

Code of Conduct for Employees

PURPOSE

The standards outlined in this document are representative of the standards of personal and professional performance, behaviour and standards that are expected of the college's working community and are not intended as a complete listing of all the college's rules, regulations and standards.

Only through the observance of such standards can the college effectively and efficiently discharge its duties to students, apprentices, employers, colleagues and the wider community.

The relationship between the college and its employees is based upon mutual respect, trust and confidence. This code of conduct sets out some of the professional standards upon which this relationship is based.

Documents to be read in conjunction with this code:

- Safeguarding Procedure
- IT Acceptable Use Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Financial Regulations

SCOPE

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees of the college and anyone working within it on a voluntary or placement basis.

It is the responsibility of all members of the college's working community to familiarise themselves with, and adhere to, all of the college's rules, policies and procedures.

Failure to comply with the standards of performance and behaviour outlined in this document may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure. Such disciplinary action may include dismissal depending on the circumstances and where safeguarding issues arise potential referral to the DBS.

All employees will be made aware of the Code of Conduct and will sign to confirm their understanding and acceptance of the standards set out within it.

UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

All college staff must act within the law whilst undertaking their official duties. Staff must not undermine the college's values of Respect, Integrity, Collaboration, High Expectations and Responsibility.

Colleagues must have an understanding of, and always act within, the statutory frameworks (e.g., Keeping Children Safe in Education - KCSiE) which set out their professional duties and responsibilities. Where staff

are members of professional bodies, they must also comply with any standards of conduct which are set by that body.

Staff should always show respect for the rights and views of others and always put the interests of any student first. Staff must have proper and professional regards for the ethos, policies and practices of the college and maintain high standards in their own conduct, performance, attendance and punctuality. Where staff may struggle to meet college expectations, they should, in the first instance, discuss this with their line manager and where needed the college will consider the need for reasonable adjustment. Staff should ensure that personal beliefs are not expressed in ways which exploit students' vulnerability or might lead them to act inappropriately or to break the law or the policies and procedures of the college.

Staff are expected to provide the highest possible standard of conduct and service. Where staff are aware of any contraventions of this Code, illegality, misconduct or break of procedure they should notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the HR Team.

All staff have a responsibility to maintain public confidence in their ability to safeguard the welfare and best interest of students. Therefore, staff should be aware that their behaviour either in or outside of the workplace could compromise their employment position, resulting in the loss of trust and confidence in their ability to protect students, or bringing the college into disrepute. This includes an expectation that all staff conduct themselves appropriately at all times inside and outside of work which includes the requirement to take all reasonable steps to protect their own and other people's safety by following relevant government guidance.

Staff need to be aware of their position working with students in a college is a position of trust, and fully understand with this role the adult has a position of power or influence. It is vital for staff to understand this power; that the relationship cannot be one between equals. Therefore, all staff should understand that in their position they have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

All staff are expected to support the college to fully investigate any matters of concern, which includes working with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), social workers, children's social care, the police and other external agencies following any issues of concern or a referral.

The Code does not seek to address every possible circumstance, and simply because a particular action is not addressed within the Code, this does not condone that action by omission. Staff will always be required to exercise their professional judgement and act reasonably.

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR SAFEGUARDING – PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Staff must safeguard students' well-being, in accordance with statutory provision within the current version of KCSiE, the local Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures and the college's own procedures. All staff have a responsibility to demonstrate understanding of the procedures and take appropriate action and work professionally with other services accessed by the college as required.

From induction onwards, all staff must be fully aware of all the college policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and how to access them. In college the relevant documents are located on Staffnet.

Given their position of trust, all staff must ensure that they do not put themselves in any situation where their conduct or behaviour with any student could be misconstrued. Any allegations of inappropriate contact with students will be managed in line with the college procedures, this Code, and where appropriate, according to the College's Disciplinary Procedure.

If a student reports any safeguarding concerns regarding any member of staff, this must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Staff must not promise confidentiality to a student and always ensure that any actions are always in the best interests of a child.

