

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT AND DRESS CODE POLICY

Policy Statement

The EKC Group is committed to developing a culture in which staff and students thrive and has a set of core values that are the guiding principles in support of this aim. The manner in which members of staff conduct themselves is of key importance in supporting this ethos and of ensuring that the College's good reputation and high standards are maintained and continually improved and reflect its commitment to its students and the community.

This Code of Conduct has been drawn up in order to facilitate this and to ensure fairness for staff and students and provides clear expectations about staff conduct and aims to ensure that fairness, professionalism and legislative compliance prevails at all times.

The College has in place a range of policies and procedures, which apply to staff. These are available from the Human Resources department or via the College intranet. All staff should read these policies and comply with their terms. The failure of any employee to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken against them under the College's disciplinary procedure.

Background

The conduct at work of all members of College staff is governed by their Contracts of Employment, by College Policies, by the 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 College expects all staff to conduct themselves in a reasonable and responsible manner when undertaking their duties and fulfilling their responsibilities, and to comply with lawful and reasonable instructions from managers. 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 code of ethics.

1. Behavioural Expectations

All staff are representing the College's standards and professional status at all times, whether this is in the office, in the classroom, at external training and meetings, with clients and at presentations.

There is an expectation that all staff will behave in a responsible and professional manner and to comply with lawful and reasonable instructions, demonstrating honesty, integrity, propriety and respect for others in their behaviours.

Effective Leadership is at the heart of the College's success and Managers at all levels are expected to model these behaviours in their day to day duties.

- (a) Staff should be polite and courteous in their dealing with colleagues, students and clients.
- (b) Staff should refrain from rude, coarse, profane or abusive language.
- (c) Staff should refrain from any conduct whether inside or outside the College which could bring the College into disrepute, at all times.

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

- (d) Staff should exercise care and sensitivity in dealing with students, to be approachable, understanding and discreet.
- (e) Gossip about other members of staff which may be hurtful and harmful. It could also be slanderous and render the individual liable to prosecution.
- (f) Employees must not report for work under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or other substances. It is a contravention of the College Disciplinary Procedures for staff to be under the influence of alcohol or any other intoxicating substances whilst partaking in College activities or on College premises.
Policy Owner: Head of HR
Approving Body: FGB
Stage of approval: Approved
Date of approval: February 2018
Page 2 of 9
- (g) Employees must not misuse prescription drugs. An employee may take prescribed medications, but should notify Human Resources if the prescribed medication is likely to affect his/her ability to perform the job. The prescribing doctor or pharmacist will give advice on this.
- (h) Employees should attend work dressed appropriately for the work they are undertaking and the area in which they work and that their dress and general appearance is as smart and as tidy as is practical in the circumstances. Dress that reflects different cultural backgrounds is welcomed. Please refer to the Dress Code Policy in Appendix A attached, for more details.

2. General Rules of Conduct

Certain types of conduct are unacceptable and could result in disciplinary action (which may include dismissal) being taken (Policy: Staff Disciplinary Policy). Each case would be judged within the context of the particular circumstances. The following list is indicative of unacceptable conduct and is neither exhaustive nor exclusive.

These rules are applicable to all staff of the College and non-observance may lead to disciplinary action. (Reference: Disciplinary Procedure)

2.1 All employees have a duty to carry out their work to the best of their abilities and to carry out reasonable instructions which are in accordance with their defined role/job description.

2.2 Every employee is expected to combine a prompt and efficient service with a concern and respect for the feelings of others. It is the responsibility of the line manager to clarify with the employee their specific duties.

2.3 Whenever employees have private or personal interest in any matter which they have to deal with at work they must not let those interests influence how they act on behalf of the College and they must declare such interests to HR by completing a written declaration of interest. The law specifically requires employees to disclose in writing any financial interest, direct or indirect, which they may have in any contract that the College has entered or may enter into.

