

Code of conduct for DMU staff

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1 Introduction, purpose and scope

- 1.1 All staff of De Montfort University, and individuals acting on its behalf, are expected to adhere to the highest standards of professional conduct and behaviour and are expected to perform their role with honesty, integrity and respect for their colleagues, students, partners and customers/clients of the university. In carrying out their roles, staff are expected to have regard to how their behaviour and actions impact on people, the university, the local environment and the community.
- 1.2 As a public institution responsible for considerable sums of public money and resources, it is essential that all staff and those acting on the university's behalf ensure that public confidence in the university's affairs is not undermined and that the highest standards of transparency, accountability and probity are upheld.
- 1.3 The purpose of this Code is to provide a clear framework for expected standards of conduct to protect both staff and the university from suspicions or allegations of wrongdoing. It is not intended to be exhaustive and further guidance should be sought from the appropriate PVC dean/director or from Human Resources if staff are unsure of the standards expected of them.
- 1.4 Self-employed contractors, agency workers or any other individuals working temporarily in, or on behalf of, the university should be made aware of this Code.
- 1.5 Failure to comply with the standards detailed in this Code may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- 1.6 Nothing in this Code is intended to limit or restrict legitimate trade union communications or activity.

2 Standards

All DMU staff are expected to carry out their duties to the best of their ability and to obey all lawful and reasonable instructions given to them. All staff must provide explanations for any conduct as required by the university.

2.1 Dignity at work

- 2.1.1 The university has a commitment to equality and diversity for all staff and students and aims to provide a supportive environment where respect is shown to all, and where all staff and students, regardless of their gender, race, ethnic background, culture, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion/belief (or no religion/belief), socio-economic status or any other factor are encouraged to perform to their potential.
- 2.1.2 All DMU staff have the right to be treated with respect and have a duty to treat other people with respect having regard to other people's different needs, attitudes and lifestyles.

- 2.1.3 In carrying out their duties, all DMU staff are expected to adhere to the principles of equality and diversity, oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination, help put an end to harassment, bullying and intimidation, and help ensure dignity at work for all.
- 2.1.4 All DMU staff, regardless of their occupation or level within the university, are responsible for ensuring that their own behaviour, whether intentional or unintentional, is not violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive work and/or learning environment. Where necessary, all DMU staff should be prepared to be challenged over their own behaviour.

2.2 **Dress and appearance**

- 2.2.1 DMU respects individual staff choices in terms of their dress and appearance and does not impose a specific dress code except where staff members are provided with a uniform and/or protective clothing. Transgender and gender non-conforming employees may wear clothes/uniform appropriate to their gender identity.
- 2.2.2 Where the nature of the role entails the wearing of safety equipment or protective clothing, staff members must strictly comply with these rules for health and safety reasons.
- 2.2.3 Staff dress and appearance must be appropriate for the environment in which they are working and should present a professional image at all times within the workplace and when representing or acting on behalf of the university. The university's management will be the sole judge of what is and is not appropriate for this purpose.
- 2.2.4 The university recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its staff and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress and uniform requirements. However, priority will be given to health and safety, security and other similar considerations eg the needs of disabled employees. Where the staff member is unable to comply for any reason (eg on religious grounds) they should inform their HR adviser who will discuss the position with the staff member and an exception may be made depending on the nature of the inability to comply with the rules and the reason for such non-compliance. See also the **Religion or Belief Policy Statements and Guidance for Staff and Students**.
- 2.2.5 In the interests of security and presenting a professional approach to students, all staff must wear, or have about their person, their identity badge when on university premises.

2.3 **Health and safety**

- 2.3.1 The health and safety of staff whilst at work is a matter of the utmost importance. It is the duty and responsibility of each staff member to familiarise themselves with, and to comply with, the university's health and safety policies and procedures. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 all staff, at whatever level, are responsible for taking care of themselves and other persons who may be affected by the staff member's acts or omissions at work.

The university's health and safety policies and procedures are available for inspection on the [intranet](#).

2.4 **Smoking**

It is illegal to smoke in the workplace and the university prohibits smoking in any university buildings or vehicles.

See the university's **Smoking at Work Policy**.

2.5 **Alcohol, drugs and substance misuse**

2.5.1 The university is committed to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its staff, students and those affected by the university's activities.

2.5.2 The university distinguishes between the misuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace which will be regarded as a disciplinary offence and treated appropriately and sickness arising out of alcohol or drug problems. However, DMU staff should be aware that abuse of alcohol or drugs in the workplace is likely to lead to dismissal.

2.5.3 The university prohibits the drinking of alcohol by staff (and contractors) in the workplace or on university business other than moderate drinking of alcohol in connection with university-related social or business functions in accordance with the university's **Substance Misuse Policy**.

2.6 **Work-related social events and activities**

2.6.1 The university aims to offer staff the opportunity to take part in social events and activities from time to time to foster good working relationships between colleagues across the university.

2.6.2 Although such social events usually take place away from the workplace and outside of normal working hours, the Code of Conduct and all other university policies eg the discipline and grievance procedures, applies to such events. The university wishes to encourage staff to take part and enjoy these events and activities whilst being mindful of how their conduct at such events might impact on relationships between colleagues, or damage the university's reputation. Those who choose to take part in staff social committee events should also refer to the staff social committee events guidance.

