



## PROFESSIONAL CODE OF STANDARDS FOR STAFF

<b>Purpose of Policy/Document</b>	This document sets out the standards of conduct for all staff, providing guidance on the College’s expectations during their period of employment.  The document also provides direction and guidance to managers in terms of what they should expect from their staff and gives a useful cross reference to other related College policies and procedures.	
<b>Target Audience (staff/students/visitors/contractors)</b>	The policy applies to all staff, including volunteers, agency staff and those who are engaged for a contract of service with the College.	
<b>Particular Legal Requirements/Issues outside of EDD</b>	Equality Act 2010 Health & Safety at Work Act 1974	
<b>Links with Other Policies/Documents</b>	Financial Regulations GDPR Disciplinary Procedure Whistleblowing Policy Acceptable Use Policy Managing Allegations Policy Anti-Bribery Alcohol & Substance misuse Prevention of Harassment & Bullying Agile working policy  Equality Policy & Action Plan No Smoking Policy Health & Safety Policy Safeguarding Policy Sickness Absence Management Managing Allegations Anti-Fraud	
<b>For completion by The Executive</b>		
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<b>Equality Impact Assessment Statement</b>	The Equality Act 2010 does not require public authorities to carry out EIAs by law. The College does, however, carefully consider the impact, when creating or amending its policies, on all concerned parties regarding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and records this at SLT meetings in order to demonstrate compliance with Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).	

**Heart of Worcestershire College**  
**PROFESSIONAL CODE OF STANDARDS FOR STAFF**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The manner in which members of staff carry out their duties is a key factor in the performance of any organisation. This code relates to all College employees, academic and business support, full time and fractional, established and fixed term, and at all levels.

The College has high standards supported by its extremely professional and well qualified staff. It is important that all staff enhance the College's good reputation and reflect its commitment to its students and the community.

This Professional Code of Standards for Staff has been drawn up in order to facilitate this and to ensure fairness for staff and students. The purpose of this document is to clarify the nature of professional conduct and behaviour required from all Heart of Worcestershire College staff.

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. A breach of the Professional Code of Standards may result in disciplinary action being taken under the Disciplinary Procedure.

The determining principles underlying this code are the College's mission and values. These are:

College Mission:

**'Inspire, Innovate, Advance'**

Our values are:

- **Integrity** – *we believe in demonstrating openness and transparency at all times. We believe in placing the interest of our learners at the heart of all College activities*
- **Trust** – *we believe in inspiring learners to achieve success. We believe in challenging and supporting staff to be successful*
- **Inclusivity** – *we believe in promoting equality and diversity*
- **Partnership** *we believe in building strong partnerships with local communities. We believe in listening to our stakeholders*

It is important that all employees are aware of the standards of conduct expected of them. If employees are unsure about this guidance, they should seek clarification from their manager or contact the HR Department.

## **2. SCOPE**

The conduct at work of all Heart of Worcestershire College staff is governed by their Contract of Employment, by College Policies, by College Financial Regulations and by legislation on such matters as Health and Safety and Employment.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to provide guidance and clarification of the requirements of staff insofar as they inform the way in which staff conduct themselves. 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, PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND STANDARDS**

The College is a publicly funded institution. Employees who have public funds entrusted to them must use them responsibly and lawfully. 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.

The College expects all employees to conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible 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.

It is expected that staff will display integrity, honesty and impartiality in all dealings and work at all times within the spirit of the College mission statement and College values.

## **4. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND PERSONAL CONDUCT**

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 should 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.

All employees are expected to comply with the College's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy and not discriminate against any 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.

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.

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.

- Staff should be polite and courteous in their dealing with colleagues, students and clients.
- Staff should refrain from rude, coarse, profane or abusive language, and should not swear in the presence of students.
- Staff should refrain from any conduct whether inside or outside the College which could bring the College into disrepute, at all times.
- Staff should exercise care and sensitivity in dealing with students, to be approachable, understanding and discreet.
- Gossip about other members of staff may be hurtful and harmful. It could also be slanderous and render the individual liable to prosecution.

The Equality Act 2010 defines harassment as “Unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity OR creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.”

Staff should be aware that what might be considered ‘banter’ involving the use of inappropriate behaviour and language, which may include sexist remarks or actions towards a colleague, student, or a member of the public could be seen as harassment and will not be tolerated. If any member of staff experiences behaviour of this nature, or has witnessed an incident then the matter should be reported to the HR Department. The Bullying and Harassment Policy contains further guidance on issues of this nature.

## **5. PERSONAL APPEARANCE**

All staff whilst at work or on duty represent the College’s standards and professional status at all times, whether this is in the office, in the classroom, undertaking external training, trips, or meetings, with clients or attending presentations. Staff are expected to present an appropriate smart and professional appearance, ensuring that they are dressed appropriately for the work they are undertaking.