2.4 Employees may carry out private work in their off duty hours as long as it does not conflict with their official duties and does not adversely affect their performance. Any private work undertaken must be declared to HR and authorised by the College in order to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

2.5 All employees should recognise the importance of customer care and should be courteous, helpful and efficient when dealing with students, colleagues and members of the public.

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

- 2.6** Any complaints received should be investigated as quickly as possible and the reasons for any delay, difficulty or poor quality of service explained. (Reference: Complaints Procedure)
- 2.7** Any employees approached by representatives of the press or media seeking a College view on any matter of College business, should immediately refer them to their line manager.
- 2.8** All employees should ensure that decisions made in an official capacity are not influenced by gifts or hospitality from those concerned. As a general rule, therefore, all gifts should be declared and staff should exercise discretion in accepting hospitality. (Reference: Anti-bribery and Fraud Policy)
- 2.9** Employees should not use the College's telephone or photocopying facilities for private purposes unless there is an arrangement for such facilities to be paid for.
- 2.10** All employees are normally required to attend for duty for the hours laid down in their contracts or as agreed with management. Failure to attend punctually or regularly, without good cause, could lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal if the offences continue after due warnings.
- 2.11** All employees must not discriminate either in employment practices or in the provision of facilities and services to the public by reference, direct or indirect to sex, race, age, marriage and civil Partnership, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, political persuasion and membership of trade unions. (Reference: Equality and Diversity Policy)
Policy Owner: Head of HR
Approving Body: FGB
Stage of approval: Approved
Date of approval: February 2018
Page 3 of 9
- 2.12** In the course of their duties employees may become aware of confidential information; for example, information of a personal nature relating to staff and/or students. On no account may confidential information be passed to anyone other than authorised persons. Employees who are in any doubt as to the authority of a person must seek advice from their line manager. All employees who handle and/or see personal data on staff and students have a responsibility to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. (Reference: Data Protection Policy)
- 2.13** All employees must comply with the licences related to copyright and educational materials.
- 2.14** All employees must adhere to the rules appertaining to the use of the College's minibuses and pool vehicles. Any unauthorised use of these vehicles could lead to disciplinary action e.g. College vehicles used for private purposes without prior authorisation.
- 2.15** All employees are expected to act in a manner that does not compromise the safeguarding of any student or the reputation of the College. Appropriate professional boundaries between staff and students must be maintained at all times. Staff (including Apprentices) must not form personal relationships with a student no matter what their age. Use of social media for interaction on a personal level is not acceptable. (Reference: Safeguarding policy)
- 2.16** All employees are expected to dress in a professional manner that is appropriate to the vocational context in which they are working and adheres to the College dress code. Dress that reflects cultural diversity is welcomed. (Reference: Dress Code Policy)
- 2.17** Staff must use IT and technology in accordance with the College's policy and procedures and ensure that they remain professional and factual in their use of language and approach in emails and texts on business phones. It should be noted that any form of internal communication can be used as evidence in court. (Reference: IT Acceptable use Policy)

2.18 Staff must ensure they are compliant with data protection particularly when taking work off site.

2.19 Communication advised in 2.17 also applies in any other forms of communication such as letters.

3. College Property

Staff should follow the College procedures for the custody of property, handling of money, inventory of stock and other associated matters. Misappropriation of College property is a disciplinary offence; as well as theft, misappropriation also means any unauthorised use. If staff are aware that this rule is being abused, they should report it to the appropriate line manager. (Reference: Financial regulations)

4. Health and Safety

All employees have a responsibility to ensure the safe, effective and efficient running of the College. Examples of behaviour expected include:

- (a) vigilance regarding any visitors to the College (courtesy; security);
- (b) duty to enforce College rules;
- (c) duty to report defects/incidents;

4.1 Employees must take reasonable care for their own Health and Safety and that of other people including their colleagues, who may be affected by anything they do at work. It is the responsibility of every employee who sees a dangerous situation to report the matter to their line manager. It is also the responsibility of every employee to comply with the requirements of the College Health & Safety policy and legislative requirements. (Reference: Health and Safety Policy)

4.2 Employees must not do anything either intentionally or recklessly which might interfere with provisions made in the interest of health, safety and welfare. Nor should they work in any way which might be dangerous either to themselves, students, their colleagues or to members of the public.

