively, impartially and in the best interests of STSS and shall avoid situations in which a personal, family, financial, professional or other private interest may conflict, or reasonably appear to conflict, with their official duties.

- A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived. The existence of a personal or family relationship, by itself, shall not constitute misconduct; however, any such relationship or interest that may reasonably affect, or appear to affect, the impartial discharge of official duties shall be disclosed to the appropriate Competent Authority.

- Where an employee is required to make, recommend, approve, supervise, evaluate, investigate, scrutinise or otherwise participate in a matter directly concerning a person with whom the employee has a close family, financial or other material personal relationship, the employee shall disclose the conflict and, where appropriate, recuse themselves from such matter.

- The Competent Authority may designate another appropriate officer or authority to deal with the matter independently and may issue such directions as are necessary to prevent actual or perceived favouritism, undue influence or preferential treatment.

- Particular care shall be exercised where a senior or supervisory officer has a close family relationship with an employee working under their direct or indirect supervision. Such relationship shall not, by itself, require separation of employment or be treated as an irregularity; however, matters involving recruitment, appointment, promotion, appraisal, transfer, disciplinary action, financial benefit, procurement, or any other material decision concerning the related employee shall, wherever reasonably practicable, be handled through an independent or alternative decision-making arrangement.

- Where such a relationship exists, the concerned officer should disclose the relationship to the competent authority and, wherever reasonably practicable, avoid participating in or influencing material decisions directly concerning the related employee. Such matters may, where appropriate, be assigned to an independent or alternative decision-making authority.

- No employee shall use their official position, directly or indirectly, to secure or facilitate any undue advantage, preferential treatment or benefit for themselves or for a related person or entity.

- Failure to disclose a material conflict of interest, participation in a matter despite a known conflict without appropriate authorisation, or misuse of official position arising from such conflict may be treated as a vigilance or disciplinary matter, as applicable

VII. <u>SURVEILLANCE VIGILANCE MECHANISM</u>

Surveillance vigilance involves continuous, systematic monitoring and lookouts to detect ongoing irregularities, procedural deviations, or hidden malpractices before they cause severe institutional damage.

1. Identification of Sensitive Areas and Posts:

- The Legal & Vigilance Officer (LVO) shall identify and maintain a record of sensitive areas, functions, and posts across STSS, having regard to the nature and level of risk involved. Such areas may include procurement, finance and cash handling, admissions, recruitment, management of institutional assets, and high-value projects or contracts.

- Personnel handling such sensitive functions may be subject to appropriate risk-based scrutiny of compliance, approvals, transactions, and relevant records.

2. Routine Scrutiny of Financial and Operational Records:

- The Vigilance Section may undertake periodic or risk-based scrutiny, including unannounced desk reviews, of records and transactions relating to procurement, financial management, cash and fee collection, bank reconciliation, inventory and assets, and other areas identified as vulnerable to irregularities.

- Such scrutiny may be undertaken on the basis of complaints, audit observations, identified risk indicators, recurring irregularities, statutory compliance concerns, or other information warranting vigilance attention.

3. **Management of Scrutiny and Information Networks:**

- STSS shall facilitate appropriate channels through which employees and other persons associated with the Society may bring to the notice of the LVO information relating to suspected misconduct, irregularities, procedural violations, conflicts of interest, collusion, or unauthorised external interference.
- The LVO may undertake verification of information received from such channels, wherever considered necessary, while maintaining confidentiality and ensuring that no person is subjected to adverse action merely on the basis of an unverified allegation.

Scrutiny of Inspection Reports and Audit Paras:

- Relevant internal and external audit observations, statutory non-compliance notices, inspection reports, and significant compliance-related communications, including matters relating to EPF, ESI, CBSE, FCRA, Taxation, Procurement, or other regulatory requirements, shall be made available to the LVO where they indicate or may reasonably give rise to a vigilance or systemic risk.

- The LVO shall maintain appropriate records of such matters and may monitor their progress and recommend corrective or preventive measures to the Competent Authority.

VIII. <u>PUNITIVE VIGILANCE MECHANISM</u>

Punitive vigilance deals with the transparent, fair, and legally sound handling of established misconduct. It ensures that appropriate disciplinary, administrative, corrective, or legal action is taken in accordance with applicable law, the terms and conditions of employment, applicable STSS rules and policies, and the principles of natural justice. It applies where an inquiry or other reliable material establishes misconduct, fraud, corruption, or other serious irregularity by an employee or any other person covered under this Policy.

