



**Ruskin College**  
Oxford

## **PROFESSIONAL CODE OF STANDARDS FOR STAFF**

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## **RUSKIN COLLEGE**

### **PROFESSIONAL CODE OF STANDARDS FOR STAFF**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Professional Code of Standards for Staff is to clarify the nature of professional conduct and behaviour required by all staff, as defined by the College.
- 1.2 The Code has been developed to ensure that there are appropriate standards for the way in which the College delivers its services. During employment with the College, employees are expected to act in the best interests of the College at all times. Employees are also obliged to comply with the terms and conditions set out in their individual contracts of employment and to avoid conduct likely to bring the College into disrepute, such examples of misconduct are contained in the College Disciplinary Procedure. A breach of the Code may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 1.3 The determining principles underlying this code are is the College's vision and mission.

#### **Our Vision:**

A Society where everyone has access to quality education regardless of their background, and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

#### **Our Mission:**

To provide the best level of education and inclusion opportunities to adults - particularly those who may be excluded or disadvantaged - and to transform the individuals concerned along with the communities, groups and societies from which they came

**Students First** - providing inspirational teaching and learning opportunities

**Respect** - valuing everyone, all the time

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** - creating a supportive environment

**Excellence** - setting high expectations

**Pride, Celebration and Loyalty** - positive attitudes towards studying and working

- 1.4 It is important that all employees are aware of the standards of conduct expected of them. If employees are unsure, they should seek guidance from their manager or contact the Human Resources Department.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 The code applies to all employees, volunteers, agency staff and those who are engaged for a contract of service with the College.

This code has no contractual status and its contents may be changed at any time.

## 3. PUBLIC CONFIDENCE

- 3.1 The College is a publicly funded institution. This requires of employees high levels of accountability, probity and service. Employees should demonstrate the College values and act honestly, diligently and in good faith in its interests. They should ensure at all times that their conduct is not influenced by personal gain and is above suspicion of improper motives.
- 3.2 The College expects all employees to conduct themselves in a reasonable manner; to follow College policies; comply with reasonable instructions from their managers; to work flexibly, effectively and to the best of their ability; abide by the terms and conditions of their employment; fulfil the requirements of their job specification and generally maintain the highest professional standards.
- 3.3 Employees who have public funds entrusted to them must use them responsibly and lawfully.
- 3.4 The public expect conduct of the highest standards from our employees and public confidence would be shaken should the least suspicion arise that any employee might be influenced by improper motives.

#### **4. PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

- 4.1 The College expects staff to abide by professional occupational standards whereby there is an expectation for the minimum levels of behaviour and professional conduct required from all staff.

#### **5. EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

- 5.1 Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals.

- 5.2 Within the workplace, all employees should show mutual respect and their language and behaviour should be conducive to a productive and harmonious work environment in which all employees have the right to be treated with fairness and equity.

#### **6. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND PERSONAL CONDUCT - DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

- 6.1 Employees should maintain standards of courtesy, fairness, general behaviour and language that demonstrate dignity and respect for their students, colleagues and the public they serve. They must also act as a positive role model to students and as a representative of the College. In both private and public life, employees must be careful to avoid becoming engaged in any activities that may bring the College into disrepute.

- 6.2 All employees are expected to comply with the College's Equality and Diversity policy and not discriminate against any person who possess one or more of the protected characteristics. Unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, harassment or intimidation will not be tolerated. This includes physical and verbal abuse and use of inappropriate language or unprofessional behaviour with colleagues, students and members of the public.

- 6.3 All employees must behave in a polite, respectful and helpful manner towards their colleagues, students and members of the public. In doing this, employees are required to perform their duties with skill, honesty, care and diligence using authority in a fair and equitable manner.

#### **7. GIFTS, HOSPITALITY, ENTERTAINING AND INDUCEMENTS**

- 7.1 The College is publicly funded and, therefore, the standards required in public services need to be maintained. Employees must consider the implied reasoning for the provision of gifts or hospitality by suppliers and consider the circumstances in which offers are made and to be aware that they may be regarded as owing a favour in return.