All colleges should promote a culture of openness, trust and transparency. Where a member of staff has any safeguarding or other concern about the conduct or behaviour of another member of staff, the concerns must be reported immediately to the DSL. Concerns about the DSL should be referred to the Clerk of Corporation Board and potential failures in the colleges safeguarding regime through the Whistleblowing Policy or by directly contacting the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

All staff must be aware that it is a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 for anyone to engage in a sexual relationship or grooming for such a relationship with a child aged under 18 with whom they are in a position of trust. It is therefore vital that staff work within appropriate professional boundaries at all times with children and young people with whom they are in a position of trust. If staff are unsure about what action to take or how they should respond to a particular situation they must immediately contact the DSL. Any concerns about an inappropriate relationship between a member of staff and a student (irrespective of their age) will be fully investigated under the safeguarding procedures and where required, the Disciplinary Procedure for staff as a potential issue of gross misconduct.

Any concerns about employers where students are on work placement or placed as an apprentice should be reported to the DSL who will seek advice from the LADO.

Concerns that do not meet the harm threshold but may be considered lower-level concerns, even where these are no more than 'nagging doubt' concerns should be reported to the DSL and will be logged by the HR team. For further guidance please see the college's safeguarding procedure.

The college recognises that due to the age group of students they may have legitimate relationships to students (e.g., parent, friend, partner, and spouse). Such relationship should be logged with HR in the interests of protecting the individual from unfounded allegations.

RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTACT BETWEEN COLLEGE STAFF – THE PUBLIC, PARENTS AND STUDENTS

Guidance on Safer Working Practice is explicit that staff should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. This is important because:

- a) Such contact can blur the professional boundaries between the staff member and students.
- b) Such contact can compromise confidentiality.
- c) Such contact can place both student and the staff member in a position of vulnerability.
- d) Students may struggle to differentiate between the role of staff member and friend and therefore have expectations which the staff member cannot fulfil.

Staff should be extremely cautious when using social networking sites outside of work and avoid publishing, or allowing to be published, any material, including comments or images which could damage their professional reputation, the reputation of the college, and/or bring the college into disrepute. Where staff do choose to use social networking sites it is strongly recommended that profiles should be set as 'private' as possible and under no circumstances should staff allow access to students, their families and/or carers.

Staff should not give their personal details such as home/mobile phone number; home, email address, or details of web-based identities to students, and be professional at all times in accordance with the ethos of this code. If a student locates these by any other means and attempts to contact or correspond with a staff member, the employee should not respond and report this matter to the DSL immediately.

INFATUATIONS

All staff need to recognise that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. They should make every effort to ensure that their own behaviour cannot be brought into question, does not appear to encourage this and be aware that such infatuations may carry a risk of their words or actions being misinterpreted.

Any member of staff who receives a report, overhears something, or otherwise notices any sign, however small or seemingly insignificant, that a young person has become or may be becoming infatuated with either themselves or a colleague, should immediately report this to the DSL as appropriate. In this way appropriate early intervention can be taken which can prevent escalation and avoid hurt, embarrassment or distress for those concerned.

The DSL should give careful thought to those circumstances where the staff member, student and their parents/carers should be spoken to and should ensure a plan to manage the situation is put in place. This plan should respond sensitively to the student and staff member and maintain the dignity of all. This plan should involve all parties, be robust and regularly monitored and reviewed.

SUITABILITY TO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The college works in line with 'Keeping children safe in education – KCSIE' and this is updated on an annual basis.

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) CHECK

The College is committed to adhering to the DBS's Code of Practice.

Roles at the college are assessed in order to decide if a DBS disclosure or check is required and if it is, what level of disclosure is required. There will be instances when existing members of staff will also require a new DBS check or will need their DBS updating on an annual basis, at which point the college will advise staff to join the online update service.

DBS checks are undertaken to ensure that the college upholds its duty of care to protect vulnerable groups who access the college. Failure to co-operate with a reasonable request on the part of the college to obtain a DBS check may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

ATTENDANCE & TIMEKEEPING

Employee attendance at work is expected to be punctual. Instances of lateness should be explained by the employee concerned to their Line Manager, who will monitor the situation and take action as appropriate in accordance with the college's capability or disciplinary procedure.

