

# **Employee Code of Conduct**

# Employee Code of Conduct



## 1. Statement

This Code of Conduct is designed to provide employees with guidance on the professional standards of behaviour expected by everyone working at the West Herts College Group.

The Code of Conduct applies to all employees, casual workers, contractors and agency workers regardless of their position, role or responsibilities.

The information included is not exhaustive and the College places an obligation on all employees to use their professional judgement and act in the best interests of the students and the College at all times. If an employee is unsure about any aspects regarding conduct, they should seek assistance from their line manager or the Human Resources team.

The College values academic freedom and is committed to promoting and positively encouraging free debate, enquiry and, indeed, protest. This means that it tolerates a wide range of views, political as well as academic, even when they are unpopular, controversial, or provocative. The College will, however, always take firm and decisive action against anyone demonstrating any form of hate crime, including anti-Semitism, Islamophobia.

The Employee Code of Conduct reflects College values, beliefs and ethical principles upon which it operates. Therefore, failure to comply with the Code of Conduct could result in disciplinary action, including dismissal.

The College Code of Conduct is not a contractual document and can be amended at any time by the College. Employees are expected to comply with both the provisions of this code and the College's policies and procedures, to create a harmonious, challenging and motivational working environment.

## 2. Guiding Principles

College employees are role models and in a unique position of influence and trust. Everyone working at the College has a duty to protect young people from discrimination and harm while maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

The behaviours modelled by everyone must set a good example to all students and the wider community and promote an aspirational culture.

All employees are expected to treat colleagues, students and external stakeholders with politeness, courtesy, dignity and respect at all times.

Employees should challenge any stigmatising of students, discrimination, bullying, harassment, intimidation and misuse of social media and avoid behaviour that might be misinterpreted by others.

### 3. Honesty and integrity

As an employee of a publicly funded institution, it is essential that you are seen to observe the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Particular vigilance must be exercised in relation to the following matters:

**Compliance with Financial Regulations** – employees are responsible for compliance with the College’s financial regulations and for the efficient use of any resources over which they have influence or control; and for managing any employees under their supervision to ensure that such regulations and procedures are followed

**Copyright** – all records, documents and other papers (including copies and summaries thereof) which pertain to the finance and administration of the College and which are made or acquired by employees in the course of their employment shall at all times be the property of the College

**Access to personal information** – there may be occasions when individuals, through their positions as members of committees, selectors/recruiters, line manager’s, tutors etc. become aware of confidential information, either about other individuals or in connection with the College’s academic/commercial activities. Individuals should be aware of the need to keep such matters confidential and to respect the appropriate College policies, presiding law and proper channels of communication for such information.

**Policy for dealing with suspected fraud and Public Interest Disclosure Procedure** - in the event that you become aware of or suspect any wrong doing, you have a duty to take action to disclose it directly to an appropriate manager or, if you feel it necessary, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Procedure (“whistle blowing”).

**Fees** – employees must declare to an appropriate member of the College Leadership Group any fee from another body for work related in any way to your College employment. In the event of a fee being offered or paid, you may be required to surrender this to the College

**Gifts** – gifts from suppliers or associates of the College that exceed £30 in value must be declared to the Director of Finance.

**Images** - Any photos taken of students for formal marketing purposes (prospectuses, print and digital advertising, corporate marketing) will require a completed consent form which gives the College clear consent from the student for specific use of the photos. Photos and videos are welcome to be submitted to the College Marketing Team for social media use and require verbal consent to be received from students. Employees are permitted to use mobile phones for this purpose, on the understanding at the point of sending to Marketing verbal consent is gained and the photos/videos are deleted from devices.

## 4. Health and safety

Everyone working at the College must adhere to the College's Health and Safety policy, procedure and guidance and must ensure that they take every action to keep themselves and others safe and well.

This includes taking immediate safety action in a potentially harmful situation (either at College or off-site) by complying with statutory and College guidelines.

## 5. Emails and the internet

Employees should ensure all emails are written in a professional manner and are suitable for any audience. Emails and other communications should be made to those that 'need to know' and during reasonable working hours.

It is inappropriate use of e-mail and the internet for employees to access, download or transmit any material, which might reasonably be considered obscene, abusive, sexist, racist or defamatory. Employees should be aware that such material might also be contained in jokes communicated via email or other mechanisms.

The College reserves the right to use the content of emails and other information in any disciplinary process.

## 6. Use of College equipment for non-work purposes

College equipment is the property of the College and should be used to assist work performance. Employees should, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in any communications sent or received using College equipment – whether of a business or personal nature.

Reasonable private use of the College equipment is permitted. Any private use must comply with College protocols and acceptable usage policies. The College may ask individuals to meet costs associated with excessive personal use.

## 7. Managing data and information

Legislation requires employees to collect, maintain and dispose of sensitive or personal data in a responsible manner.

In instances where employees have access to confidential information about students or their parents or carers, they must not reveal such information other than to colleagues who have a professional role in relation to the information.

Employees must not provide students with their personal email addresses or telephone numbers.