7.2 Members of staff should not normally accept any gifts other than items of very small intrinsic value (e.g. business diaries, calendars, telephone pads etc.), rewards or hospitality (or have them given to members of their families) from any organisation or individual with whom they have contact in the course of their work that would cause them to reach a position whereby they might be, or might be deemed by others to have been, influenced in making a business decision as a consequence of accepting such hospitality.

7.3 If there is any doubt, what is and what is not acceptable in terms of gifts or hospitality, the offer should be declined or advice sought from the HR Manager.

## **8. FINANCIAL PROBITY**

8.1 The College has a responsibility for prudent stewardship of Public money, and, consequently, all staff are required to adhere to its Financial Regulations (which can be viewed on the shared drive). All staff are responsible for ensuring they understand and adhere to the Financial Regulations and should be aware that a breach may lead to disciplinary action. In particular, the misappropriation of monies, including fraudulent submission of overtime or expenses claims will be regarded as gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

8.2 A potential conflict of interest may arise when an employee has a financial interest in a company or is in a position to influence contracts for business between a third party and the College.

8.3 In many cases, only the employee will be aware of the potential for conflict of interest. Therefore, the onus is on that person to inform their line manager in writing if a potential or actual conflict of interest arises. The line manager will then discuss the situation with an appropriate Senior Manager.

8.4 Failure to disclose a potential or actual conflict of interest may render a financial decision to be null and void and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against any employee involved.

## **9. REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

9.1 Employees must declare in writing to the Finance Director any financial interest or dealings they, any person living with them or any close member of their family may have in any business or contract which may have a business relationship with the College. Should an employee wish to become so involved in any such business they must first receive the permission of the Principal.

## **10. CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION**

- 10.1 Employees will from time to time receive College information of a confidential nature. Any processing or disclosure of confidential information must be for legitimate College reasons and must comply with the College Data Protection Policy a copy of which can be found on the shared drive.

## **11. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING PROCEDURE (WHISTLEBLOWING)**

- 11.1 The College is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and expects employees who have serious concerns about any aspect of the College's work to come forward and voice these concerns, using the Public Interest Disclosure Procedure (Whistleblowing) if appropriate.
- 11.2 Employees are asked to ensure that public interest and assets are protected by reporting immediately to their line manager, or alternative contacts as named in the Procedure, any concerns about dishonesty or impropriety which they suspect has occurred or is likely to occur.
- 11.3 Employees must assist in any investigation or hearing into suspected misconduct.

## **12. HEALTH & SAFETY**

- 12.1 The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employees while they are at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others. Consequently, employees are legally bound to comply with the College's Health & Safety Policy and any safety rules and instructions set by the College.

## **13. ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND OTHER SUBSTANCE MISUSE**

- 13.1 The College wishes to promote the health and well-being of employees and minimise problems at work arising from the effects of alcohol, drugs (whether prescribed or not) and solvents, etc.
- 13.2 At all College events whether student, celebratory or conference based, staff may only, in exceptional circumstances, consume alcohol in moderation after gaining permission from a senior manager. The College will not accept liability for any accidents that may occur as a result of misuse of alcohol.
- 13.3 All staff must ensure that when reporting for work they are not under the influence of alcohol or any other substance which may impair their ability to undertake the full range of duties.

- 13.4 Staff operating machinery/equipment may not under any circumstances consume alcohol during working hours.
- 13.5 Handling illegal substances on the College's premises will be treated as gross misconduct under the College's Disciplinary Procedure. This includes buying, selling, holding and taking such substances.
- 13.6 Employees are encouraged to seek help from their line manager or the HR Manager as soon as they believe they have a problem. Any such help or onward referral will be handled confidentially.
- 13.7 Employees taking prescribed drugs are required to advise their manager if any such drugs being taken are likely to have an effect on their ability to drive, to use equipment, if such tasks are required by their employment with the College.

