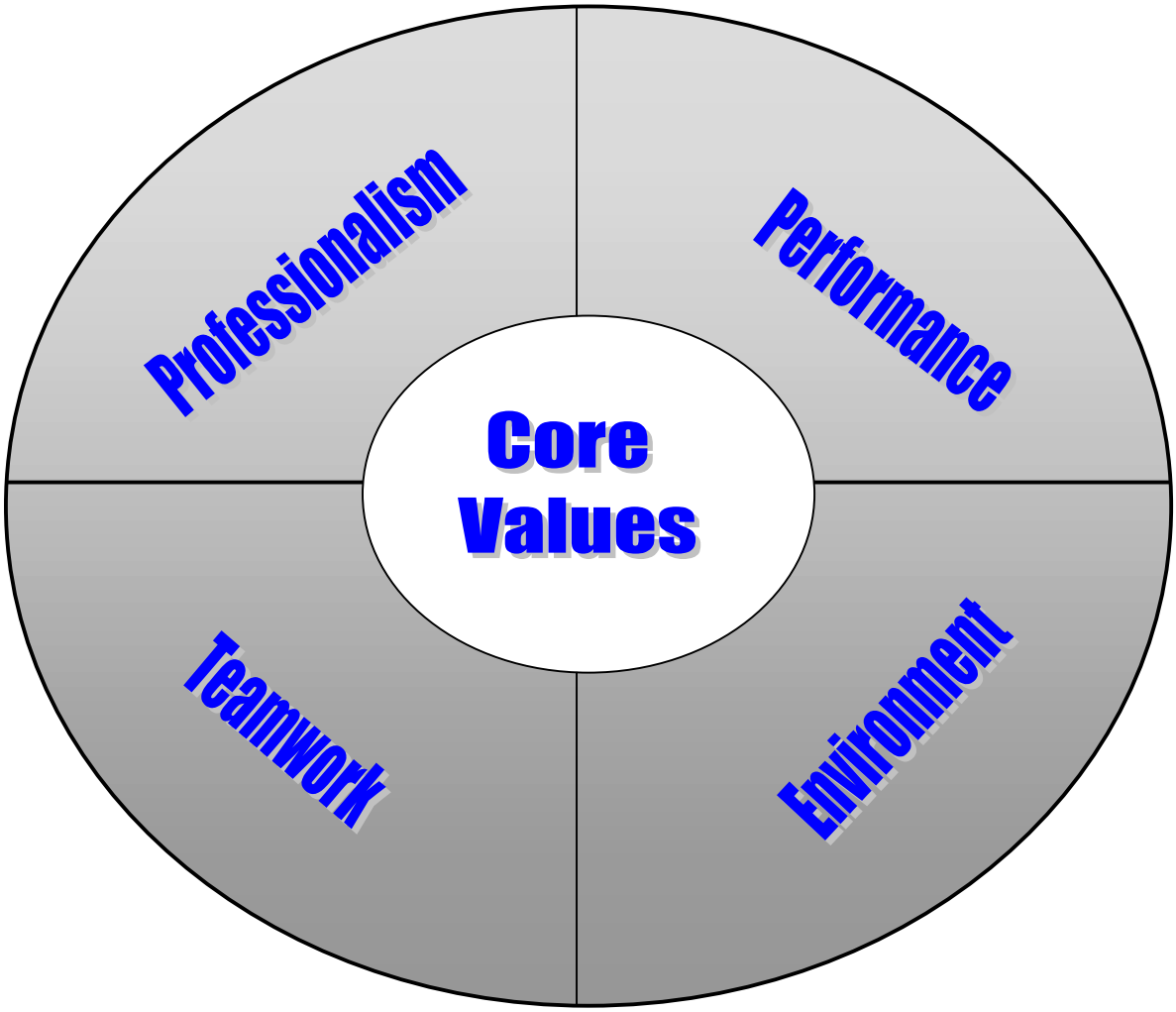
West Herts College

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Our Values and our Conduct



Staff Procedures – 1 May 2006

West Herts College

Values and Conduct of Staff

Introduction

West Herts College must strive for a reputation as a high quality educational institution with staff who are friendly, helpful, reliable and professional. The reputation of the College, including the trust and confidence of those with whom it deals, is one of its most vital assets. As members of staff, our professional and personal standards, not just our contractual obligations, guide our conduct and behaviour towards our learners, colleagues and other members of the community who become involved with the work of the College. We believe that it is important that every area of our activities should reflect our shared commitment to these high standards.

