

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

PURPOSE OF THE STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

Introduction

Article 8 of the Articles of Government in 'The Education (Government of Further Education Corporations) (Former Sixth Form Colleges) Regulations' states that: 'After consultation with staff, the Corporation shall make rules relating to the conduct of staff.'

Article 9 states that: 'In making rules under Article 8, the Corporation shall have regard to the need to ensure that academic staff of the institution have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas, and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or any privileges they may have at the institution.'

The College Corporation intends article 9 to cover all College staff.

The Staff Code of Conduct will complement similar documents in existence within the College to which staff will continue to want to refer. Such documents include:

- The College Mission Statement and Values Statement which are stated in the Strategic Plan
- The Equality and Diversity Policy
- The Race Equality Policy
- The Data Protection Policy
- The BHASVIC Staff Handbook
- Contracts of Employment
- Conditions of Service Handbooks

College Ethos

Even if it were desirable to do so, it would not be possible to write an exhaustive list of rules governing staff conduct. Staff should be trusted in the discharge of their responsibilities, which implies allowing room for initiative and judgement. In fairness to staff, however, it is important to set out guidance as to where the exercise of that initiative and judgement could potentially bring them into conflict with others.

Whilst there are clearly areas of our professional lives, for example finance or health and safety, where rules simply have to be obeyed, the Staff Code of Conduct is, by and large, not a document that can be adhered to in that sense. Its purpose is to communicate to all staff, a shared expectation of each member of staff's duty to the rest of the College community.

There may be occasions when a member of staff wants to know how a particular aspect of conduct might be regarded, when measured against the Staff Code of Conduct. Staff should seek the Principal's advice if they are in any doubt of this kind.

During 2002-03, a good deal of effort was put into management training. All College managers were involved in this. The consultation process which led up to the training produced two key documents on management and these have been attached to the Staff Code of Conduct.

STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Working with Students

In their dealings with students the College expects that all staff will:

- Ensure their relationships with students are never of a kind that could compromise their professional responsibilities.
- Promote high standards of student behaviour.

2. Working with Colleagues

All staff must at all times treat colleagues with respect and courtesy. This includes attending meetings on time and meeting other deadlines on which their colleagues depend.

In order to assist their colleagues, staff must adhere to the College's policies and procedures. For purposes of illustration, key examples, all to be found on the college intranet, are listed below:

- BHASVIC Management Structure
- The Data Protection Policy
- The Equality and Diversity Policy
- Guidelines for arranging educational visits
- Procedures for Staff Absence and Absence Management Policy and Procedures
- College security: Policy and guidelines
- Health and Safety Procedures
- Financial Procedures

Smoking is prohibited in College buildings.

3. Representing the College

In order to preserve the reputation of the College, staff must:

- Obtain approval from the Principal, or in the Principal's absence, the Vice Principal, before contacting the press or committing College resources other than those for which they have responsibility.
- Take care over the use of College notepaper and the College logo, whether for use themselves or the use of students they are supervising.
- Maintain professional standards of conduct towards others when acting in a College capacity.
- Dress appropriately when acting in a professional capacity and with due regard for the conclusions others may draw from their attire.

4. Additional Professional Responsibilities

Whilst it is proper that staff should receive the rewards of their own professional and academic endeavours, it is also essential to the mutual interests of both staff and the College that these are

not achieved at any cost to primary contractual commitments. To this end, staff should be clearly aware of the importance of ensuring that the Principal is kept informed as to their intentions in the following areas:

- Except in the case of employees with supply contracts, the proposed undertaking of additional paid employment
- Any interest they may have regarding the appointment of staff, selection of students or contracts with which they may be involved on the College's behalf.

In addition staff are reminded that they are expected at all times to observe the following professional obligations:

- To preserve the confidentiality of information relating to the College's staff, students, finances, marketing and strategic planning, together with any further information rightly to be judged the property of the College.
- To preserve this same degree of confidentiality for twelve months after leaving the College's employment.
- To exercise proper professional discretion in the event of their being offered hospitality or gifts of any kind to ensure that their line manager is informed of their acceptance of any such gifts or hospitality with a value in excess of £25.00 per instance.
- To wear their College ID at all times so that it is visible to others.

5. College Property

In order to preserve the quality of the College's environment and physical resources staff must ensure that:

- They, and students for whom they are responsible, look after College premises and property which they use
- Procedures for borrowing College equipment are observed
- Energy is conserved wherever possible
- The security of College property is maintained as well as possible and not put at risk
- They pay the College for any costs incurred by the personal use of College equipment (eg. phone, fax, photocopier). However, in calculating this staff should bear in mind any costs they may have incurred by the use of their own equipment on College business (eg. phone call on College business made from home).
- Staff should also assist with the security of the College by directing to Reception anyone who they think might be a stranger on site.

