

Behaviours and Standards at Work Policy

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1. Introduction

University Officers, staff and others acting on the University's behalf have responsibilities and obligations to act with integrity, objectivity, self-awareness and honesty, and to ensure that their activities, interests, and behaviours do not conflict with these obligations and responsibilities. It is expected that University Officers, staff and others acting on the University's behalf should abide by the principles set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life ([The Nolan Committee](#)).

The University has a range of policies and procedures to underpin expected standards of behaviour and conduct at work and to prevent conflicts of interest arising. These can all be found on the People Services Intranet. Members of staff should ensure that they are familiar with the standards of behaviour and conduct expected appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

2. Behavioural Standards at Work

The University is committed to providing a workplace in which all employees are given the dignity and respect to which they are entitled. Expectations around behaviour are set out in the Bullying and Harassment Policy/Code and apply to all staff.

The purpose of this Policy is to assist in developing and encouraging a working environment and culture in which harassment and bullying are unacceptable. It details the rights and responsibilities of all staff

to work in an environment which is inclusive and free from bullying and harassment, and which encourages tolerance and respect for the feelings and sensitivities of others. Additionally, it provides detailed examples of unacceptable behaviours.

Valued Ways of working is a useful tool that provides guidance on the key behaviours that are regarded as valuable and supportive in achieving our strategic goals. The University recognises that high performance results not only from what people do but also how they do it.

Unacceptable Conduct

The University's Disciplinary Procedures set out the framework for dealing formally and informally with conduct and behaviour which does not meet acceptable standards.

The procedures for different staff categories, including examples of conduct which would be considered as gross misconduct, are available on the People Services Intranet or AL employment policies.

3. Social Activities

The University wishes to support staff social events that are organised by departments and teams, as it is appreciated that such events can promote team spirit and good working relationships. Parties in offices, for whatever reason, must have the prior approval of the Head of Unit or Sub-Unit.

Social events should be held in a way that is inclusive of all staff, taking into consideration the days and times they are held and that

non-alcoholic refreshments are available. Line managers should consider that not all staff may wish to participate and ensure that any team activity planned does not exclude members of the team unintentionally for personal or religious reasons.

Although such social events may take place away from the workplace and outside of normal working hours, the University expects staff to behave and act respectfully and responsibly. Staff should be aware that the University Bullying and Harassment Policy/Code apply to work related social events.

Therefore, staff who attend work-related social events must adhere to the following standards and principles:

- Staff should remember that if they choose to consume alcohol at any work-related social event, that they will remain responsible for their own behaviour.
- It is strictly forbidden for any member of staff to use illegal drugs, including cannabis, at any work-related social event whether the event is held on university premises or not.
- Staff should not say or do anything at a work-related social event that could offend, intimidate, embarrass, or upset any other person, whether as a joke or not.
- Staff must not behave in any way, at any work-related social event, that could cause the University reputational damage.

Any breach of the above standards of behaviour may render the member of staff liable to disciplinary action under the relevant University disciplinary procedure.

The above standards are in place for the benefit of all members of staff and to ensure that everyone can enjoy work-related social events in an atmosphere of conviviality without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable by the conduct of another member of staff.

4. Inappropriate Use of Work Devices and Property

Staff should not access any pornographic/adult sites on devices or equipment provided by the University for work purposes and linked to the OU Corporate network. Doing so would not be consistent with the Behaviours and Standards at Work Policy and would be unacceptable use of University IT property.

Access of adult sites is monitored by the University. Unless there is prior written approval, for a work reason, staff accessing, viewing, and downloading such material may face disciplinary action up to and including the sanction of dismissal. Work reasons for which permission may be granted could include where a member of staff is undertaking research, module development or other work-related activities.

5. Winter Holiday Season including Christmas

Absence from normal duties during normal working hours, whether to attend a holiday party or for an extended lunch hour, should not exceed a total of two hours (over and above the normal lunch break)

and should normally be confined to the thirteen working days just before the Christmas closure.