This document has been produced after wide consultation and sets out our shared view about how we should behave and conduct ourselves when carrying out our professional duties.

This document contains:

- **Values Statement:** making explicit our commitment to the values which are the foundation for our conduct.
- **Code of Conduct**: providing guidance on the standards of conduct required of all staff; and College protocols.
- **Rules of Conduct for Staff:** describing the responsibilities of all members of staff in relation to their individual conduct. These rules may be revised or amended from time to time in the light of experience or changing circumstances. Breaches of the rules may lead to disciplinary action being taken under the College Disciplinary Procedures.

The purpose of the Code and Rules of Conduct is to ensure that the College:

- provides a high quality of service to its students and customers in accordance with the College Purposes Statement and the College Student Charter.
- acts in accordance with the guiding principles of probity, transparency and high standards of conduct in the public sector exemplified in the Nolan Report*;
- provides a supportive working culture for staff and learners;
- has consistent standards across the College to support mutual respect and our "one-staff" philosophy

* Local Public Spending Bodies, Committee on Standards in Public Life, May 1996.

VALUES STATEMENT

- **Everyone's contribution valued**

  - Recognising that we, the staff of the College are its most important asset, we are committed to developing appropriate, positive relationships with all those with whom our work at the College brings us into contact - colleagues, learners, visitors and other members of the community.

- **Everyone treated with courtesy and respect**

  - When meeting and dealing with people we display courtesy and respect - we consider their feelings and take account of their needs;

  - In our dealings with colleagues, we make every effort to praise in public and, where necessary, to offer constructive criticism in a confidential manner;

- **Valuing and enjoying our work**

  - We recognise the key role that we play in contributing to the success of the College, and the creation of an excellent learning and working environment. We aim to be positive and committed to our work, and supportive to our colleagues;

  - We have pride in being members of the College and aim to actively promote its achievements.

- **Commitment to high standards, both personally and professionally, and quality services**

  - This is reflected in the way in which we organise ourselves and manage others and guides our decision-making at all levels.

  - We are committed to continuous improvement in its widest sense; and, as individual members of staff, we take an active role in the planning of our own personal development;

  - We aim to avoid actions and comments which might undermine others' positive perception of the College; and to avoid situations whereby our interests outside College and our professional responsibilities conflict.

- **Commitment to equality of opportunity and valuing diversity**

  - We are committed to equality of opportunity and ensure that everyone is treated equitably and with dignity.

  - We respect and value diversity

- **Learner centred, customer focused and professional**

  - We are committed to a learner-centred, customer-focused approach to our work, and make strenuous efforts to help the College to achieve its purposes and strategic objectives;

- We try hard to be open and communicative at all levels, and thereby gain the trust of those we are dealing with;

- **A safe and purposeful working environment**

  - We are committed to playing our part in maintaining and developing a purposeful working environment, and ensuring that the College is a safe place in which to work and learn.

CODE OF CONDUCT

As an employee of the College, you have a responsibility to:

- carry out the duties assigned to you in a diligent manner and inform your line manager of any difficulties you may encounter;

- familiarise yourself with, and adhere to, College systems, procedures and policies; maintain a proper, professional relationship with our learners. Teaching staff, in particular, should have regard to the professional difficulties which may arise if an appropriate distance is not maintained from learners, both inside and outside the College. Staff must recognise that they are not in an equal relationship with learners but are in a position of authority, which should not be abused. . Staff must declare any personal relationship between themselves and a student to their manager. Such a declaration will be treated sensitively and in the strictest confidence. If the staff member has any professional contact or influence on the student's study at the college, arrangements must be put in place to ensure that any assessment procedures and outcomes will be impartial and without bias Failure to disclose the existence of such a relationship will result in disciplinary action being considered

  Under the Sexual Offences Act 2000 it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a child (which in this connect means under 18 years of age and vulnerable adults over the age of 18 years) where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. Relationships of this type are not allowed and will be subject to disciplinary procedures and may result in dismissal.