4.3 Employees must not smoke within College buildings or grounds – but must use the designated smoking shelter in accordance with the no smoking policy adopted by the Governing Body. This includes the use of e-cigarettes and other associated apparatus.

5. Attendance

5.1 Unauthorised absence is defined as any absence from work without informing a manager (although informing a manager does not necessarily 'authorise' the absence). This is regarded as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the member of staff – this includes sickness absence which is not reported correctly. A salary deduction may be made for unauthorised absence.

5.2 All employees will be expected to present themselves for work unless they have prior permission to be absent. In cases of sickness all employees are expected to comply with the College's Attendance Policy.

5.3 In cases of sudden domestic emergency, the responsibility lies with the employee concerned to inform the line manager as soon as possible.

5.4 Sickness absence, especially frequent or prolonged periods, may be investigated.

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

5.5 Sickness absence of employees on annual leave will not be accepted unless the appropriate manager has been informed on the first day of sickness and a doctor's certificate received within ten days of the commencement of the sickness. (Reference: Attendance Policy.)

5.6 Teachers need to ensure classes start and finish on time.

6. Students

6.1 Students should always be treated courteously and with respect and members of staff should not swear in the presence of students

6.2 Information relating to students is confidential to the student (and to his/her parent or carer if he/she is under eighteen years of age) but staff are referred to College Guidelines on Student Information.

6.3 Members of staff should maintain a professional relationship with students. While this does not preclude social contact, friendship between a member of the teaching staff and a particular student may affect impartial judgement of his/her work, or be seen to affect judgement and lead to accusations of favouritism. Any friendships such as this must be brought to the attention of the line manager.

6.4 Staff should never take advantage of any student or seek inappropriate opportunities with a student who has limited understanding of situations and who is reliant on the advice and guidance of a trusted adult. For clarity, staff must always notify the manager of a student's request for support with any financial or personal matters.

6.5 Sexual relationships between staff and students pose particular difficulties. In the case of students under eighteen years of age, such relationships are illegal and would be deemed to constitute gross misconduct and would be notified to the relevant authorities. Mature students could also be seen to be vulnerable in a college setting and, to avoid claims of harassment, relationships should be deferred until the student is no longer part of the College and therefore does not need to be concerned about grades etc.

7. Conflict of Interest

If staff find themselves in a situation where there might be a conflict of interest, they should report this to their line manager. A decision may need to be made with the support of the College Principal and/or HR to veto the arrangement if there is a conflict of interest. No private work must be done in College time. (See also exclusivity clause in contracts)

8. Children

Due to Health and Safety issues, there is an expectation that staff do not bring children in to work when they are working (except to attend the Nursery).

9. Pets

It is not permitted for staff to bring pets into College unless within the animal care area. This does not include working dogs.

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

10. Security

Due to the size of the College (staffing and premises), it is impossible to secure the safety of personal possessions. Therefore, the College will not be held liable for any loss or damage to such possessions and does not carry insurance for this. All staff are responsible for the safety of their own belongings and should take reasonable precautions for the safety of the belongings of students, colleagues and clients. Possessions left in staff rooms, offices etc. will not be the College's responsibility should they go missing for any reason.

11. 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. Theft is illegal as well as being gross misconduct and may result in prosecution as well as dismissal. Examples can include:

- (a) no item (furniture, computers, stationery etc.) may be removed from the College without express permission of relevant line management. (Small items of stationery or discs taken home for purposes of College work are excepted from this)
- (b) private work, or work connected with an outside interest, must not be done in College time, nor with the use of College materials or other facilities
- (c) If College phones are used for personal purposes which incur additional charges, then this should be reported to finance
- (d) College resources cannot be used for personal gain

No fee or reward should be accepted from an outside organisation or individuals who may potentially gain from this i.e. outside organisations or students, except for small gifts such as advertisement materials, calendars, pencils etc. If an offer or receipt of a gift or hospitality value in excess of £50 is accepted, it should be reported to the Head of Corporate Affairs. Details of date, name of body providing hospitality or gift, description, venue or other relevant details will be held by the Head of Corporate Affairs.