#### **14. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS**

- 14.1 The College requires an employee to inform the HR Manager if they are convicted of, or charged with a criminal offence. Minor road traffic offences must also be reported if the employee uses their vehicle for work purposes. If any member of staff is in any doubt about whether or not to report an offence, they are advised to seek advice from the HR Manager.
- 14.2 Careful consideration will be taken of the offence and the surrounding circumstances. Disciplinary investigation may be taken (and the resulting decision will depend on whether the nature of the offence) if it brings the College into disrepute or undermines the ability of the individual to perform their duties effectively.

#### **15. IDENTITY CARDS**

All staff are required to wear their ID card so that individuals can clearly be identified as being a member of College staff. This will also help the College to ensure a safe learner environment and will allow the College to challenge anyone we do not recognise as a member of the College or as a visitor.

#### **16. EMAIL AND INTERNET USAGE**

- 16.1 The College provides email accounts and internet access to staff to help them perform their duties. Access during working hours should be limited to matters relating to work, rather than for social and private purposes, any use outside of working hours, such as at lunchtimes, must still adhere to college rules and procedures relating to internet usage. Inappropriate use of these facilities may be considered a disciplinary matter.
- 16.2 Employees are asked to avoid inflammatory language in emails and to check the accuracy of any emails being sent outside the College.

Employees should also pay particular attention in responding to staff emails when using the 'Reply to all' facility, and whether the content of the response is appropriate and relevant for all to be copied in. The 'copying in' of inappropriate people to emails can be seen as inflammatory and bullying behaviour, it can also be time consuming for the recipients, please consider this when using the college e-mail system.

- 16.3 For guidance on the use of email and internet facilities, please see the I.T Regulations.

## **17. MEMBERSHIP OF OUTSIDE BODIES (SOCIETIES, COMMITTEES ETC.)**

- 17.1 The College encourages membership of societies and professional bodies. However, should an employee find that through acting in an official capacity they may be influenced by a membership or association, they should report the conflict of interests to their manager.

- 17.2 Membership of certain committees (e.g. those holding charitable status) could lead to possible legal liabilities. Therefore, employees are not considered to be representing the College on outside bodies or committees unless specific permission is given in writing by the HR Manager. The College will not accept liability for the actions of employees serving as members of such committees or bodies unless this permission is granted.

## **18. FIDELITY**

- 18.1 In addition to the express terms, employees have common law duties implied in their contracts of employment. These duties require the employee to obey lawful and reasonable instructions, serve the employer personally and faithfully, exercise reasonable care and skill in carrying out their work, abide by the law as established by Parliament and the Courts and not to disclose confidential information after the employment ends. Serious breaches of these terms could, if proven, lead to disciplinary or legal action being taken against the employee.

- 18.2 Employees who are required to attend a court of law must immediately inform the Principal.

## **19. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

- 19.1 Employees should ensure that any personal relationships with a member of the Governing Executive, colleagues, or members of the public are conducted in such a way that no suspicion of improper influence or lack of impartiality could arise in their work.



19.2 Employees must not be involved in College matters relating to appointment, promotion, pay, discipline or grievance where the person is a relative, partner or personal friend. Should such a situation arise they must advise the HR Manager.

## 20. SOCIAL MEDIA

20.1 The College encourages the positive use of social media as part of the educational process. Social media is used by many people, particularly students to communicate with their peers and the public. Students may wish to form personal relationships with employees, however to ensure professional boundaries are maintained, employees **must**:

- Not accept and/or invite the following individuals to be 'friends' on personal social media accounts or other online services:
  - current students/college users
  - vulnerable ex-students/college users
- Think carefully about how and what activities are carried out on social media websites.
- Be transparent and honest. The College will not tolerate employees making false representations. If employees express personal views, it should be made clear that the views do not represent or reflect the views of the College.
- Only use the College email address to communicate with students
- Exercise discretion and caution if they have existing personal/social media connections with students on sites such as Facebook if a connection/friend becomes a student
- Be aware of their privacy settings at all times when using such sites e.g. Facebook and/or dating sites
- Think carefully when disclosing the name of the college as the employer in personal details on sites such as dating apps or other social media.
- Follow the guidance given in the Social Media Policy and report to a Senior Manager any inappropriate approach by a student via social media.

## OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

- I.T. Regulations