The College values the diversity of its staff and aims to create an environment where the cultural, religious and non-religious or similar philosophical beliefs of all are respected. Dress that reflects different cultural backgrounds which is welcomed, however if an employee believes that the College’s dress code conflicts with any belief they hold they should raise this with their line manager.

Staff in some departments will be required to wear a College uniform.

If an employee is in any doubt about the correct mode of dress relevant to their work area, they are advised to seek advice from their line manager.

## **6. PROBITY**

Probity may be defined as honesty or uprightness. Colleges are publicly funded and, as such, demand the same standards as are required in other areas of public service.

It is unacceptable professional conduct to misrepresent yourself, your colleagues or students with regard to qualifications, health, contractual duties or other behaviour which unfairly detracts from the position of others or confers personal advantage.

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.

For the protection of those involved, the Executive Office will maintain a register of all gifts and hospitality received. Members of staff in receipt of such gifts or hospitality are obliged to notify the Executive Office immediately.

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 Clerk to the Corporation, Deputy CEO or Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Operations. Guidance on acceptable hospitality is contained in the detailed Financial Procedures. Further information and guidance is also provided in the Anti-Bribery Policy.

Any financial transaction must be carried out according to Financial Regulations. Particular attention is drawn to regulations governing approval levels for orders, equipment and any transaction which could be seen to be of personal gain to the individual member of staff concerned.

#### **College equipment and facilities:**

- Items of College property should not be removed from the College without express permission of relevant line management.
- Private work, or work connected with an outside interest, should not be done in College time, or with the use of College materials or other facilities.
- College Mobile phones should only be used for the purposes of College business.

Private telephone calls, both outgoing and incoming, should only be made and received where the subject matter of the call is of some urgency or importance. They should be kept as short as possible, and calls should only be made with prior approval of the line manager. The use of personal mobile phones during working hours should be limited in the same way.

## **7. FINANCIAL DEALINGS & REGISTER OF INTERESTS**

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

In many cases, only the employee will be aware of the potential for conflict of interest. Therefore, the onus is on that individual 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. 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.

Employees must declare in writing to the Principal 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 involves the College. Should an employee wish to become so involved in any such business during their employment at Heart of Worcestershire College they must receive the permission of the Principal.

## **8. DECLARATION OF INTEREST / CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

To comply with JCQ regulations, Heart of Worcestershire College is required to identify, record and manage Conflicts of Interest and to inform the relevant awarding body/bodies for any of their qualifications of:

- Any members of centre staff who are taking qualifications at their own centre which include internally assessed components/units;
- Any members of centre staff who are teaching and preparing members of their family (which includes step-family, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g. son/daughter) for qualifications which include internally assessed components/units;

and maintains clear records of all instances where:

- Centre staff have members of their family (which includes stepfamily, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g. son/daughter) being entered for examinations and assessments either at the centre itself or other centres;
- Centre staff are taking qualifications at their centre which do not include internally assessed components/units;
- Centre staff are taking qualifications at other centres.

Staff must also declare to HR if they are engaged in:

- External Quality Assurance roles for Awarding Organisations
- End Point Assessment for Apprenticeship Standards

To ensure compliance, you must declare any of the above statements that apply to you at the start of each academic year through completion of the Register of Interests form on the College Portal.

## **9. CONFIDENTIAL & PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Employees will from time to time receive College information of a confidential nature. Any processing or disclosure of confidential or personal 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 College Portal.

Staff who have access to sensitive employee and student data should not share this information or use it for their advantage in any work situations.

Obtaining information should only be accessed when needed for work and not for any personal benefit or curiosity/gain, for example: Looking to see where a student lives,

seeing how old a colleague is, finding out what salary or grade a co-worker is paid on, or what other benefits they receive.

Staff should never share information about students and should refer any requests for information about students (even from the Police) to the Safeguarding Team.

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

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.

Employees must 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.

Employees must assist in any investigation or hearing into suspected misconduct.

## **11. HEALTH & SAFETY**

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.

## **12. TIMEKEEPING**

Staff lateness and unauthorised absence are both instances of poor attendance which cause serious operational problems to the College and which can place extra burdens on colleagues.

Employees are expected to be punctual, and to fulfil their contractual working hours and work obligations at the times specified. All scheduled activities including teaching, training and attendance at meetings are expected to start on time, and in line with agreed timetabled times. Managers and Leaders will promote these expectations amongst their staff.

Unauthorised absence is defined as any absence from work without informing a manager. Staff must inform their line manager of any absence from work and are also expected to comply with the provisions stated in the College's Sick Absence Management Policy and Procedures regarding the notification process for periods of illness.

Under the agile working approach, there is the ability for staff to undertake some of their working week away from HoW College premises.