Offers of holidays, hotel accommodation, theatre or match tickets etc. should be refused. If there is any doubt, the advice of the line manager, or Human Resources should be sought. Any transaction involving expenditure or receipt of money must be carried out according to the College financial regulations. Particular attention is drawn to regulations governing signatories for orders, the use of Travellers Cheques, equipment and any transaction which could be seen to be of personal gain to the individual member of staff concerned.

If a member of staff has any doubt about the propriety of any aspect of his/her behaviour, he/she should always consult his/her line manager, Head of Corporate Affairs, a relevant Director, College Principal or Head of Human Resources.

12. Gross Misconduct

The following offences are amongst those regarded as gross misconduct, and may lead to summary dismissal:

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

- 12.1** Unauthorised possession – any instance of unauthorised possession or removal of property belonging to the College, the public or other members of staff. College property must not be removed from the College for personal use unless authorised by the appropriate manager. It is noted that some staff may be required to use property off College premises as part of their role; in these instances, listed inventory/assets will need to be recorded by line managers before they are taken off the premises.
- 12.2** Fraud – any deliberate attempt to defraud the College or a member of the public in the course of official duties. This includes misrepresentation of entitlement to expenses or allowances and any falsifications on a time sheet or other document.
- 12.3** Corruption – receipt of money, goods or favours in respect of service rendered e.g., from contractors in anticipation of receiving orders for goods.
- 12.4** Failure to disclose an interest – in a contract contrary to the Instruments and Articles of Governance.
- 12.5** Assault – assault, threatening behaviour, harassment against students, members of the public or colleagues.
- 12.6** Negligence – any action or failure to act which threatens the health and safety of others; or a serious failure to co-operate with management under the terms of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, COSHH regulations, Food Laws 1990 and Environmental legislation.
- 12.7** Malicious Damage – to College property including uniform or the property of the public or colleagues.
- 12.8** Being Unfit for Duty – through the effect of alcohol or illicit drugs/illegal highs.
- 12.9** Conduct or language – Any conduct or language that is offensive, abusive and/or intimidating and/or which is deemed by the College to be insubordinate, threatening or which is viewed to be incompatible with continued employment at the College.
- 12.10** Discrimination – Unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race; disability, religion or belief; sex; gender reassignment; age, sexual orientation; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; trade union activity or political preference.
- 12.11** Computer Misuse Act – Serious breaches that contravene the Act or are in contravention of some aspects of the IT Acceptable Use Policy.
- 12.12** Inappropriate relationships with students – any conduct that involves sexual relationships with students or contravenes the principles of safeguarding.
- 12.13** Wilful breach of data protection legislation.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive merely illustrative. Staff should seek further clarification from the Staff Disciplinary Procedure.

13. Off Duty Offences

In the event of an employee being arrested, or charged with an offence committed off duty, the respective senior manager (i.e. College Principal, Director) will consider whether or not the alleged offence has any implications for the person's employment.

Policy Owner: Head of HR

Approving Body: FGB

Stage of approval: Approved

Date of approval: February 2018

An employee convicted of a criminal offence may be dismissed in accordance with the College Disciplinary Procedure if in the considered opinion of the College the conviction renders the person unsuitable for further employment. In appropriate circumstances, alternative employment may be offered rather than dismissal.

14. Special Rules

Certain areas may have special rules relating to employees' conduct. These requirements must be brought to the attention of staff concerned, following consideration by the Policy Group. Failure to observe departmental policies or guidelines may lead to disciplinary action (Reference: Staff Disciplinary Procedure)

This document may be varied by the Governing Body from time to time following consultation with staff.