1. **Prima Facie Case Determination:**

- Upon gathering clear, verifiable evidence through a Preliminary Inquiry, if the facts disclose actionable misconduct, the matter shall be moved directly into formal punitive channels. The LVO shall place the findings before the Competent Authority for consideration of appropriate further action.

- A prima facie finding shall not be treated as a final determination of misconduct or guilt. Where formal disciplinary action is considered necessary, the same shall be undertaken in accordance with applicable law, the terms and conditions of employment, applicable STSS rules and policies, and the principles of natural justice.

2. **Classification of Disciplinary Penalties**:
   - Where the Competent Authority considers that formal disciplinary action is warranted, proceedings shall be initiated and conducted in accordance with the applicable STSS Code and principles of natural justice.
   - The employee concerned shall be informed of the allegations and provided a reasonable opportunity to respond and defend themselves in accordance with the applicable procedure.
   - Where misconduct is established through the applicable disciplinary process, the Competent Authority may impose such minor or major penalty as is authorised under the applicable STSS Code Book, having regard to the nature and gravity of the misconduct.

     - *Minor Penalties:* Formal written warning, censure, or withholding of annual increments for a specified period.
     - *Major Penalties:* Reduction in rank/demotion, compulsory retirement, or immediate termination of services with the forfeiture of specific institutional terminal benefits.

3. **Swift Processing of Suspensions:**
   - Where allegations of serious misconduct, including financial fraud, physical assault, or child safeguarding violations, have been verified through preliminary inquiry or other reliable material, and where there is a reasonable apprehension of tampering with physical or digital evidence, interference with witnesses, obstruction of the inquiry, or prejudice to a fair investigation, the Competent Authority may place the employee under immediate suspension or take such other appropriate interim measures as may be necessary.

4. **Criminal and Legal Interventions:**
   - Where an offence violates the statutory laws of the land (e.g., criminal breach of trust, financial embezzlement, criminal trespass, or POCSO violations), the policy mandates filing a formal First Information Report (FIR) with local law enforcement within strict statutory timelines, alongside independent civil suits for financial recovery.

   - Where necessary, STSS may also take appropriate steps for recovery of financial loss or protection of its legal interests, in accordance with law.

IX. <u>COMPLAINT MECHANISM</u>

1. **Complaint submission**

   - Complaints may be submitted through any of the following official channels:

- Written Complaint (Signed): A complaint may be submitted in writing, bearing the signature of the complainant, and sent by post to the Legal & Vigilance Officer (LVO), clearly marked "**Confidential – Vigilance Complaint**."

- Designated Vigilance Email: A complaint may be submitted through the official STSS vigilance email address, lvo@sambhota.org, which is designated for receiving vigilance complaints and is subject to appropriate access and confidentiality controls.

- Secure Web Portal: A complaint may be submitted through the designated **Vigilance Complaint Mechanism** available on the official STSS website. Complaints received through the portal shall be handled in accordance with the confidentiality and access-control requirements of this Policy.

2. Anonymous complaints:

- No action shall be taken on anonymous complaints. Any complaint that does not clearly disclose the identity of the complainant shall be closed without further investigation.

3. Preliminary scrutiny

- All complaints shall be screened for authenticity and seriousness.
- Frivolous or malicious complaints may be rejected with reasons recorded.
- *Preliminary scrutiny shall be completed within 15 working days (To authenticate the complaint); usually, a full inquiry will take longer.*
- *If the preliminary scrutiny reveals that a complaint was deliberately falsified or filed with malicious intent to harass or defame an employee, the complainant shall be subject to strict disciplinary action for serious misconduct.*

4. Preliminary inquiry

- A fact-finding inquiry may be ordered by the Headquarters Legal & Vigilance Officer (LVO) where necessary to verify the allegations and ascertain the relevant facts.

- No formal charge shall be framed at the preliminary inquiry stage. The purpose of the preliminary inquiry shall be limited to verification of the allegations and assessment of whether further action is warranted.

- Where immediate preservation of evidence is necessary, the LVO may instruct the designated school-level Nodal Officer to secure relevant physical records, digital records, devices, logs, registers, or other material locally, while maintaining their integrity and confidentiality.

