VINAYAKA MISSION'S
RESEARCH FOUNDATION
(Deemed to be University under section 3 of the UGC Act 1956)



Policy for Minimization of Disposable Items

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POLICY FOR MINIMIZATION OF DISPOSABLE ITEMS

Drafted by	Dy. Director-Research
Verified by	Director I/c, Accreditation & Ranking
Passed by	Vice-Chancellor
Approved by	Executive Council
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POLICY FOR MINIMIZATION OF DISPOSABLE ITEMS

1. Preamble

Vinayaka Mission's Research Foundation (Deemed to be University) [VMRF (DU)] recognizes its responsibility to promote sustainability, conserve resources and reduce the environmental impacts associated with disposable items. This Policy establishes a University-wide approach to minimizing the purchase, distribution and use of disposable and single-use items and promoting durable, reusable, refillable, repairable and returnable alternatives wherever practicable, safe and appropriate.

2. Short Title and Commencement

a. This policy shall be called as **"Policy for Minimization of Disposable Items"** in University Operations.

b. This policy shall come into force from the date of approval of the Executive Council of the University.

3. Purpose

This Policy aims to reduce unnecessary consumption of disposable items across VMRF (DU), embed waste prevention into procurement and service delivery, encourage responsible consumption, reduce paper and packaging waste, and establish responsibilities and monitoring arrangements. Measures shall protect health, safety, accessibility, infection prevention, legal compliance, research integrity and service quality.

4. Scope and Applicability

This Policy applies to all VMRF (DU) campuses, constituent colleges, departments, centres, laboratories, research facilities, hospitals and healthcare facilities, administrative offices, libraries, hostels, cafeterias, dining outlets, stores, maintenance units and University-managed premises. It applies to students, faculty, employees, researchers, visitors, contractors, suppliers, vendors, caterers, outsourced service providers and organizers of University-hosted or University-funded activities where the University controls procurement or service arrangements.

The Policy covers disposable items used in procurement, packaging, food services, meetings, conferences, ceremonies, student activities, office administration, printing, teaching, research, cleaning and maintenance. It shall be read with applicable University policies for waste

management, sustainable procurement, hazardous waste, biomedical waste, laboratory safety and infection prevention.

5. Policy Statement

VMRF (DU) shall progressively minimize avoidable disposable-item use and make reusable alternatives the default wherever practicable and safe. Recycling or substituting one disposable material for another shall not replace efforts to prevent unnecessary consumption. Disposable items shall not be reused where doing so conflicts with safety requirements, manufacturer instructions or applicable law.

6. Objectives

- To reduce purchase, distribution and consumption of disposable items across University operations.
- To promote durable, reusable, refillable, repairable and returnable products.
- To integrate waste prevention and packaging reduction into procurement and supplier contracts.
- To reduce paper use through digital administration and communication where suitable.
- To encourage responsible practices among students, faculty, staff, visitors and service providers.
- To monitor consumption and report progress using measurable indicators.
- To ensure reduction measures do not compromise health, safety, accessibility, hygiene or research quality.

7. Definitions

- **Disposable or single-use item:** A product intended to be used once or for a short period before being discarded, regardless of whether it is made from plastic, paper, cardboard, wood, metal or another material.
- **Reusable item:** A product designed for repeated use and, where necessary, safe cleaning, maintenance, repair or refilling.
- **Essential disposable item:** A single-use product required for clinical care, infection prevention, laboratory safety, accessibility, emergency response, legal compliance or a validated technical purpose where a suitable reusable alternative is unavailable.
- **Waste generator:** Any person, department, facility, vendor or activity that produces waste.

- **Waste diversion:** Preventing waste from entering the residual-waste stream through prevention, reuse, recycling, composting or other suitable lawful recovery.

8. Waste-Prevention Hierarchy

Decisions involving disposable items shall follow this order, subject to safety, legal and operational requirements:

- **Avoid:** Eliminate unnecessary items, packaging, printing and distribution.
- **Reduce:** Lower the quantity and frequency of consumption.
- **Reuse:** Choose durable, refillable, repairable, returnable or shared alternatives.
- **Recycle or compost:** Recover materials through suitable and available systems.
- **Dispose responsibly:** Use the approved route for residual waste.

A product's recyclability, biodegradability or compostability shall not, by itself, justify its purchase where prevention or reuse is feasible.