- act in a fair and courteous manner to all others with whom you come into contact as a result of your College duties;

- present yourself in a style and appearance which is consistent with your position as role model for learners and a person exercising authority in your employment at the College. Be aware that you and the College are being judged against standards which responsible parents or employers would expect to find in a good secondary school or a well managed business;

- treat the College environment and its associated resources with respect and ensure that others exercise the same degree of care and respect for our environment;

- make yourself clearly identifiable as a member of staff to learners, visitors and your colleagues by wearing your name badge and identifying yourself and your role whenever you are acting as a member of the college staff ;

- manage the behaviour and conduct of learners, visitors and your colleagues - in exercising such responsibility you are expected to deal firmly but politely with any minor incidents of undesirable learner behaviour, whether or not the learners are known to you. On the rare occasions where more major incidents occur, you should inform an appropriate College manager, a member of the Estates Team or Reception at the earliest possible opportunity;

- care for the health and well-being of learners, visitors and your colleagues. This encompasses the responsibility to rigorously enforce the rules regarding not smoking within the College environment and to set a good personal example for learners;

- act in accordance with the College policy statement on drug and alcohol abuse. Therefore, you should ensure that our learners are aware of the dangers associated with the consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs and the College's policies in dealing with cases where there is reasonable belief that the learners are participating in drug-related activities. You should take appropriate action in accordance with your team and College policy in the case of any learner whom you believe to be:

  - under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other incapacitating substances;

  or

  - in possession of alcohol or illegal substances;

- be aware of the influence which we exert on our learners and others with whom we come into contact as a result of our College duties. Therefore, staff should exercise caution with regard to expression of political, religious or ideological opinions in a teaching environment.

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF

1. There are a number of key College policy documents which, in all your actions as an employee, you must ensure that you are familiar with and adhere to:

   Code of Conduct

   College Student Charter

   Data Protection Policy

   Health and Safety Policy

   Equality and Diversity Policy

   Harassment and Bullying Policy

   Please be aware that these policy documents may be revised or amended from time to time in the light of experience or changing circumstances and there will be other policies or guidance which apply to your role, e.g. as a teacher, which you are required to observe.

2. You must abide by the terms and conditions set out in your contract of employment with the College. Whilst it is important to be familiar with and act in accordance with all the terms and conditions contained within the contract, please note the requirements in relation to:

   Exclusivity of Service

   Confidentiality

   Copyright, Employee Inventions and Post-termination Restrictions

   Attendance Policy

   Criminal convictions or formal police cautions You are required by Department for Education and Skills regulations to report to the Principal and Chief Executive in writing any criminal convictions or formal police cautions which are recorded against you during your employment with the College.

3. As a member of staff of a publicly funded institution, it is essential that you are seen to observe the highest standards of integrity and probity. Particular vigilance must be exercised in relation to the following matters:

   Compliance with Financial Regulations You are responsible for compliance with the College's financial regulations and for the efficient use of any resources over which you have influence or control; and for managing any staff under your control to ensure that such regulations and procedures are followed.

   Declaration of Interest If you have a financial interest or involvement in a contract, potential purchase or any similar issue being considered by the College, then you must report this in writing to the Clerk of the Corporation.

Policy for dealing with suspected fraud and Public Interest Disclosure Procedure In the event that you become aware of or suspect any wrong doing, you have a duty to take action to disclose it directly to an appropriate manager or, if you feel it necessary, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Procedure ("whistle blowing").

Fees You must declare to an appropriate member of the College Leadership Team any fee from another body for work related in any way to your College employment. In the event of a fee being offered or paid, you may be required to surrender this to the College.

Gifts and Hospitality It is important to exercise particular discretion with regard to the acceptance of gifts and hospitality. You should be careful to avoid a conflict of interest. You should always have in mind the need to behave in a manner that avoids giving the impression that you have been influenced in your dealings with others by any gift or consideration.

The following are examples of what is normally acceptable:

occasional gifts of a trivial character, such as small gifts from groups of learners on completion of their courses, or inexpensive seasonal gifts, such as diaries, calendars and so on;

conventional hospitality, provided it is normal and reasonable in the circumstances.