Christmas and or winter holiday events should be entirely self-funded by individuals and should not be paid for by the University, either on purchase orders or by claiming on expenses.

Attendance of members of Walton Hall based staff at the OU Carol Concert, which takes place during normal office hours, is a matter for the discretion of the Head of Unit, having regard to the demands of the area and the need to maintain essential services. Heads of Unit are encouraged to allow staff to attend the annual function wherever possible.

Line managers are reminded to consider those who do not wish to celebrate Christmas for personal or religious reasons and ensure that any team activity planned in the winter season does not exclude members of the team. Please remember to talk through plans with team members, taking all views into account.

6. Use of the University's Name

Staff should not use the University's name in such a way as to damage the university's reputation or bring the institution into disrepute.

As clarified in the Social Media Policy and the university's academic freedom principles, staff do of course have the right to academic freedom as well as freedom within the law, to express their political, religious, social, and academic views in private and public, if this is

explicitly done in their own name and not in the name of the University. However, expressions and statements made in the exercise of freedom of expression or academic freedom must not discriminate against, harass, bully, or incite violence or hatred against other persons and groups.

The guidance which follows is of a general nature and staff are asked to adopt a common- sense approach.

Where a member of staff is writing to bodies outside the University, University notepaper can be used for matters within the area of expertise to which an appointment relates, so long as it is made explicitly clear in writing that it is a personal view and not one that in any way represents University policy or practice.

Outside this definition and for personal views, University notepaper should not be used. This also applies to all political activities. In such cases the correspondent, though they may give their job title at the Open University, should always write from a home address.

The Reference Guidelines can be found on the People Services Intranet. These state that, where a professional academic or professional personal reference is provided, this may be sent using the individual's University email address or on university notepaper, but it must explicitly state that the reference is not an Open University employment reference.

The OU is a signatory to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and commits to using research performance metrics responsibly. The OU values a diversity of contributions to its research

culture. This fact should be reflected in narratives pertaining to academic performance and references must be DORA-compliant.

7. Works Produced for the University

Members of staff are required to ensure that to the best of their knowledge and belief all works produced by them for the University (whether in written, broadcast, recorded or other form) are not defamatory and do not infringe the rights of any third party.

Copyright and Inventions clauses are set out in relevant “Terms and Conditions of Service” documents.

8. Financial and Audit Standards

The University’s Financial Regulations set out the rules, procedures, and standards to be followed by all members of staff. They provide the basis for the efficient management and control of the finances and assets of the University. All members of staff are expected to interpret the Regulations as would a ‘reasonable’ person so that they act in a reasonable manner to safeguard the interests of the University, its staff, and students.

The regulations also contain standards required relating to disclosure of information about the financial affairs of the University, confidentiality of information relating to individual members of staff, and disclosure to outside bodies.

There is a requirement to disclose private interests if staff members must deal with any matter in the course of their official duties in which they have a private interest (however slight) or where there is

any personal, financial, or other beneficial interests in a transaction or financial arrangement with or on behalf of the University.

Under the University's Financial Regulations, no staff should put themselves in a position where they are influenced or might reasonably be thought by others to have been influenced by gifts, hospitality, entertainment, or other favours from current or potential suppliers.

9. The Nolan Committee

The Committee on Standards in Public Life

As a public sector institution, the university and its staff are committed to maintaining the Nolan Principles for standards in public life.

These 'Seven Principles of Public Life' have been widely adopted and are aimed specifically at holders of public office.

Selflessness Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or

recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

10. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy

and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

11. Useful References

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Personal Relationships Policy

Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy

Hospitality and Gifts Policy

Fraud Response Policy

Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom

External Enquiries Policy

Social Media Policy

Reference Guidelines

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing Policy)

Valued Ways of Working

Christmas Closure Policy

12. Governance

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