9. Operational Requirements

9.1 Procurement and Packaging

- Before purchasing disposable items, departments shall assess whether the item is necessary and whether an appropriate reusable alternative is available.
- Procurement shall, where suitable, prioritize durable products and assess lifespan, repairability, refill options and total cost of ownership.
- Departments and suppliers should avoid excessive packaging, unnecessary individual wrapping and avoidable single-use accessories.
- Bulk purchasing, refill systems and returnable packaging should be preferred where safe, hygienic and operationally appropriate.
- Tender documents, purchase specifications and contracts should include applicable requirements for reduced packaging, reusable alternatives and reporting of priority disposable items.
- Purchases of identified priority disposable items should be recorded to support monitoring.

9.2 Cafeterias, Dining and Catering

- Washable and reusable cups, plates, bowls and cutlery shall be preferred for dine-in services wherever practicable.

- Reusable or returnable food containers should be adopted where feasible and compatible with food-safety requirements.
- Disposable cutlery, straws, stirrers, bags and individual sachets should not be distributed automatically; provide them only on request or for an approved operational need.
- Refill drinking-water arrangements should be supported where water quality, accessibility and hygiene can be maintained.
- Personal reusable cups and containers may be permitted where compatible with food-safety and service requirements.
- Suitable cleaning, sanitizing and storage arrangements shall be maintained for reusable serviceware.
- Plastic items prohibited under applicable Indian law shall not be purchased, supplied or used.

9.3 Meetings, Conferences and University Events

- Event organizers shall plan for disposable-item reduction before placing orders or engaging service providers.
- Reusable serviceware should be used wherever practicable.
- Electronic invitations, registration, programmes, certificates, feedback forms and communications should be the default, subject to accessibility and operational needs.
- Unnecessary printed handouts, promotional products and individually packaged materials should be avoided.
- Banners, signs, display materials and name-badge holders should be reused where feasible.
- Caterers, vendors and external organizers shall be informed of applicable requirements before events.
- Appropriate segregation and collection arrangements shall be provided for unavoidable waste.

9.4 Offices, Administration and Paper Reduction

- Digital documentation, communication, approvals and record management should be used by default where legally and operationally appropriate.
- When printing is necessary, print quantities should be minimized and double-sided printing used where suitable.

- Avoid unnecessary duplicate copies, disposable stationery and individually packaged office supplies.
- Reusable office supplies and refillable products should be preferred where suitable.

9.5 Teaching, Research and Laboratories

- Teaching and research units should review opportunities to reduce disposable consumables through better planning, stock control, shared resources and validated reusable alternatives.
- Purchasing and dispensing practices should reduce expired, unused or excess materials where practicable.
- Reduction measures shall not compromise laboratory safety, infection prevention, sample integrity, regulatory compliance or research quality.
- Items designated for single use shall not be reused contrary to safety requirements, validated procedures or manufacturer instructions.
- Clinical, biomedical, chemical, radioactive and other regulated waste shall be handled under the relevant specific procedures.

9.6 Cleaning and Maintenance

- Cleaning and maintenance services should prioritize durable tools, reusable cleaning materials and refill or bulk-dispensing systems where compatible with hygiene and chemical-safety requirements.
- Disposable materials required for infection control, contamination prevention or validated safety needs may continue to be used.
- Service supervisors should review avoidable consumption and communicate improvement opportunities to the coordinating unit.

9.7 Water Bottles, Bags and Personal Reusables

- Members of the University community should be encouraged to carry reusable water bottles, cups, bags and food containers where appropriate.
- The University may provide or promote accessible drinking-water refill points, reusable serviceware and awareness campaigns.
- Reusable alternatives should be practical, affordable, accessible and supported by suitable cleaning or refill infrastructure.

10. Essential Exceptions

Disposable items may be used where necessary for infection prevention, clinical care, laboratory safety, validated research procedures, disability-related or other accessibility needs, emergency response, legal or regulatory compliance, or demonstrable operational circumstances where a suitable reusable alternative is unavailable.

Recurring exceptions should be documented by the responsible unit, including the item, justification, responsible manager and opportunities for safe reduction. Exceptions should be reviewed at least annually. Immediate health, safety, accessibility and patient-care needs take precedence over reduction requirements.