## 8. Access to information

Everyone has the right to request access to information that is held about them. Requests to view information held should be made to the Human Resources team.

## 9. Safeguarding students

All employees are required to attend Safeguarding and Prevent training on a routine basis.

Employees are required to share with their manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead any information, which gives rise to concern about the safety or welfare of a student. This includes any observed breaches to e-security.

Employees must take reasonable care of students under their supervision with the aim of ensuring their safety and welfare at all times.

Employees must never promise that they will not act on information they are told by a student.

## 10. Use of Social Media

When using social media employees must remain aware that online activity may be seen by students, parents and colleagues. Activity must be suitable for them to see and in keeping with the expectations included within the College's Employee Code of Conduct.

College information should not be shared on employee personal social media sites.

Employees using social networking websites in their private life should adhere to the following expectations:

- refrain from identifying themselves as working for the College, in a way which may bring the College into disrepute
- refrain from identifying other College employees, or students without their consent
- refrain from making any defamatory remarks about the College, its employees, students or conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the College
- refrain from disclosing personal data or information about the College, employees, or students, that could breach the Data Protection Act 2018, for example, posting photographs or images of students
- refrain from allowing students to access their personal social networking accounts. If employees are contacted by a student via their personal social media accounts, they should bring it to the attention of their line-managers
- refrain from making or accepting friend requests or following requests to or from students

An employee who notices any inappropriate online behaviour (or otherwise) by another employee must report it to the College's Human Resources team without delay

An employee who 'likes' or comments on something which is unacceptable, may themselves be subject to disciplinary action.

## 11. Staff Dress Code

The College aims to promote a professional image to students, parents and members of the public and set a professional example for students to follow. All employees should dress in a manner appropriate to their role and the health and safety and hygiene requirements related to the activities they are involved in.

As a general guideline, clothing must be smart/casual, in good repair and not include any inappropriate slogans. Footwear should be smart, presentable and secure on the feet.

Jewellery must not compromise health and safety in relation to activities undertaken.

## 12. Smoking, e-cigarettes, alcohol and other substances

All employees, students and visitors have a right to a smoke free environment. Smoking is prohibited inside all College buildings and only permitted on campuses within designated areas.

Smoking is defined as being anything that can be smoked and, therefore, includes cigarettes, pipes (including water pipes such as shisha), cigars, herbal cigarettes and e-cigarettes.

Cigarette butts and other litter must be disposed of in the bins provided.

Employees must always present as being fit for work, which encompasses the responsibility of not being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances or being adversely affected as the result of prior consumption.

Employees must not be in possession of illegal substances and must report to a member of the College Senior Management Team any instances of a student, colleague or visitor being under the influence of or in possession of alcohol or illegal substances.

## 13. Relationships with Students

Employees must maintain professional relationships with all students. All employees must recognise that they are not in an equal relationship with students but are in a position of authority and trust.

Under Sexual Offences legislation it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child (which in this connection means under 18 years of age and vulnerable adults over the age of 18 years) where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. If a relationship does occur, the College will report this to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) as per safeguarding guidelines.

Employees must declare to their line manager and the Director of Human Resources any personal relationship between themselves and a student. If the employee has any professional contact or influence on the student's study at the College, arrangements must be put in place to ensure that any assessment procedures and outcomes will be impartial and without bias.

If an employee is in a relationship with someone who might become a student at the College, they must declare this to the Director of Human Resources. Employees should not start any type of personal relationship with a student until the student has left the College for a minimum of 6 months.

Employees should not exchange personal mobile or home telephone numbers, personal emails addresses, engage in conversation via social networking sites with students. Nor should employees offer students lifts in their own private vehicles.

## 14. Conduct outside the College workplace

Employees should not engage in activities outside work, which could damage their own reputation, the reputation of the College and its employees.

Employees must inform the Human Resources team immediately if they are subject to a criminal conviction or pending prosecution. This will be discussed in the context of their role and responsibilities in order to help safeguard students and their colleagues. Criminal offences

that involve violence or possession or use of illegal drugs or sexual misconduct will be regarded as unacceptable. This could lead to dismissal and referral to relevant external agencies.

## 15. Support for employees and resolution of difficulties

The College recognises that conflicts in the workplace may arise. In all instances, conflicts will be handled in a respectful and sensitive manner and with sincere intent to resolve problems quickly and with minimum disruption to the College and individuals involved.

To assist this process, employees are asked to fully embrace the expectations set out in the Employee Code of Conduct. Line managers will support employees with their understanding of the expectations placed on employees and specific training will be made available as necessary.

If in any doubt with regards to complying with this Code, or its application in any particular situation, employees should discuss the matter with their line manager or an appropriate member of the Senior Management Team.

## 16. Declaration of interests

Employees should consider carefully whether they need to declare to the College their relationship with any individual(s) or groups where this might cause a conflict with College activities.

Any line manager who believes that their work would bring them into a management role with a partner or relative should declare that relationship to their manager. Involvement in appraisals, grievances or disciplinarys with the person declared as a partner or relative must be avoided.

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