

# UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIPS

This document provides staff with clarity and guidance around issues of professional behaviour in the University context and explains the appropriate procedures for reporting unprofessional behaviour or concerns.

The University will not accept or tolerate behaviour that breaches professional boundaries by staff in connection with University business. Staff should avoid putting themselves in a position where it could be perceived that they are breaching professional boundaries, and/or where it is perceived there is, or could be, an abuse of power.

#### Scope

This code applies to all:

- employees
- workers
- visitors (including researchers and lecturers)
- honorary staff
- examiners
- management/ IT consultants/agency staff
- contractors
- all students engaged in teaching or other work activities
- other individuals who are involved with the University e.g. mentors, coaches, alumni.

For ease of reference only, the term “staff” in this document includes all of the above.

#### Code

- It is a requirement for all staff to undertake the professional behaviours training.
- Staff will behave in a professional and respectful manner at all times, maintaining appropriate professional boundaries between colleagues, students and any other people they may meet in the course of performing their duties.
- Staff will maintain clear boundaries between professional and personal matters.
- Staff will not put themselves in a position where their behaviour could be considered to be overstepping appropriate professional boundaries, and risk triggering complaints of unacceptable behaviour or a conflict of interest, even where such an outcome was not intended.
- Staff will recognise that there is often a power differential in a professional context e.g. staff/student, senior staff/junior staff, manager/staff member, PhD supervisor/PGR. A member of staff will, under no circumstances, abuse their power or put themselves in a position where it could be perceived that their power is abused.

- The University recognises that there may be occasions where genuine, consensual relationships occur between staff members. Where a personal or intimate relationship exists or develops **and** where there is a power relationship (or potential for such a relationship) between members of staff, both should declare the relationship to their relevant senior manager(s), i.e. Head of School or Head of Service.

Failure to declare a relationship of this nature could lead to disciplinary action. HR managers will be able to provide advice and guidance where a staff member or manager is unclear whether there could be a requirement to inform the relevant senior manager.

- The University strongly discourages any member of staff from having, or pursuing a personal or intimate relationship with a student/PGR. Where there is a pre-existing relationship or one develops, the Head of School or Head of Service should be informed immediately. Failure to declare a relationship of this nature could lead to disciplinary action.
- Any staff member involved in a close personal relationship (whether intimate or not) with another staff member or student/PGR will behave in a professional manner at all times in connection with University business and should preserve a clear boundary and avoid any conflict of interest (or perception thereof) between their personal and professional relationship.
- Care will always be taken by staff on social occasions (both on and off campus) to ensure behaviour remains professional and that boundaries are always maintained.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour, that staff members must avoid, include but are not limited to:

- a) Aggressive or abusive behaviour, including rude language, personal insults or threatening to harm another person.
- b) Unwanted and/or inappropriate physical contact.
- c) Unwanted, inappropriate, excessive or flirtatious contact or messages either directly or indirectly.
- d) Inappropriate remarks, references, comments, messages or jokes (either face to face, electronically or via social media). For example, remarks relating to an individual's personal characteristics (protected or otherwise), and/or professional reputation, which are derogatory or detrimental in nature.
- e) Intimate/inappropriate gestures (e.g. unsolicited gifts).
- f) Meeting a student or PGR alone, outside of the workplace, for purposes unrelated to work activity.
- g) Abusing authority to disadvantage or advantage a student/PGR or member of staff (e.g. making decisions about assessment not based on merit).
- h) Accessing/viewing/sharing of pornographic or offensive material (please see the [Security Incident and Computer Misuse policy](#)).

- i) Rewarding, or taking punitive action against, a student/PGR or member of staff without a valid reason.

*Please note this list is not exhaustive*

## **Reporting inappropriate behaviour**

The University will take any allegations of inappropriate behaviour very seriously and will ensure that all issues are investigated thoroughly and independently.

Individuals who suspect, have witnessed, or have experienced inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff can report this, by any means, in one of the following ways:

- to their Head of School/Service/Executive Dean
- to their Faculty/Service HR Manager or Head of HR
- to colleagues in our Equality Policy unit via [dignity@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:dignity@leeds.ac.uk)
- to the Student Cases Team [studentcases@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:studentcases@leeds.ac.uk) (if you are a student or PGR)

All reports of alleged inappropriate behaviour, including sexual harassment, by a member of staff (reported as outlined above) must be referred to a Head of HR.

All investigations will be conducted in accordance with the appropriate policy:

- [Procedure for Academic and Professional & Managerial staff](#)
- [Procedure for Support staff](#)

## **Advice Support and useful contacts**

**Campus Security Service** – contact 0113 343 2222 in the event of an emergency on campus.

**Police** in an emergency contact 999 for non-emergencies contact 101.

**Human Resources:** <http://hr.leeds.ac.uk/contact>.

**Leeds University Union (LUU):** Independent advice and support to students (see <https://www.luu.org.uk/student-advice/> for further information).

**Professional bodies:** For example General Medical Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council – acceptable boundaries for the profession are available.

**Staff Counselling and Psychological Support Service:** Tel: 0113 34 33694 email [staffcounselling@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:staffcounselling@leeds.ac.uk)

**Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service:** Tel 0113 34 34107 email [scc@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:scc@leeds.ac.uk)

**Trade Unions:**

- [University and College Union](#)
- [UNISON](#)
- [Unite](#)

### **Related University Policies**

[Dignity and Mutual Respect Policy](#)  
[Use of Computer systems policy](#)

### **Document Control**

Date of implementation: January 2019 (updated October 2019)

This Code will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains relevant and reflects changing legislation and organisational requirements.

Document owner: HR Policy Manager