



# Ruskin College Oxford

## HR STRATEGY

**Created:** July 2019

**Approved:** Senior Leadership Team

**Last Reviewed:** July 2019

**Responsibility for Review:** HR and Senior Leadership Team

**Date of Next Review:** July 2022

## **Introduction**

Ruskin College has been transforming lives for 120 years, giving adults the opportunity to learn and to grow, regardless of background and circumstances. Set up in 1899 as a workers' college striving for a fairer society, today we offer university programmes, adult courses and apprenticeships with a social purpose.

We offer residential adult learning to people of all ages and backgrounds and for many of our adult learners, financial, personal or social obstacles have made it impossible for them to fulfil educational potential earlier in their lives.

We are no ordinary college; by transforming the lives of adults who deserve a second chance in education, we know that they will make their communities better places too. Everything we do has a social purpose and we take pride in our continued activism in search of a fairer society. It is for this reason that our staff are also of significant importance to us supporting our students throughout their time with us to ensure a successful outcome.

We have been supported in delivering our aims and achieving our success and that of our students by the creativity, resourcefulness, commitment and enthusiasm of our staff; these are qualities we value highly. We have developed our HR strategy in recognition of these qualities and set out below the approach we take to ensure our staff enjoy working here and excel in their chosen field of work. This is how we ensure our students achieve.

## **Our Approach to our People and our Human Resource Activities**

In striving to achieve our standards, performance levels, mission, values and objectives, we aim to support all our staff by using employment procedures that advocate mutual respect, exchange of information, awareness of safeguarding, health, safety and duty of care, comparable levels of reward and benefit and a continuous raising of professional standards to ensure an outstanding learner experience.

This means that we will provide interesting work, in a pleasant and safe environment at an equitable rate of pay. In return each employee will be expected to carry out their work activities in an appropriate manner with due care and attention, in an honest and trustworthy way.

Our commitment to our staff is demonstrated in the opportunities staff have for professional development and by the setting out known performance standards, values and expected behaviours. Our Human Resources procedures underpin this approach to employment, development and staffing.

## **Our Vision, Mission and Values**

Our vision is a society where everyone has access to quality education regardless of their background, and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

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

Our values are:

- **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

Our staff are committed to ensuring our students achieve their best and are committed to our values which support the achievement of our students.

## **Policies and Procedures**

Our HR policies and procedures are available on the College website and are therefore accessible to all staff as required. We update our policies and procedures regularly and consult on changes via staff groups and with our recognised union. The list of our policies is shown in Appendix 1.

## **Recruitment**

It is vitally important that we engage the right type of individuals who can deliver the highest level of teaching to our learners and provide high quality management and administrative support to that teaching function. We aim to attract and retain high quality staff who accept responsibility for their actions and help to achieve our objectives; staff who value their own professional development and actively seek opportunities to improve themselves, colleagues and learners.

Recruiting people who do not 'fit' the College leads to increased costs, lowers staff morale and reduces our teaching standards; therefore a systematic approach to recruitment and selection which finds the right 'fit' for our organisation is our objective. We aim to take a fair approach that gives due consideration to the various skills, experiences and knowledge of our local community and picks the best from our recruitment pool.

## **Recruitment Vetting**

We have a duty of care to our learners and indeed to all colleagues to provide a safe and secure working environment. In line with statutory regulations and good practice we carry out vetting procedures to ensure that our staff meet our standards, are suitably qualified, competent, and professional, cleared to work with our learners and have a positive work history which will complement colleagues and help us achieve our mission.

## **Promotion and Transfer**

Appropriate consideration and assessment will be given to all staff who apply for promotion or transfer. All internal applicants will be tested and interviewed in the same way that external applicants are to ensure that appointments are made on merit and suitability for post. All transfers and promotions will seek to ensure the achievement of best advantage to the College and its learners.

## **Pay and Reward**

The College aims to reward staff fairly for the work they do and negotiates and consults with our recognised trades union and staff groups on a regular basis. The College currently pays at the

average rate for the Education sector and reviews salaries against market forces and College performance against funding from time to time.

## **Induction**

We believe that whatever role a new employee undertakes, they will be playing an essential part in contributing towards providing an outstanding educational environment for our learners. Induction plays a significant part in ensuring that new staff are given the right information and welcomed to the College in the appropriate way in order that they may start to contribute straightaway. We aim to ensure the approach to induction supports College priorities and meets the requirements of training and development.

Induction provides essential information which will help new staff settle into the College and raise awareness of College strategic objectives, policies, procedures, resources, key contacts and interaction with colleagues. We invite all new staff to an induction event as soon as possible and in any case at the beginning of each term.

## **Probationary Assessment**

The probationary period of employment is an important time for both new staff and the College to 'try out' their employment. It is vital that staff are given sufficient support, information, training and guidance to be able to do so. If, however, the 'trial' period is unfortunately not satisfactory then measures are in place to ensure that the employee and the College do not suffer unnecessarily as a result of a mismatch at recruitment.

## **Professional Development**

The College is committed to actively promoting the continuous professional development of its entire staff. Our overall aim is to promote the development of staff on a continuing basis to ensure their performance reaches the highest standards achievable. Staff development consists of formal and informal learning experiences throughout the employment journey at the College.

