

# University of Aberdeen

## Staff Code of Conduct

### 1.0 Introduction

*“Open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others.”* Bishop Elphinstone, 1495.

The University of Aberdeen (“the University”) is fully committed to equality, diversity and inclusion for all its staff and students. It is a strategic objective of the Senior Management Team (SMT) to secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion, whilst caring for the health, safety and wellbeing of our diverse community.

This Code of Conduct provides a clear statement setting out the University’s expectations of members of the University community in respect of professional conduct in all work for, and related to, the University. The Code of Conduct sets out the standards of conduct expected by all.

### 2.0 Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to all employees, volunteers, honorary appointees, holders of office in University entities, visiting academics, consultants, contractors and any other person appointed or engaged to perform duties or functions on behalf of the University. In the Code of Conduct these groups will be collectively referred to as ‘members of the University community’. All members of the University community are expected to maintain the standards in the Code of Conduct when conducting University business on and off campus, providing a service to the public and participating in collaborative projects both commercial and academic.

### 3.0 General Conduct

Members of the University community should, at all times, act in the best interests of the University, striving to support our strategic objectives and uphold our core values which underpin the Dignity at Work and Study Policy. These are:

#### **Strategic Objectives**

Inclusivity, Interdisciplinary Working, Internationalisation and Sustainable Working

### 4.0 People

The University of Aberdeen values equality, diversity and inclusion. The University strives to create and maintain a working environment where staff and students are treated with dignity and respect. All members of the University community are listened to and supported in reaching their career goals. The University recognises structural inequalities exist and strive to address these through equality, diversity and inclusion policies. Everyone is entitled to fair, respectful and dignified treatment at work.

Members of the University community should uphold the University’s core values by:

- Showing respect to others in all forms of communication, including electronic exchanges
- Treating people fairly and without bias

- Considering the potential impact of all actions on others, being open and treating everyone with respect
- Maintaining appropriate and professional relationships with members of the University community
- Carefully considering workloads, conflicting deadlines and working week patterns (for part-time staff) when planning, assigning and collaborating on work and any University activities.

Behaviour which is detrimental to the University's core values include:

- Behaving disrespectfully to another person
- Acts of discrimination
- Any behaviour that can be deemed to be threatening or bullying
- Maliciously harming the reputation of staff, students, or the University.

## 5.0 Fairness, Honesty and Accountability

Through setting standards at work in the Code of Conduct, the University aims to create a workplace culture for members of the University community that holds the concept of dignity at work at its core.

Members of the University community are accountable for all their actions, and omissions and at all times must:

- Maintain appropriate and professional relationships with all members of the University and external parties
- Ensure the University meets all contractual, legal and regulatory requirements
- Actively seek to understand and abide by relevant UK law and legally binding agreements in all University activities
- Report any suspicions of dishonesty as promptly as possible.

Behaviour which is detrimental to these standards includes:

- Compromising their own, or another's, integrity for expediency
- Behaving unprofessionally with any member of the University, external partners, collaborators, or visitors.

## 6.0 Safety in the Workplace

The University is committed to the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students, visitors and the public. Members of the University community must share with the University, responsibility for the impact of their work on health, safety and wellbeing.

Upholding these values involves staff:

- Acting professionally and responsibly at all times
- Observing and following the [Health, Wellbeing & Safety Policy](#)
- Only undertaking work they are competent and fit to carry out
- Stopping work if they consider it unsafe, and speaking up immediately if they observe an unsafe or unhealthy work environment or practices
- Using the appropriate PPE when it has been identified as necessary for their specific task.

Behaviour which is detrimental to these values and dangerous to the health, safety and wellbeing of members of the University community involves:

- Working while your performance is impaired by alcohol, any undeclared prescription or over-the-counter medication, or any other legal or illegal drugs,
- Knowingly performing unsafe practices which endanger the health and safety or yourself or others
- Showing or condoning a disregard for, or non-compliance with health and safety laws, regulations or policies.

## 7.0 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises if a member of the University community's personal, social, or financial activities interfere with, or potentially interfere with, their responsibilities towards the University. Conflicts of interest must be declared and carefully managed in line with the [University's Code of Practice on Conflicts of Interest](#). Any potential conflict of interest must be disclosed to HR immediately.