Management Vision Statement

We want BHASVIC to be a college in which managers:

- 1 Work in line with our **Mission**
- 2 Act in accordance with our **Values** and the **Staff Code of Conduct**
- 3 Feel motivated
- 4 Contribute to shaping College policy and procedures
- 5 Implement College policy effectively
- 6 Communicate effectively with colleagues
- 7 Are quality-aware, quality-systems-aware and committed to improvement
- 8 Are highly regarded for their leadership in their area of responsibility
- 9 Have a clear, shared understanding of their responsibilities and accountabilities
- 10 Are confident and effective in line-management
- 11 Work well in a team-relationship with other managers, and particularly within the line-management chain

Code of Management Conduct

As managers, we should:

BE POSITIVE

1. Praise colleagues and celebrate success whenever possible
2. Promote the sharing of good practice – there are excellent models within BHASVIC
3. Acknowledge our own mistakes and understand how they happened so that we do not repeat them
4. Be as clear as possible when defining who will do what by when (think SMART)
5. Welcome and learn from constructive criticism
6. Always aim to work with people, never on people

BE SUPPORTIVE

7. Speak well of colleagues to others and ensure that all criticism is constructive
8. Never criticise colleagues in public and always avoid 'blaming and shaming'
9. Respond to poor behaviour and performance (i.e. that detracts from or falls short of our Mission and Values) always, and as quickly as possible, in fairness both to the member of staff (who has a right to know and a right to support) and to their colleagues
10. When dealing with poor behaviour and performance, keep the emphasis on the positive and be supportive, even when a colleague has to accept that there is a problem which must be addressed
11. As far as possible speak directly to an under-performing colleague ourselves: if comment comes via a third-party, it brings with it also a sense of hurt and/or guilt
12. Err on the side of caution in judging what might or should be treated as confidential and never discuss matters of this kind with a third party – even when the third party asks on behalf of, or regards themselves as a perfectly acceptable proxy for, the colleague in question

CONSULT EFFECTIVELY

13. Always take time to give staff the 'big picture'- in essence, this means (i) the fundamental whys and wherefores for doing something, (ii) everything that is involved and (iii) the timescales
14. Ensure that before we undertake any initiative with staff we have all aspects of the 'big picture' (point above) securely agreed
15. Always communicate to all who are touched, even tangentially, by a particular Initiative.

Notes

- 4 Any manager who is in doubt about whether or not they have responsibility for something has a duty to get clarification from their line-manager at once.
- 9 Managers are responsible for the conduct, capability and discipline of those they line-manage in the first instance, calling on the advice of their own line-managers as needed. In exceptional cases responsibility may also pass to their line-manager. This will not happen unless there is deliberate and explicit agreement for it, so as to prevent important matters "falling between two stools".

Managers are therefore responsible for more than just the 'departmental' work of those they line-manage. They are responsible for 360° of their performance¹. A consequence of this is that managers have a duty to support other managers' calls on their staff. As an example only, Heads of Teaching Departments have a responsibility for ensuring their staff attend data protection training. A teacher working in more than one department should normally expect the Head of Department who is responsible for the majority of their work to undertake the 360° role.

Disagreeing with College policy is not poor performance; failing to adhere to it, is. Policy grows and develops and so disagreement and dialogue about it is a positive thing. Similarly, saying no – if asked to do something unreasonable or unachievable – is also sensible: it forestalls failure.

- 14 Whenever possible, major changes will be piloted first so they can be tested and assessed in practice.

No major changes will be introduced without CMT approval (and also Governors' as appropriate). CMT approval won't be granted unless (i) the proposed changes are accompanied by a written communication/consultation strategy. This strategy must show a flow diagram showing any new processes in full - and which staff are affected. It must also show a SMART action plan for communication/consultation with these staff. (ii) The workload implications for staff are clearly stated and addressed. (iii) The timescale and SMART success criteria for the proposal are written down and clear.

- 15 All communication requiring a response must set a deadline for receiving it.

Communication deadlines must be reasonable and must take account of any unusual pressures on staff time that may coincide with them. For a major consultation requiring paper work to be read, a deadline of a fortnight after distribution should be standard.

¹ In the case of teachers who are tutors, the Senior Tutor has line-management responsibility for, but only for, tutorial matters.

All staff are expected to meet deadlines. A member of staff whose deadline is not met should expect an apology for the inconvenience caused to them. Staff who miss deadlines must be asked why. Support must be given to a member of staff who has repeated difficulty meeting deadlines.

So as to be clear about its purpose and limits, all consultation with staff will be signalled as 'formative' or 'summative'. 'Formative' means that a decision cannot be formulated until staff views are more clearly known. 'Summative' means that the decision is formulated but is still draft: staff views are wanted if they can illuminate flaws in the draft proposals or suggest improvements to them; but the broad direction is set and not up for discussion.

The reason for making the distinction between formative and summative consultation is to put those who are being consulted with as fully as possible in the picture: if those who are consulting and those who are consulted both share the same understanding about what 'consultation' means in any particular case, there is less chance of destructive misunderstanding.