2.20.1 Code of Conduct

Policy number: 2.20.1
Contact Officer: CEO, UQ College
Approved by and date: College Management Group – 20 September 2012
Date for Next Review: 12 months from approval for Contact Officer to review policy

Overview

1. UQ College recognises its staff as its greatest asset. The Code of Conduct applies to all officers and employees of UQ College, whether full-time, part-time or casual appointees, and to members of the UQ College Board. Visiting and adjunct academics, and others acting in a voluntary capacity, are also expected to act in a manner consistent with the ethical obligations, while participating as a member of the UQ College community.

The Code of Conduct has the support of the UQ College Board and is intended to guide and enhance the conduct of staff in performing their duties in the collegial environment of UQ College.

There are five fundamental ethical principles enshrined in the Public Sector Ethics Act 1994, from which the ethical obligations contained in this Code of Conduct are derived. The five ethical values guiding staff behaviour are:
- respect for the law and system of government
- respect for persons
- integrity
- diligence
- economy and efficiency

Description

2. UQ College’s mission is to bring new opportunities for its students through creating alternate pathways and programs for school leavers and adult learners seeking to undertake further study to achieve success in order to reach their life goals and boost career opportunities. In achieving this mission, UQ College recognises that its staff is its greatest asset. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to guide and enhance the conduct of staff in performing their duties in pursuit of this mission.

UQ College values a collegiate environment as the best means of fostering the advancement of knowledge and encourages independence and innovation in ideas and methods and protects academic freedom.

UQ College staff should familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct and endeavour to ensure that its principles are observed at all times. While the Code of Conduct expresses the professional commitment of staff in their service to the College, UQ College as an institution also encourages its staff to aspire to the highest standards of conduct. The focus is therefore supportive and educative. However, the Code of Conduct does regulate staff behaviour. Thus, where conduct falls below the
standards outlined in the Code of Conduct, staff may be counselled in accordance with normal performance management strategies. Significant departures may amount to misconduct on the part of the individual staff member.

Staff or students having concerns regarding the application or contravention of the Code in a particular situation should be aware that grievance procedures exist and should be utilised.

3. Respect for the Law and System of UQ College Governance

3.1 Obligation to observe the law
UQ College staff, in common with all citizens, has an obligation to observe the laws of the State and the Commonwealth. Staff should comply with the policies, procedures and rules of UQ College.

3.2 Academic freedom
The obligation is not intended to detract from the concept and practice of academic freedom, which is regarded as fundamental to the proper conduct of teaching, research and scholarship. Academic and general staff are expected to use this freedom in a manner that is consistent with a responsible and honest search for knowledge and its dissemination.

Academic staff should be guided by a commitment to freedom of inquiry. This commitment is expressed in their teaching and research and in their role in advancing the intellectual heritage of their society. Academic staff should exercise their traditional rights to examine social values and to criticise and challenge the belief structures of society in the spirit of a responsible and honest search for knowledge and its dissemination. For example, academic freedom entitles an academic staff member to challenge and criticise ideas and methods but not to defame others. Academic freedom does not extend to behaviour that is harassing, disruptive and intimidating or that interferes with the academic or work performance or freedom of others.

4. Respect for persons

4.1 UQ College seeks to create an environment where all persons are treated equitably and with respect, where persons’ rights are respected and where staff and student efforts are encouraged and their achievements given due recognition.

Respect for persons extends to the manner in which UQ College staff deal with students, other staff and members of the community. UQ College regards a staff member's personal behaviour towards and interaction with others as a vital part of the duties of their position. A collegial working environment is particularly encouraged.

4.2 Courtesy and responsiveness
UQ College staff are expected to be responsive, courteous and prompt in dealing with others, whether students, other staff (irrespective of their position or seniority) or members of the community. For example, rude or insulting behaviour towards other members of staff is unacceptable.

4.3 Obligations of staff supervising other staff
UQ College staff who supervise other staff have special responsibilities to treat their staff fairly and to afford staff equality of opportunity, to maintain open and honest communication with them and to ensure that their staff understand performance standards expected of them. Evaluations of staff performance should be undertaken against these standards objectively and without bias. For example, a supervisor should make available development and training opportunities without patronage or favouritism. Formal and informal mechanisms for consultation and communication with staff are encouraged.
4.4 Making fair decisions
When making a decision, taking action of a discretionary nature or resolving a grievance which may adversely affect a person's rights, liberties, interests or legitimate expectations, the principles of procedural fairness should be applied. This means that persons affected should have the opportunity to respond to allegations or assertions made and to have a decision made without bias. Decisions should be based on considerations relevant to the matter at hand. Decisions may be accepted more readily if reasons are given.

4.5 Staff must not unfairly discriminate
Staff should treat other persons equitably and fairly, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability or medical condition, cultural background, religion, marital status, age or political conviction.

4.6 Respect for the opinions of others
At UQ College, different opinions and perspectives are accommodated and respected, and disagreements are dealt with by rational debate. Rational debate presupposes open communication and the freedom to voice alternative points of view.

4.7 Harassment and bullying unacceptable
Staff must not engage in conduct which amounts to or may be perceived as sexual, racial or gender-based harassment. Staff should not behave towards other persons in a manner which may reasonably be perceived as intimidating, overbearing or bullying.