Upholding these values involves:

- Open disclosure of any outside jobs and affiliations with competitors, customers or suppliers
- Open disclosure of any relationship that may potentially lead to a conflict of interest (as specified in the Personal Relationships Policy – Staff and Personal Relationships Policy – Staff and Students).

Behaviour that raises a potential conflict of interest and may call into question a member of the University community's integrity includes:

- Seeking to influence the recruitment, supervision, terms and conditions of employment, or the management of a close relative or any person there is an existing relationship with, whether they are a University member of staff, contractor or student
- Taking part in the selection, assessment or negotiations of a current or prospective supplier if the member of the University community has any interest, personal or professional, in the company.

## 8.0 IT Use & Security

The University IT facilities are provided to support the work associated with your employment at the University. Full details on the conditions for using Information Technology facilities can be found on the [Policy Zone](#).

All members of the University community are responsible for ensuring the security of the IT systems preventing inappropriate data use and the illegal use of software. Through good IT practices members of the University community contribute to securing the University network and computer systems against unauthorised access.

Good practice in IT use involves:

- Keeping passwords private and never divulging them to anyone, or allowing use of your account by others
- Adhering to University policies with regards to the use of computer equipment
- Treating e-mail and other internet communications in the same way as a University letter or other formal communication

Poor practice in IT use can compromise the security of University systems essential to the effective running of activities and includes:

- Maliciously attempting to access systems members of the University community are not authorised to use
- Knowingly disclosing information to any unauthorised person
- Sending, accessing, receiving or storing any material in breach of copyright, of an offensive, discriminatory, degrading, harassing, threatening, obscene, political or defamatory nature, on University IT facilities.

## 9.0 Data Protection

Members of the University community must adhere to the [University's Data Protection Policy](#) to ensure compliance with national legislation. They must:

- Ensure that any personal data that is processed is accurate, relevant and not excessive in relation to what is needed

- Ensure that consent has been obtained from the individual concerned to use the data
- Ensure that data is not disclosed to a third party without a valid reason
- People are entitled to see the data that the University holds about them. Members of the University community are accountable for any records they keep and should ensure at all times these are necessary, factual and are kept confidential.
- Members of the University community hold responsibility for any data they manage when they are working off campus such as individualised research data, reference requests, examination scripts or results. Strict security measures must be applied to the transportation and storage of all data.
- Queries should be sent to the University Data Protection Officer.

Poor practices in data protection includes:

- Not keeping data secure at all times
- Writing opinions or comments in records that could be derogatory
- Not obtaining consent from an individual to collect and process their data
- Openly discussing confidential records where you can be overheard.

## 10. Sustainability

The University encourages awareness of environmental responsibility amongst all members of its community, while promoting environmental best practice in the management of all University related activities.

## 11. Breach of the Code of Conduct

Any member of staff who is witness to or has experienced/is experiencing behaviour that is contrary to the Code of Conduct should discuss this with their line manager or a member of the HR Department in the first instance. A reported concern regarding behaviour witnessed or experienced that is subsequently found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct will be investigated and reviewed in line with the Disciplinary Policy.

In the event that a member of staff wishes to discuss a potential breach prior to making a formal complaint the following contacts are available:

- [Trade Union Representative](#)
- [Workplace Dignity Network](#)
- [Staff Network Groups](#) – BeWell, Disability, LGBTQ+, Menopause, New Staff, Parents & Carers, Race Equality, School Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leads, Women’s Development, Workplace Dignity.
- [University Chaplaincy](#)

## 12. Related Policies and Procedures which Underpin the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is interlinked with the following University policies and procedures which can be accessed via the [Policy Zone](#):

- Conditions for Using Information Technology Facilities
- Data Protection Policy
- Dignity at Work and Study – Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Drugs & Alcohol Policy
- Ethical Framework on the Boundaries of Confidentiality

- Financial Regulations Policy
- Fraud Policy
- Addressing GBV and Sexual Harassment Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Health Wellbeing & Safety Policy
- Personal Relationships Policy – Staff
- Personal Relationships Policy – Staff and Students
- Procurement Policy and Guide
- Religion and Belief Policy

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list.