The extent to which an individual may be able to adopt agile working will be dependent on the department they work within and the requirements of their own role, as well as the technology available to support agile working arrangements. All agile working arrangements need to be agreed by the Line Manager.

### **13. OTHER PAID EMPLOYMENT**

Employees must not allow their private interests to come into conflict with their work at Heart of Worcestershire College. Employees must not, without the written consent of the Principal, undertake any employment, activities or engagement which might interfere with the performance of their duties or conflict with the interests of the Corporation.

Staff should ask the Principal about any such employment or engagement which they judge could possibly have a bearing on the Corporation's interests.

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

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 illegal), solvents, etc. Staff should not, under any circumstances, attempt to carry out their duties if they are under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other substances.

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.

In accordance with the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy, employees are encouraged to seek help from their line manager or a member of the HR team as soon as they believe they have a problem. Any such help or onward referral will be handled confidentially.

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, etc. as required by their employment with the College.

At celebratory College events staff may consume alcohol in moderation. The College will not however accept liability for any accidents that may occur as a result of misuse of alcohol. Staff operating machinery may not under any circumstances consume alcohol during working hours.

### **15. NO SMOKING POLICY**

The College has a smoke-free environment in all its land and buildings, and it is the responsibility of all staff to rigorously enforce the College's policy and to set a good personal example for students. Staff, (including contracted, agency and other external staff), students, contractors and visitors are not permitted to smoke on any part of the College site, including entrances / exits, cars, car parks, pavements or walkways (including public rights of way). Smoking includes the use of e-cigarettes / vaporisers.

Smoking by any member of staff whilst on College premises, and/or during working hours (e.g. whilst on an educational trip or visit, working in a community setting, or whilst in a vehicle) will be treated as misconduct and may lead to formal action in accordance with the Staff Disciplinary Policy.

Staff are expected to abide by and support the No Smoking Policy and are expected to challenge students who are smoking or using smoking paraphernalia on college premises. Additionally, in support of upholding the Policy and of advocating a smoke



free environment, college staff are expected to take reasonable steps to ensure they do not smell of smoke whilst on duty.

## **16. CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS & ALLEGATIONS**

The College requires all employees to inform the Principal if they receive a police caution or if they are convicted of, or charged with a criminal offence during their employment with the College.

Minor road traffic offences must also be reported if the employee uses their vehicle for work purposes and/or is required to drive the College minibus.

Allegations of impropriety or misconduct made against any employee in respect of their conduct outside the workplace must also be reported to the college immediately. This includes any allegations made in the course of any secondary employment or holding a public appointment.

Careful consideration will be taken of the offence and the surrounding circumstances. but disciplinary action may be taken, and the resulting decision will depend on whether the nature of the offence brings the College into disrepute or undermines the ability of the individual to perform their duties effectively.

Employees who are required to attend a court of law as a result of being charged with a criminal act, or where their attendance in court is associated with their role at the College, or where their attendance in court might bring the College into disrepute, must immediately inform the Principal

If any member of staff is in any doubt about whether or not to report an offence, they are advised to seek advice from HR.

## **17. IDENTITY CARDS**

Whilst on site all staff must wear a College identity badge which is visible at all times so that individuals can clearly be identified as being a member of College staff. This enables the College to ensure a safe learner environment and allows us to challenge anyone we do not recognise as a member of the College, a contractor or a visitor.

We accept that there may be some occasions when wearing an ID card may lead to health and safety concerns, for example in workshops and kitchens. However, upon leaving these areas staff should ensure ID cards are again worn and visible.

Staff should also ensure that any visitor or contractor for whom they are responsible is signed in at Reception, supervised appropriately and also wears a visible badge.

## **18. ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY**

The College provides email accounts and internet access to staff to help them perform their duties. Access to the internet should be limited to matters relating to work, rather than for social and private purposes. Inappropriate use of these facilities may be considered a disciplinary matter.

Employees should avoid inflammatory language in emails and must ensure the accuracy of all emails.

For guidance on the use of email and internet facilities, please see the Acceptable Use Policy for Staff.

## **19. PERSONAL CONDUCT, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS & MEMBERSHIP OF OUTSIDE BODIES (SOCIETIES, COMMITTEES ETC.)**

Staff conduct in their private lives is a matter of concern for the College where it damages the College's reputation, makes the individual concerned unsuitable for educational work or renders their continuing employment unacceptable to colleagues.

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 interest to their manager.

Membership of certain committees (e.g., those holding charitable status) could also 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 Principal & CEO, Deputy Principal or Deputy CEO. The College will not accept liability for the actions of employees serving as members of such committees or bodies unless this permission is granted.

Employees should ensure that any personal relationships with members of the Corporation, 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.

Close personal relationships with another member of staff could, in some circumstance, lead to a conflict of interest or accusations of bias or favouritism. This applies to romantic / sexual relationships, family relationships and business / financial / commercial relationships.