11. Suppliers, Contractors and Outsourced Services

- Suppliers, campus vendors, caterers, contractors and outsourced service providers shall comply with relevant Policy requirements applicable to their activities.
- Contract managers shall communicate the Policy during procurement and contracting and include appropriate requirements in new or renewed contracts.
- Where practicable, suppliers should provide information on packaging, reusable options and quantities of priority disposable items supplied or consumed.
- Contract managers and responsible departments shall review compliance and request corrective action where necessary.
- Requirements apply to activities on University premises and services delivered on behalf of VMRF (DU) where the University controls the purchasing or service arrangement.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

- University Administration / competent authority: Approve the Policy, designate the coordinating office and provide appropriate resources.
- Designated Sustainability / Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) unit: Coordinate implementation, issue guidance, consolidate annual data, monitor progress and recommend improvements.
- Procurement and Stores: Incorporate disposable-item reduction into purchasing specifications, supplier arrangements and relevant records.
- Facilities and service managers: Support reusable systems, suitable cleaning and storage arrangements, refill facilities and appropriate waste collection.

- Heads of departments, colleges, hospitals, laboratories and centres: Implement the Policy, identify local reduction opportunities, maintain records and review exceptions.
- Event organizers: Plan events to minimize disposables and communicate requirements to caterers and service providers.
- Contract managers and vendors: Follow contractual requirements and provide requested usage or purchase information.
- Faculty, staff, students and other waste generators: Avoid unnecessary disposable items, use reusable alternatives where appropriate and comply with safety requirements.

13. Training and Awareness

VMRF (DU) shall promote awareness of responsible consumption, reusable alternatives, packaging reduction and proper waste segregation through induction, signage, digital communication, workshops, campus campaigns and student activities. Relevant staff, event organizers, housekeeping teams, caterers and service providers shall receive guidance appropriate to their responsibilities. Departments may recognize effective initiatives and share practical examples across the University.

14. Monitoring, Records and Reporting

The designated coordinating unit shall maintain annual records for priority disposable-item categories using procurement records, supplier information, departmental returns and waste audits where available.

- Quantity of priority disposable items purchased or consumed by category.
- Expenditure on priority disposable items.
- Change in consumption compared with a documented baseline.
- Number or proportion of departments adopting reusable or refillable initiatives.
- Proportion of relevant cafeteria, catering, office and event services using reusable items where data are available.
- Quantity or weight of disposable-item waste generated, where measurable.
- Compliance of relevant supplier and catering contracts.
- Recurring exceptions, training activities and corrective actions.

A baseline shall be established using the earliest sufficiently complete and reliable reporting period. The coordinating unit should propose measurable annual reduction targets for approval by the competent authority. Targets should reflect baseline data, operational feasibility, safety

and service requirements; this draft does not prescribe a numerical target. Where data permit, progress should be reported both in absolute quantities and relative to activity levels, such as meals served or event attendance. Annual reports should state the reporting period, data sources, limitations, progress and planned actions.

15. Compliance and Corrective Action

All covered persons and service providers are expected to comply with this Policy and applicable law. Managers shall address non-compliance through documented corrective actions, such as purchasing changes, revised service arrangements, staff guidance and supplier follow-up. Repeated non-compliance may be addressed under applicable University procedures or contractual remedies. Corrective action shall take account of approved health, safety, accessibility and operational exceptions.

16. Review and Amendment

The policy owner shall review this Policy annually and whenever significant legal, operational or technical changes require revision. Reviews shall consider consumption records, progress against targets, supplier performance, available reusable systems, safety requirements and feedback from the University community. The approved version shall record the actual approval, effective and review dates.

17. Related Policies and Legal Framework

- Applicable Indian environmental and waste-management legislation, including the Plastic Waste Management Rules and amendments in force.
- VMRF (DU) Policy on Waste Disposal – Landfill.
- University procedures for hazardous waste, biomedical waste, e-waste, laboratory safety, infection prevention and sustainable procurement, as applicable.
- Applicable food-safety, accessibility, occupational health and safety, and local-authority requirements.

Regulatory note: VMRF (DU)’s designated compliance/legal team should verify current official requirements before approval. The Government of India’s 12 December 2022 release describes identified single-use plastic items prohibited under the Plastic Waste Management Rules as amended at that time; the current legal text and subsequent amendments should be checked before implementation.

Annexure I — Disposable-Item Reduction Action Register

Date / period	Department / service	Item category	Reduction or reuse action	Responsible person	Status / evidence