

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

Code of conduct for employees

Introduction

The University is committed to the highest ethical standards in the way it conducts all aspects of its work. This Code of Conduct provides guidance in relation to the standards which the University expects of its staff. All employees of the University are required to be aware of and abide by its provisions. The Code applies equally to full-time and part-time employees, visiting lecturers and those on short or honorary contracts, regardless of seniority or length of service.

Members of staff are individually responsible for ensuring that they comply with all laws and regulations applying to their work at the University.

Outside work

The Conditions of Service of each member of staff lay down procedures to be followed in connection with paid outside work. To help the University comply with the European Union's Working Hours Directive, all staff members (including part-time and short term contract staff) should advise their line manager of any paid work, including self-employment and consultancy, which they undertake outside the University.

Intellectual property

Where appropriate, the rights to benefit from inventions, discoveries and patents are defined in the Conditions of Service of each member of staff. Members of staff who, in the course of their work, make an invention or discovery, which is capable of being patented or which they believe to be commercially exploitable, must disclose this fact to the University through their line manager. The University's *Research and Consultancy Guidelines* (available from the Research Directorate) provide further information.

Conflicts of interest

It is important that all decisions relating to the University's business will withstand external scrutiny, and can be seen to be clear of personal interest. The University secretary maintains a register of the outside interests of senior staff. Other staff have a duty to disclose to their line manager any external business or professional interests, including directorships of companies, which might potentially be seen as providing a conflict of interest with their duties as a member of staff.

Staff of the University may at times find themselves in a position to make decisions which can have a significant impact on other people. These include recruitment of staff and processes for reviews of contracts or promotion, and selection and assessment of students. In all such cases it is essential that decisions are taken in a fair and balanced way that could stand up to external scrutiny, and be seen to comply fully with the law and the University's equal opportunities policies. Conflicts of interest should be identified and declared, so that staff can avoid being involved in decisions if their actions might be seen as biased.

Many members of staff will be in a position to place or influence the placing of orders or appointments for the provision of goods or services for the University. Staff should inform their immediate superior before any order is placed if they themselves, their partners or other close family members, have outside interests which might lead to personal or financial gain or loss from such transactions, whether directly or indirectly.

Gifts or inducements

Occasionally firms or individuals may offer gifts or hospitality to members of staff who are in a position to influence orders, contracts or academic results. Staff should treat such offers with great care, since their personal integrity could be called into question. Hospitality accepted should not be significantly greater than could be reciprocated at the University's expense. Regular invitations from the same source, or other offers of hospitality which might imply obligations or raise suspicions should be declined.

Gifts of a trivial or inexpensive nature may be accepted at staff members' own discretion, but anything with a value above £50 should normally be refused. In exceptional circumstances and with the authority of the Vice Chancellor, a more valuable gift (such as a painting or artefact) may be accepted for display or disposal by the University.

Equality of treatment

Individuals in a position to place or influence the placing of orders are responsible for ensuring that there can be no criticism that unequal treatment has been given to potential suppliers. Particular care is required where suppliers are involved in a tendering process. Advice should be sought from the Purchasing Manager if necessary.

Any personal inducements to place orders should be declined, and the matter reported to the Director of Finance immediately.

Access to confidential information

Although the majority of the University's business is conducted in an open fashion, there will be times when individuals become aware of confidential information, either about other individuals or in connection with the University's commercial or academic activities, as a result of their position as members or secretaries of committees, recruiters or line managers. Individuals should be aware of the need to maintain confidentiality, and to respect the proper channels of communication for such information. Staff who collect personal data in the course of their work have a duty to ensure that it is gathered, stored and used in accordance with the principles in the data protection legislation. Staff should consult the University Secretary concerning the disclosure of information under Freedom of Information Act.

Use of computers

Staff are responsible for using the University's network facilities in a responsible manner. The network may not be used to gain any unauthorised or illegal access to data or systems, or for any other purpose which might bring the University into disrepute. The University has published a separate policy for the use of the computer network, which is available from the Information Services Directorate or at <http://staff.luton.ac.uk/isd/policies.shtml>.

Health and Safety at Work

It is the duty of all employees to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. No member of staff should recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interest of health, safety or welfare. All staff should be provided with a copy of the University's *Health and Safety Manual*, and further copies are available from the Safety Adviser.

Raising matters of concern

Individuals have a right and a duty to raise any matters of concern which they may have about the conduct of University business. This should normally be done through their Head of Department; but in circumstances where this is not appropriate they may approach the University Secretary in confidence. No individual who expresses their views in good faith and in line with this guidance will be penalised for doing so. The University has separate policies on fraud and corruption and on whistleblowing, and these are available to all members of staff.

Breaches of this code

Breaches of this Code by employees may result in disciplinary action being taken in accordance with their Conditions of Service.

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