- Where the allegations concern the Head of an Institution, the school-level Nodal Officer, or any other person who may have control over, access to, or influence over the relevant records, witnesses, or evidence, the LVO may directly undertake or supervise the fact-finding, evidence preservation, and other necessary preliminary measures at the institution concerned.

- The preliminary inquiry shall be conducted objectively and confidentially, and no adverse finding of guilt shall be recorded against the person concerned at this stage.

5. **Formal disciplinary proceeding**
   - Where a prima facie case is established through a preliminary inquiry or other reliable material, the matter may be placed before the Competent Authority for initiation of formal disciplinary proceedings.

   - The formal inquiry, where required, shall be conducted in accordance with the procedure applicable to the person concerned, and the findings shall be recorded on the basis of the material and evidence placed before the inquiry.

   - Upon completion of the formal inquiry, the LVO shall place the inquiry findings and relevant records before the Competent Authority for consideration and appropriate action. The Competent Authority shall take the final decision in accordance with applicable law and rules.

X. PENALTIES AND ACTION

1. Based on the nature and severity, it may be decided:
   - **Administrative or Disciplinary Proceedings**: Subject to enforcement as prescribed under the relevant STSS rules and regulations.

   - **Legal action**: Where the facts disclose a possible criminal offence or other violation of applicable law, STSS may initiate or facilitate appropriate legal or regulatory action, including reporting the matter to the competent law-enforcement or statutory authority, as required or permitted by law.

   - **Recovery Proceedings**: Where misconduct results in financial loss to STSS, appropriate steps may be taken for recovery or restitution of the loss, including applicable interest and reasonable legal costs, through such lawful means as may be appropriate in the circumstances.

XI. CONFIDENTIALITY

All vigilance proceedings shall be treated as strictly confidential. Unauthorised disclosure of any information relating to vigilance matters, including the identity of the complainant, the nature of the evidence, and the deliberations of the inquiry, shall constitute misconduct and may attract disciplinary action.

- **Active duty**: Every employee or other person involved in a vigilance matter, including complainants, witnesses, persons against whom allegations are made, inquiry personnel, and supporting officials, shall maintain the confidentiality of information received or accessed in connection with the matter and shall not disclose, circulate, or misuse such information except for a legitimate official purpose or as required or permitted by law.

- Particular care shall be taken to protect the identity and personal information of complainants and witnesses, as well as evidence, records, and other sensitive information relating to an inquiry.

- **Penalty**: Any unauthorised leak, whether intentional or through negligence, will be treated as a separate instance of serious misconduct under section IV, regardless of the outcome of the original case.

Proviso: *Nothing in this provision shall prevent a person from making a disclosure that is required by law, made to a competent statutory, regulatory, investigative, or judicial authority, or made through an authorised grievance, vigilance, or whistleblower mechanism.*

XII. WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

Any person making a complaint in good faith shall be protected from victimisation. The identity of the complainant shall be kept confidential to the extent possible. Retaliation against whistleblowers shall invite disciplinary action.

XIII. JURISDICTION AND ROLE CLARITY

- The Legal & Vigilance Officer (LVO) shall function primarily as a fact-finding, vigilance, and oversight mechanism and shall place findings and recommendations before the Competent Authority for appropriate action.

- The Competent Authority shall be responsible for taking appropriate disciplinary or administrative action in accordance with applicable law, the terms and conditions of employment, and applicable STSS rules and policies.

- Matters relating to sexual harassment shall be dealt with by the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in accordance with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act.

- Cases involving physical misconduct or assault, threats, or other acts of violence shall be dealt with under disciplinary rules, with vigilance involvement where necessary.

- Where a matter falls within the jurisdiction of another statutory or duly constituted institutional authority, the matter shall be dealt with by such authority in accordance with the applicable legal framework, while the LVO may address any separate vigilance, compliance, or systemic-risk aspects of the matter, where appropriate.

XIV. REVIEW AND AMENDMENT

This policy shall be reviewed and updated from time to time, as and when considered necessary by the Administration having regard to changes in law or institutional requirements. Any amendments to this policy must be approved by the administrative body or the Governing body of Samhota Tibetan Schools Society.

XV. INTERPRETATION

In case of any ambiguity or dispute regarding the interpretation of any clause in this policy, the decision of the Director of STSS shall be final and binding.

Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society · Khanyara, Dharamsala-176218 · Director

DIRECTOR
Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society

Date: *1st October 2026*
(STSS)