## **Employee Involvement and Communication**

We welcome employee opinion and ideas are cultivated as part of an ongoing exchange of information; this encourages respect, open communication and fosters an environment which can act as a platform for delivery of our mission.

At the beginning of each term the Principal holds an 'all staff briefing' and staff are able to raise issues and comment upon matters of interest. Updates on current matters are regularly circulated to staff and the Principal operates an 'open door' policy where any employee can meet with him to share information and give feedback.

## **Wellbeing**

We aim to ensure that our staff remain motivated, engaged and healthy during their work at the College and during any challenging times both at work and in their personal life. Whilst everyone in work has a duty to safeguard and nurture personal wellbeing we provide support mechanisms, leisure activities, counselling, a room for reflection and work place assessments through our occupational health provider to contribute to employee wellbeing. This helps to balance performance, stresses and pressure against an enriched experience and development for staff and our learners.

## **Dignity at Work**

The College strives to ensure that all staff are equally valued and everyone is treated with respect. Our procedures give clear guidance on all issues relating to personal and professional conduct, so that every member of staff understands what is expected of them and how they should interact with colleagues, learners and visitors.

We promote a pleasant working environment that supports our staff positively. All staff are expected to maintain a respectful and professional standard of interaction with colleagues to ensure the College is able to fulfil its commitment to creating a working environment which is 'fit for purpose'.

## **Employee Benefits**

The College offers a range of benefits which help to attract and retain high calibre staff. We recognise that whilst staff come to work to get paid it is also beneficial to ensure that staff enjoy a period of leave away from work, that they maintain their health and interest in work and have high morale during each academic year.

The College is fortunate to be set in the village of Old Headington in grounds that are outstanding and staff are free to use the gardens and open areas during breaks and at other times.

We offer generous holiday entitlement, a pension scheme, and other benefits such as a cycle to work scheme, childcare vouchers, free car parking, eye tests vouchers, management and academic training, an on-site restaurant, opportunities to study and use of the library and the chance to be part of a unique globally respected institution.

## **Employee Relations Issues**

We believe that disciplinary action should be viewed as a constructive means of bringing performance shortfalls to the attention of relevant staff. This means that shortfalls can be remedied rather than simply implementing sanctions as a punitive measure. It is essential that discipline is carried out in a way that is reasonable, understood and fair.

Where a breach of rules, conditions of employment, common law, normally accepted standards of behaviour or failure to maintain normal standards of performance occurs, the College has a duty and responsibility to apply the appropriate procedure and will do so for the good of the College, its learners and all staff. We aim to resolve staff grievances fairly and as quickly as possible.

## **TU Relations**

As a College that is recognised for its links to TU and the labour movement, we have a number of trades unions with which we work with on a regularly basis. We currently recognise one union for consultation purposes and enter into discussions with representatives on a termly basis in the form of a Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

We welcome the experience and support that trades unions can offer to the workplace and value the feedback that they are able to provide on current issues. We also recognise the support that representatives give to staff during employee relations processes and therefore assist us in achieving our statutory duty.

## **Performance**

Performance appraisals are carried out with all staff to ensure that an appropriate assessment of performance and potential development and training needs are known.

Appraisals provide a valuable opportunity for managers and staff to meet to discuss ideas, expectations and progress. These sessions also enable the College to gauge those suitable for promotion, specialist training, improve quality of work and ensure continued open and direct communication.

Where it is necessary to improve performance staff will be coached, supported and offered developmental training to ensure they reach the required standard to ensure our learners are given the best teaching and support possible.

## **Termination of Employment**

In all circumstances where termination of employment is necessary, a fair and reasonable approach will be used. All dealings with ex-staff in terms of references, queries, grievances, etc. will be as impartial as possible without jeopardising the College position or achievement of our mission.

## **Review of this Strategy and HR Policy**

This HR Strategy and all HR related policies will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) regularly. It will also be reviewed against legislation and best practice on an annual basis by the HR Manager. It will remain effective until July 2022.

Any questions or concerns relating to this strategy should be referred to the HR Manager.

## Appendix 1

<b>HR Policies and Procedures</b>	
<b>Procedure Title</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>
<b>Pre-Employment Screening Policy</b>	<b>April 2021</b>
<b>Equality and Diversity Policy</b>	<b>November 2019</b>
<b>IT Regulations</b>	<b>February 2020</b>
<b>Probation Procedure</b>	<b>January 2020</b>
<b>Health and Safety Policy</b>	<b>November 2019</b>
<b>Holiday Guidelines</b>	<b>September 2018</b>
<b>Disciplinary Procedure</b>	<b>April 2020</b>
<b>Grievance Procedure</b>	<b>July 2020</b>
<b>Compassionate and Special Leave policy</b>	<b>July 2022</b>
<b>Capability Policy and Procedure</b>	<b>July 2019</b>
<b>Senior Post Holder Grievance Policy</b>	<b>May 2018</b>
<b>Professional Code of Standards for Staff</b>	<b>July 2020</b>
<b>Site Security Policy</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
<b>Single Equality Scheme</b>	<b>November 2019</b>
<b>Whistleblowing Policy</b>	<b>May 2020</b>
<b>Conflicts of Interest Policy and Procedure</b>	<b>March 2020</b>
<b>Safeguarding Policy</b>	<b>February 2020</b>