It is the responsibility of management to approve any variations (including any short-term variations) to an individual's normal hours of work. Individuals should not vary their normal hours of work without prior management approval.

The college's absence management procedure outlines the standards that are expected of all employees and the procedures that should be followed during any period of absence. It also provides details of how the college will address and manage all issues related to employee absence.

ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Employees must not attend work under the influence of any substance, including alcohol, illegal drugs and/or solvents.

The college's drug abuse policy and procedure outlines the standards expected of all the college's working community in relation to drug and alcohol use and abuse and provides guidance on managing issues related to such use and abuse and the action that will be taken by the college in instances of non-compliance.

Employees who have been prescribed medication by a healthcare professional, must inform their Line Manager immediately if that medication has, or could have, an adverse effect on the employee's ability to carry out their duties.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The college recognises that all members of its community have the right to be treated with consideration, respect and dignity, and is committed to creating and maintaining a working environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, intimidation and victimisation.

To clarify, bullying and/or harassment is verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct which is unsolicited or unwelcome and which another individual considers violates their dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Instances of bullying and or harassment at work, or outside work if it has a bearing on the working relationship, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All instances of bullying and/or harassment will be managed through the anti-harassment, bullying and dignity at work procedure and the college's disciplinary procedure as appropriate.

Examples of bullying / harassing behaviour could include:

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by constant criticism.

Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is unwanted conduct which is related to one of the following: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and is therefore unlawful.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All members of the college's working community have a personal responsibility to protect and maintain the confidentiality of information. The disclosure of confidential information relating to the college and/or its students, apprentices, customers or employees is prohibited, except as authorised or required by the law or in accordance with an employee's duties under their contract of employment (including statements made between or to Trade Union Representatives) or when making a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act.

If employees are unsure as to whether they should disclose information which they consider to be, or might be, confidential, they should seek guidance from their Line Manager, TU Representative or duty head.

Full details of the covenants by which employees are bound in respect of confidentiality are outlined in their contracts of employment.

A breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee/s responsible in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

Any confidential data taken off-site must be securely stored.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the college's data protection policy and data protection act factsheet.

COMPANY VEHICLES AND DRIVING IN PURSUIT OF COLLEGE ACTIVITY

The college is committed to ensuring that employees are kept as safe as possible whilst undertaking any task on behalf of the college, including driving during the course of work or in pursuit of college business or activities.

There may also be occasions on which employees are required to either drive a company vehicle or their own vehicle in pursuit of college business or activities. Individuals should refer to the Health and Safety Manual for more detailed information.

POLICE ENQUIRIES OF CURRENT EMPLOYEES

As per your contract of employment, all employees have an obligation to inform the college if they are the subject of criminal investigations, charge, caution, warning or conviction. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. However, an employee will not face disciplinary action solely because they are the subject of criminal investigations, charge, caution, warning or conviction. The question that the college needs to address in such cases is whether the conduct warrants disciplinary action because of its effect on the employee's ability or suitability to undertake their job role and/or on the reputation of the college. In such circumstances, the facts of the matter should be investigated and if disciplinary action is considered appropriate, the procedure outlined in this document should be followed. The college will not usually wait for the outcome of any prosecution before deciding what action, if any, to take.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COLLEAGUES

If you perceive that a personal relationship you have with a colleague may give rise to a professional conflict/compromise, you should bring this to the attention of your Line Manager or their Manager. This applies equally to relationships that existed prior to employment and to relationships that develop whilst at college. Such disclosures must be treated with respect, dignity and in confidence, however it may be necessary for the Line Manager to discuss with their Line Manager or Human Resources, but this will be on a strictly need-to-know basis and will be discussed with the employee in the first instance. The line manager will be responsible for making appropriate alternative arrangements where necessary to avoid any conflicts of interest.

In some cases, it may be necessary to consider moving an employee if it is perceived that there is a conflict of interest in order to protect both parties. Full discussions will take place with the individual.

