

Code of Conduct

Members of Council and Staff of the Teaching Council

The *Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies* is a set of guidelines which was approved by Government in 2016. The Code of Practice sets out the principles of corporate governance which State bodies are required to adopt.

Corporate governance comprises the systems and procedures by which the Teaching Council is directed and controlled. In the interests of transparency and accountability, it is important that as a State body, the Teaching Council should operate to the highest standards.

It is noted that where the provisions in the Teaching Council Act, 2001 to 2015 (the Act) govern matters which are also the subject of The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, such matters will continue to be governed by the Act.

The *Code of Practice* requires that all State bodies should have a written 'Code of Business Conduct for all directors and employees of state bodies'.

This Code of Conduct for the Members and staff of the Teaching Council (the Code) takes account of the provisions of the following Acts:

- The Teaching Council Act, 2001 to 2015
- Ethics in Public Office Acts, 1995 to 2001
- Standards in Public Office Act, 2001
- Freedom of Information Acts, 2014
- Data Protection Act, 2018
- Safety, Health, and Welfare Act, 2005
- Employment Equality Act 2000-2018

The purpose of this Code of Conduct for Members and staff of the Teaching Council is to provide clear guidance to the Council and its staff, governing behaviours in all dealings with its stakeholders, the public, other public agencies, contractors and other service providers or traders.

Objectives

The objectives of the Code are to establish an agreed set of ethical principles guiding the Council in its work, for the benefit of Council Members and staff; to ensure that they meet or exceed the standards of public service performance required by statute; to promote and maintain public confidence and trust in the Council and its work and to prevent the development or acceptance of unethical practices.

Nothing in this Code shall inhibit the right of Members to advocate the concerns of their nominating bodies.

General Principles

The following principles inform this Code of Conduct for Members and staff:

1. Integrity
2. Information
3. Obligations
4. Loyalty
5. Fairness
6. Work and external environment
7. Responsibility
8. Review

1. Integrity

The Council will behave with integrity, by ensuring that Members and staff:

- holding designated positions, disclose in a register of interests, outside employment or business interests which are in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of the Council;
- who are employed by the Council are not permitted to be involved in outside employment/business interests in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of the Teaching Council;
- avoid the giving or receiving of corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment, or benefits which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgement on business transactions;
- are committed to operating vigorously and energetically but also ethically and honestly;
- purchase goods or services in accordance with best public service procurement practice;
- claim expenses only as appropriate to Council needs and in accordance with good practice in the public sector generally;
- produce accurate reports and accounts which reflect the Council's business performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading;
- do not use the Council's resources or time for personal gain, or for the benefit of persons/organisations unconnected with the Council or its activities;
- respect the confidentiality of Council's deliberations by undertaking not to circulate documentation or to reveal Council deliberations and discussions to third parties except for purposes of consultation that are compatible with the representative nature of Council;
- take decisions in an objective manner having regard to the public interest;
- do not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to any individual or organisation that might reasonably be thought to influence the performance of their duties; and
- participate in the work of the Council in an ethical and honest manner at all times.

2. Information

The Council will treat the information at its disposal according to best practice by:

- promoting the provision of access to general information relating to the Council's activities in a way that is open and enhances the Council's accountability to the general public;
- respecting the confidentiality of sensitive information held by the Council. This information constitutes material such as: commercially sensitive information (including, but not limited to, future plans or details of significant policy changes or other changes such as restructuring); personal information, and information received in confidence by the Council;
- undertaking appropriate prior consultation with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest; and
- complying with relevant statutory provisions (such as Data Protection legislation, Freedom of Information Acts, 2014).

3. Obligations

The Council will meet its statutory and regulatory obligations, by:

- ensuring that Members and staff comply with detailed tendering and purchasing procedures as well as with prescribed levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure;
- introducing controls to prevent fraud, including adequate controls to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to claiming of expenses for business travel;
- ensuring that Members use their reasonable endeavours to attend all Council and committee meetings;
- conforming with procedures laid down by the Council in relation to conflict of interest situations, including in regard to acceptance of positions following employment and/or engagement by the Council that may give rise to the potential for conflicts of interest and to confidentiality concerns; and acknowledging the duty of all to conform to highest standards of business ethics.

4. Loyalty

The Council will promote loyalty, by acknowledging:

- the responsibility
- of Members and staff to be loyal to the organisation and fully committed to promoting its purposes and the interests of the Council.

5. Fairness

The Council will promote fairness by:

- complying with employment equality and equal status legislation; and
- aiming for fairness and equality of treatment in all of its dealings with the public.

6. Work and External Environment

The Council will behave responsibly as an employer and a public body, by:

- placing the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of employees;
- ensuring that community concerns are fully considered; and
- minimising any detrimental impact of its operations on the environment.

7. Responsibility

The Council will promote this Code of Conduct by:

- circulating this Code together with a policy document on disclosure of interests to all Members, management, and employees for their retention;
- ensuring that the implications of the Code are fully understood by the above recipients and that they acknowledge receipt and understanding of the Code of Conduct; and
- providing practical guidance and direction on areas such as gifts and entertainment and on other ethical considerations which arise routinely.

8. Review

The Council will arrange for the review of the Code of Conduct for Members of Council and Staff of the Teaching Council from time to time.