4.8 Obligations of teachers
Staff involved in teaching should encourage the pursuit of independent scholarly learning, critical judgment, academic integrity and ethical sensitivity in their students, and should themselves demonstrate these qualities in their interactions with students. Teaching staff should behave courteously towards students and should be sensitive to students' need for feedback and consultation. The interests of students should be given primary consideration in the relationship of trust which exists between teaching staff and their students. Evaluations of students should reflect each student's true merit. For example, significant scholarly or academic assistance or contributions from students should be acknowledged, for instance, where this has given rise to publication; expectations of students in respect of assessment criteria should be explained clearly and in a timely fashion; teaching staff should make themselves available for individual consultation by students for reasonable periods of time, whether in person or by other means; a student should not be unfairly penalised for adhering to a defensible alternative view or approach.

5. Integrity

5.1 UQ College staff are placed in a position of trust: they manage UQ College/UQ resources, have access to UQ College/UQ information and make decisions that affect the interests of others. This trust is put at risk unless staff act with honesty, impartiality and propriety and in ways which maintain public confidence in UQ College and advance the good of the UQ College community.

5.2 Avoiding conflicts of interest
Conflicts of interest are not unusual in the exercise of public responsibility. It is important that UQ College and staff members are able to recognise, declare and manage conflicts of interest and situations where there is a potential or perceived conflict of interest. UQ College staff should ensure that there is no actual or perceived conflict between their personal interests and their College duties or responsibilities. The expectation is that officers must recognise, declare and manage conflicts of interest.

5.3 Receipt of gifts
UQ College staff should not ask for or encourage the giving of any form of gift or benefit in connection with the performance of their duties. Receipt of gifts can be perceived as an inducement to act in a particular way, thus creating a real or apparent conflict of interest.
A staff member may, of course, give or accept an occasional gift of nominal value which is offered in accordance with social or cultural practice.

5.4 Appropriate use of UQ College information
UQ College staff will gain access to information while engaged in teaching, administrative, technical and support activities. Some information may be unavailable to the College community generally or the public. Staff should respect the privacy of others and ensure that information of a personal nature, for instance, is accessed and used only for UQ College purposes and is not disclosed except where UQ College policy expressly permits this. Information of a commercial or strategic nature should also be handled with the utmost sensitivity, and should not be used for personal gain. For example, staff having computerised access to personal information about others should not access or use that information for private purposes, and where a student confides in a staff member, the information should not be discussed with or revealed to others, except where this is necessary to take action or decisions concerning the student who has provided the information.

6. Diligence

6.1 UQ College aims to achieve the highest standards of excellence in teaching and administration. All Staff contribute to the achievement of this aim when they carry out their duties honestly and to the best of their ability.

6.2 Duties to be carried out in professional manner
UQ College staff are expected to carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and conscientious manner, and to be accountable for their official conduct and decisions. UQ College staff should ensure that the personal use of alcohol or other drugs does not affect work performance or the safety and well-being of others.

6.3 Duty to carry out official policies and decisions
Generally, UQ College staff have an obligation to carry out official decisions and policies faithfully and impartially. This obligation applies even though staff have the right to institute grievance procedures where they believe a decision is improper or they seek to have decisions or policy changed through appropriate channels.

6.4 Standards of performance
Staff members should endeavour to maintain and enhance their skills and expertise and keep up-to-date the knowledge associated with their particular field or area of work. High standards of performance and a focus on client service (whether clients are students, other staff, members of the academic or wider community) are expected. Staff should not allow outside work to interfere with the performance of their UQ College duties.

6.5 Duty to take care
UQ College staff should exercise due care in undertaking their activities, particularly where others will rely on advice or information offered. Staff have a duty to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm (including physical harm) to anyone. Thus, UQ College staff should actively promote safe working practices and environments for everyone using UQ College/University facilities. For example, staff giving advice to students about UQ College administrative or academic procedures need to ensure that the information is up-to-date and accurate; staff training others in workplace health and safety practices should make available written instructions, explain or give demonstrations; staff teaching, or assisting in laboratories must dispose of hazardous or infectious material in an appropriate fashion, and ensure that students using laboratories are also instructed in safe handling and waste disposal procedures.

6.6 Professional ethical standards
UQ College staff who work in a professional capacity, or teach or undertake research related to professional activities (such as doctors, dentists, lawyers, teachers, therapists, psychologists, accountants) may have obligations or conventions related to their profession. Staff subject to
professional ethical standards should aim to act in a way which satisfies the ethical standards of UQ College and of their profession.

6.7 Disclosure of fraud or corrupt conduct
Fraud, corrupt conduct or maladministration is contrary to law and is to the detriment of the UQ College community generally. Staff are therefore encouraged to report genuinely suspected or known fraud or corrupt conduct to appropriate UQ College or external authorities.

7. Economy and Efficiency

7.1. Staff have a responsibility to ensure that UQ College resources are managed effectively and without harm to the community or the environment.

7.2 Use of property and resources for UQ College purposes
Material, financial and computerised resources should be used only for the legitimate UQ College purposes for which they are provided. For example, electronic mail and access to the Internet and computerised information systems are provided to staff to support their employment activities, and should be used for this purpose, and staff should not remove UQ College/UQ equipment from the campus, except where this is necessary for use by the staff member for UQ College purposes and where they have appropriate permission.

Staff members may occasionally need to use UQ College resources, for instance, to make a telephone call for private purposes, or to use computerised systems such as the Internet to enhance their skills in respect of these technologies. Staff should be sensitive that in doing so they are using UQ College resources and should endeavour to ensure that such use is kept to a minimum.

7.3 Avoidance of waste and security of UQ College/UQ property and facilities
Resources should be used economically and waste avoided. Equipment, materials and UQ facilities should be treated with appropriate care and secured against theft or misuse. This ensures that the maximum levels of resources are available to discharge UQ College’s functions. For example, UQ meeting and lecture rooms and staff offices should be secured when unoccupied.

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