Nepotism:

- Employees cannot be involved in the recruitment and selection process, when a **relative, partner, spouse or friend**, applies for a role at the college.
- Employees who are related, married or in a relationship, should not be involved in a supervisory/reporting relationship with one another. Where this is unavoidable, a risk assessment will be produced to avoid any conflict of interest/nepotism.

Staff – Client/service provider

If you perceive that a personal relationship you have with a client or service provider may give rise to a professional conflict/compromise, you should bring this to the attention of your line manager or their manager. Such disclosures must be treated with respect, dignity and in confidence.

If you are unsure about what action to take or how you should respond to any situation you must immediately contact your line manager or the designated safeguarding lead.

RECORDING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Employees must only take photographs/videos of students and/or their colleagues for college purposes, and the relevant consent form must have been completed in advance of the recording/photography taking place.

Any recordings or photography taken must be stored appropriately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Staff should not take images or videos of students using their personal devices.

DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

In order to uphold fairness and consistency, and to comply with college regulations (including but not limited to its financial regulations), members of the college's working community must disclose any interests and/or relationship(s) - whether direct or indirect - that they have with any person, college, company or other organisation involved with the college and/or its business and/or activities which may give rise to conflict / compromise.

STANDARDS OF DRESS

Your appearance should reflect a professional image.

You should dress appropriately and what you wear must not be offensive or revealing.

It must be suitable for the area in which you are working, and some roles require employees to wear items of protective clothing in the interests of health and safety. Such items should be worn at all times as required.

This includes always wearing the College's ID staff badge on the official College staff lanyard and ensuring that any visitors are signed in and out and also wearing the appropriate lanyard at all times. Any person on site without a lanyard should be challenged by a member of staff.

USE OF LANGUAGE

The college promotes a positive and welcoming culture, so it is important that you consider how your language and tone may come across and be viewed by others in conversations.

Appropriate and respectful language should be used at all times by both staff and students. This includes refraining from swearing or using obscene language. Employees should avoid using any threatening or abusive words, and refrain from banter or any unprofessional comments about another member of staff or student.

Everyone has a responsibility to challenge banter and bad language when you hear it. Hostile, sexual connotation or innuendo or bullying language is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The College is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for its employees and learners alike.

All employees have an individual responsibility to uphold and apply in practice the college's Equality and Diversity statement of intent and to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with that document and with relevant legislation. Discrimination and prejudice will not be tolerated by the college and such conduct may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

BRIBERY ACT 2010

The college values its reputation for ethical behaviour and for financial probity and reliability. It recognises that over and above the commission of any crime, any involvement in bribery will reflect adversely on its image and reputation. Its aim, therefore, is to limit the college's exposure to bribery by:

- Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy.
- Encouraging staff to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately.
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting Police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution.
- Taking firm and clear action against any individual (s) involved in bribery.

The college prohibits the offering, the giving, the solicitation or the acceptance of any bribe, whether cash or other inducement to or from any person or company, wherever they are situated and whether they are a public official or body or private person or company by any individual employee, board member, agent or other person or body acting on the college's behalf in order to gain any commercial, contractual or regulatory advantage for the college in a way which is unethical or in order to gain any personal advantage, pecuniary or otherwise, for the individual or anyone connected with the individual.

Individuals should discuss with their Line Manager if at any time they are in doubt as to whether a potential act constitutes bribery. If necessary, guidance can be sought from the Director of Finance.

Related policies and procedures are anti-fraud policy and fraud response plan, financial regulations, whistleblowing policy and risk management policy and procedure.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The college has established financial regulations which govern all activity associated with the college's approach to financial management and control. All employees have an individual responsibility to uphold and apply in practice these regulations and any breach of them will be addressed in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Employees must not accept any gifts, fees or inducements for any service connected with their employment (including, for the avoidance of doubt, any such gifts received from learners), with the exception of minor gifts, inexpensive marketing materials and cards.

Individuals should inform their Line Manager if they are offered any substantial gifts (over the value of £25) or if they require further clarification.