If you are in any doubt about the acceptability of gifts or hospitality, you should raise the matter with a member of the College Leadership Team. You should inform your line manger in writing if you are in receipt of any of the above. The Director of Finance will monitor such declarations on a quarterly basis.

4. **Personal behaviour** You must act as a positive role model to our students and as a representative of the College:

Attendance and timekeeping You must attend regularly and punctually.

Smoking You must not smoke whilst on College premises or on College duty.

Food and drink You must comply with College policies regarding areas where food and drink may be consumed, and ensure the compliance of learners and visitors to the College.

Alcohol and illegal substances You must always present yourself as fit for duty - this encompasses the responsibility of not being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances or being adversely affected as the result of prior consumption of alcohol. You must not consume or be in possession of illegal substances and you must report to a member of College senior management any cases where you have reason to believe that a learner, colleague or visitor to the College is under the influence of or in possession of alcohol or illegal substances. Presenting yourself for duty does extend to situations of on call where you may be required to attend work.

Personal Appearance You must always present a smart, professional appearance. Whilst dress is a matter of personal taste, it is expected that staff will

normally wear clothes which are generally accepted as appropriate for a professional environment.

It is recognised that members of staff may be engaged in activities for which smart, professional dress is not appropriate. In such situations some members of staff are issued with uniforms (e.g. site and reception staff) or one of the following alternatives may apply:

- you may be provided with suitable and/or protective clothing;
- or you may be granted permission by College management to wear working clothes appropriate to the activities.

In the above instances, such clothing may only be worn for the duration of the activity. .

Maintaining the good reputation of the College You must be careful to avoid becoming engaged in any activities which may bring the College into disrepute.

5. **College Information and Communication Systems** The College information systems e.g. telephone, post, e-mail, internet, are the property of the College and may only be used for authorised purposes. In using these systems you must take account of the following:

   The College communication systems are the property of the College and are designed to assist in the performance of your work. You should, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in any communications sent or received using these systems, whether of a business or personal nature.

   Inappropriate use of the College communication systems is misconduct and will, in certain circumstances, be treated by the College as gross misconduct. It is inappropriate use of e-mail and the Internet for employees to access, download or transmit any material which might reasonably be considered to be obscene, abusive, sexist, racist or defamatory. You should be aware that such material may also be contained in jokes sent by e-mail. The College reserves the right to use the content of any employee e-mail in any disciplinary process.

   Reasonable private use of the College communications systems is permitted but should be kept to a minimum and must not interfere with your work, and any private use that you make must comply with College protocols.

6. **Rules of Conduct for Learners** Please ensure that you are familiar with these rules which may be varied from time to time, and behave in a manner which is consistent with them.

7. **Contact with the Media** You may only communicate with members of the press or broadcasting media on behalf of the College or in respect of any matters connected with the College, with the express permission of the Principal and Chief Executive.

8. **Staff Relationships** Any line manager who believes that their work would bring them into a management role with a partner or relative should declare that relationship with their manager**.**

The manager's manager should take steps too ensure that :-

- Appraisals for the partner/relative are carried out by another appropriate person or reviewed by an independent person as appropriate
- Any grievance or disciplinary issues should be dealt with by another appropriate person
- Procurement processes should provide for another appropriate person to be involved

9. Policies and Procedures

You are required to comply with College policies, procedures and procedures which for lecturers include the completion of registers.

10 Technology

The College requires staff to use the technology provided to carry out their role, which will require as a basic the use of email and intranet. Staff will be required to utilise new technology as it is introduced to the College.

SUPPORT FOR STAFF AND RESOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES

As members of College staff, you are all expected to:

- embrace the values stated in this document which are our shared philosophy of the institution
- act in accordance with the guidance provided by the Code of Conduct
- comply with the specific rules of conduct

In managing the performance of staff for whom they are responsible, line managers will support staff in comprehending and meeting the standards required by the rules set out in this Code of Conduct. Specific training will be made available through various professional development programmes, including induction training for new staff.

If a member of staff is in any doubt with regard to complying with this Code, or its application in any particular situation, s/he should discuss the matter with his/her line manager or an appropriate Senior College Manager.