Areas of potential risk could arise where:

- the two employees are members of the same team
- where there is a line management relationship, or one is a member of senior management
- where one employee could be responsible for promotion, performance management or pay/grading decisions in relation to the other.

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. If any of these situations applies, or if a member of staff has any queries about whether they should disclose a relationship, please contact the HR Manager or the Principal in confidence.

## **20. SAFEGUARDING**

All staff, whether paid or voluntary, have a duty to keep learners safe. All staff are required to read Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Safeguarding Policy, adhering to the guidance provided.

The college has a duty of care to its employees and will ensure that effective support is provided for anyone facing an allegation and will provide the employee with a named contact if they are suspended.

There are the two levels of concerns and allegations, this policy covers concerns / allegations that do not meet the harm threshold, these are referred to as 'low-level concerns

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working in or on behalf of the school or college may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with young people
- having favourites
- taking photographs of young people on their mobile phone, contrary to college policy
- humiliating the young person.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns may arise in several ways and from a number of sources.

For example: suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or as a result of vetting checks undertaken.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. Ensuring they are dealt with effectively should also protect those working in or on behalf colleges from becoming the subject of potential false low-level concerns or misunderstandings.

Low-level concerns which are shared about supply staff and contractors should be notified to their employers, so that any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If schools and colleges are in any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of staff as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, they should consult with their LADO.

Concerns regarding Safeguarding can be reported via the Whistleblowing Policy.

Staff should behave professionally at all times and should ensure that appropriate boundaries are maintained.

### **Communication:**

In communicating with young people under 18 and vulnerable learners in particular, employees should:

- only use equipment provided by College to communicate with young people and vulnerable learners

- only make contact with young people for professional reasons and in accordance with College policy
- recognise that contacting learners through social networking sites is not appropriate.

### **Social Media:**

- staff should not initiate personal invitations to students, this includes social media platforms, dating apps, nor should staff 'follow' any student on any social media platform.
- staff should not accept a friend request from a student
- staff should exercise discretion and caution if they have existing personal connections or are friends with students on sites such as Facebook, or if a connection / friend becomes a student
- staff should follow the guidance given in the Internet and Email Policy and report to a Senior Manager any inappropriate approach by a student via social media.
- When using social networking sites, for example 'Facebook' and/or dating websites, staff should be aware of their privacy settings and be mindful of their profile and any contents that could bring the College into disrepute.

All staff remain bound by all College policies throughout their employment, any notice periods and post-employment and in line with this policy and the Acceptable Use Policy staff are to refrain from airing their personal views on the College and colleagues via social media platforms.

For guidance on the use of social media please see the Acceptable Use Policy for Staff.

### **Social Contact:**

- Staff should not have any social contact with young people and/or vulnerable adults who are HoW College learners unless this is approved by Senior Managers.
- Staff should advise Senior Managers of any social contact they have with a learner which may give rise to concern.

### **Physical Contact:**

- Never touch a learner in any circumstances and always be prepared to explain actions should the need arise.
- Always encourage learners, and in particular vulnerable adults, to undertake self-care tasks independently, wherever possible.

### **Behaviour Management & Physical Intervention:**

- Staff actions must be regulated and informed by the Student Standards and Search & Restraint Policies.

### **Position of Trust**

A sexual relationship between an adult in a **Position of Trust** (this includes all College staff and volunteers) and a 16–18-year-old is a criminal offence under Section 16 of the Sexual Offenders Act.

All staff should clearly understand the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in

their contacts with all students, regardless of age. Staff should take care not to compromise their position of trust.

Staff must be aware that any form of communication with young students which could be interpreted as sexually suggestive or provocative (e.g., verbal comments, letters, notes, electronic mail, phone calls, texts, contact via social media) could instigate a **Position of Trust Strategy meeting** at County level.

Staff should clearly understand that in a situation where a member of staff has formed an intimate or sexual relationship with an adult student (who is over 18), this could also be regarded as a grave breach of trust which could result in formal disciplinary action being taken against the employee and/or a **Position of Trust Strategy meeting** being instigated at County level. If you are assessing or supporting a learner with whom you have a relationship, Senior Managers should be informed.

### **Transporting Learners:**

#### **Staff should not transport students in their cars.**

Staff should follow the guidance for Trips & Visits and should plan and agree arrangements with all parties in advance

### **Educational Trips & Visits – Refer to the Guidance for Trips & Visits**

**Photographing/Videoing Students – Refer to the Guidance for Photographing and Videoing Learners Policy.** Staff should never photograph or video students using their own devices.

### **Data Protection – Refer to the College GDPR Data Protection Policy.**

Staff should never share information about students and should refer any requests for information about students (even from the Police) to the Safeguarding Team