Accepting gifts from learners

Staff should not encourage learners giving them gifts, however, learners, will from time to time bring gifts in for staff members as a thank you. Small gifts such as a box of chocolates can be accepted particularly if given as a 'group present', the student(s) should be thanked but it should be made clear that you will log the gift with your line manager. Larger more personal gifts (e.g., jewellery) should be politely declined. Under no circumstances should staff members purchase individual gifts for learners. The college operates a reward system for learners, and this should be used by staff to reward positive behaviour and effort. For more information about reward structures within teams please check with your head of department.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The college is committed to promoting and implementing all relevant health and safety legislation and recognises that the highest priority must be given to safe methods of work at all times.

Employees must familiarise themselves with the college's Health and Safety Policy and Health and Safety Manual and must ensure that all health and safety standards are met in accordance with that policy.

Employees must not, under any circumstances, behave in a way which could endanger their own health and safety or the health and safety of others.

Any breach of the college's health and safety rules or regulations or its Health and Safety Policy will be viewed extremely seriously by the college and may constitute gross misconduct in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

Anyone suspected of, or caught, causing deliberate damage to college property, hired plant or third-party property within the confines of college and/or client premises will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS OR OTHER MEDIA/SOCIAL MEDIA

Statements to the press or other media on any aspects of the college's business and/or activities must not be made without prior reference to the Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement and Student Experience or Communications Manager. Although this does not apply to Trade Union Representatives acting in a Trade Union capacity. The college and trade unions would inform each other on press statements affecting each other's business.

The reasons for this will no doubt be appreciated by employees, as often the Executive team is more aware than staff of the college's opinion on controversial matters and can therefore ensure that an appropriate statement is made.

Any statement made in contravention of this rule may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the employee/s concerned in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

THEFT

Anyone who is suspected of or caught stealing the property or assets of the college, its employees or clients will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure. The Police may be notified.

USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

All employees have an individual responsibility to uphold and apply in practice the college's e-mail and internet policy. Breaches of the e-mail and internet policy will be addressed in accordance with the college's disciplinary procedure.

All employees must familiarise themselves with the college's email etiquette guidance, email and internet policy; ICT and information security policy; mobile computing policy and social media policy.

Under no circumstances should staff be accessing websites deemed to be unsuitable in an educational setting whether this be on their own personal equipment or the college's equipment. All staff should be aware and understand that this will raise serious concerns about the suitability of the adult to continue working with children. Staff should be aware of the college's IT acceptable use policy.

YOUR BEHAVIOUR

You should adopt high standards of personal conduct at all times:

Never act in a way that can be perceived as threatening to colleagues or learners.

Accessing or bringing images of pornography or other inappropriate content on site, is never acceptable, regardless of format. Storing or disseminating such material on site sharing links to such material via college equipment/services is forbidden and if proven, is likely to lead to the person being dismissed from the college.

SMOKING

Smoking is **not** permitted on any of the college's sites, with the exception of Station Park and Chesterfield Road.

It is the responsibility of all staff and learners to ensure that people are not smoking/vaping on campus, including during emergency evacuations. The use of electronic cigarettes is not permitted on site.

Staff and students should be asked to move off campus or to designated smoking areas if they wish to carry on smoking. If they refuse to do this disciplinary action will be taken against them.

All staff are encouraged to challenge smokers particularly at the beginning of each term to raise awareness of no smoking and the Duty Head may be called to enforce the No Smoking Policy.

Staff should be aware of setting a good example to learners and acting as a positive role model. Staff should therefore avoid smoking alongside students and in areas and at times when there is likely to be a high concentration of learners.

GUIDANCE NOTES

No code of conduct can hope to spell out the appropriate behaviour for every situation, nor should it seek to do so. The college relies on each member of staff to make a judgement of what is right and good practice in any particular situation.

If you are unsure determining what action is appropriate in any given situation it is recommended that you seek clarification from your Line Manager.

An individual who is not satisfied with an outcome arising from a decision reached in relation to their employment has the right to appeal using the stages outlined in the grievance procedure.