2.6.3 The above applies to events and activities that are organised and arranged via the university's staff social committee, but may also apply to other activities and events that are arranged informally between work colleagues eg team nights out or Christmas parties, that are attended primarily by staff of the university. The above also applies to social activities and events that are attended by both staff and students for reasons related to the university's business eg welcome/induction events for new programmes, activities organised as part of orientation, etc. whether or not the social event/activity takes place outside of work time and away from university premises.

2.7 Use of university property

Staff are responsible for any property belonging to the university that is under the staff member's control and in their possession and must take proper care of any such items whether it is used in the workplace or outside of university premises. It is inevitable that there will be some wear and tear to university property, however, staff should ensure due diligence and in particular must:

- ensure that university property is maintained and serviced when necessary
- not allow university property to be used by anyone outside the university, unless they are suitably qualified and this has been authorised by the university (for example, a professional undertaking repairs or servicing)
- not make modifications to university property (for example, upgrades to a laptop or company car) without the prior approval in writing of the university
- use university property to carry out any illegal activities or activities that might bring the university into disrepute (for example, drink driving in a company car or using a laptop to visit inappropriate websites in breach of the **Policy on the use of email, internet and social media**).
- not, by act or omission, allow university property to be lost, stolen or damaged (for example, by not securing university property properly or leaving it in a public place such as on public transport)
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that no one else has access to the property to enable confidential data to be accessed or copied, and
- not remove university property from the university's premises without the prior approval in writing of the university.

2.8 Personal use of university property and resources

2.8.1 Any facilities, equipment, tools, or other resources provided by the university for use in a staff member's duties should be used only for those duties and for no other purpose except where the university has agreed to personal use, or in accordance with the relevant university policy. For example, reasonable personal use of a university supplied mobile phone, laptop or tablet will be permitted as long as the use is otherwise in accordance with the appropriate university policy.

2.8.2 The university will not unreasonably prevent staff from using university resources for personal purposes where such use is urgent and essential, and where reasonably practicable, prior authorisation has been obtained from the staff member's line manager. Personal use of university facilities and resources should not interfere or conflict with the work of the university or other colleagues.

2.8.3 The staff member may be required to reimburse the university for the costs associated with approved or non-approved use of university facilities for personal purposes.

See also the **Policy on the use of email, internet and social media**.

2.9 Safeguarding vulnerable groups

2.9.1 All DMU staff and those working on the university's behalf should demonstrate

exemplary behaviour and adopt a safeguarding approach when working with children and vulnerable adults. See the university's **Safeguarding Policy, Procedure and Guidance**.

- 2.9.2 Where DMU staff work in 'regulated activity' (as defined by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006) they are obliged to report any change in their circumstances that impacts or might impact on their suitability to work in that role, either to their PVC/Dean or Director or Head of Department or a senior member of Human Resources (HR Partner level or above).
- 2.9.3 Examples of changes include: being arrested; receiving a criminal conviction (this includes road traffic offences but not fixed penalty notices such as speeding or parking tickets unless they are given in court); formal police warning, reprimand, caution or awaiting sentence or any criminal allegations made against the staff member that are being investigated. It also includes any allegations of misconduct or impropriety made against the staff member including allegations made in any role or employment they hold outside of the university's employment, whether or not the staff member believes the matter to be trivial or irrelevant to their work for the university, and whether or not the staff member knows or believes the allegations to be true.
- 2.9.4 In all cases information must be disclosed as soon as practically possible to allow the university to assess the employment risks and implications (if any). If in doubt about whether there is a duty to disclose, the matter should be raised with the appropriate manager (in accordance with 2.9.2). Where necessary, the individual may be required to undergo a further Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- 2.9.5 The failure to disclose information may in itself amount to a disciplinary offence. If a staff member fails to disclose information, disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be taken against the staff member if it is later discovered that information was withheld or was not disclosed in accordance with the requirements of this section 2.9.

2.10 **Disclosure of criminal charges, convictions or other allegations**

- 2.10.1 Any DMU staff member who is arrested, facing criminal charges, conviction or other allegations regardless of their role, must immediately inform their PVC/Dean or Director or Head of Department or a senior member of Human Resources (HR Partner level or above).
- 2.10.3 Examples of information that must be disclosed include: being arrested, convictions (this includes road traffic offences but not fixed penalty notices such as speeding or parking tickets unless they are given in court); changes or likely changes to DBS barring status (see also 2.9 above); cautions; warnings; reprimands; criminal fines; or awaiting sentence or during any criminal allegations made against the staff member that are being investigated. It also includes any allegations of misconduct or impropriety made against the staff member including allegations made in any role or employment they hold outside of the university's employment. This obligation applies whether or not the staff member believes the matter to be trivial or irrelevant to their work for the university, and whether or not the staff member knows or believes the allegations to be true.

2.10.2 In all cases information must be disclosed as soon as practically possible to allow the university to assess the potential employment risks and implications (if any). If in doubt about whether there is a duty to disclose, the matter should be raised with the appropriate manager (in accordance with 2.10.1).

2.10.4 The failure to disclose information may in itself amount to a disciplinary offence. If a staff member fails to disclose information, disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be taken against the staff member if it is later discovered that information was withheld or was not disclosed in accordance with the requirements of this section 2.10.

2.11 **Bribery and corruption**

2.11.1 The university will not tolerate corrupt working practices or any form of bribery by, or of, its staff or consultants or any person or body acting on its behalf. All DMU staff and those acting on the university's behalf are expected to carry out their role, function or business activities performed in the course of their employment, or on behalf of the university, impartially and in good faith observing the highest standards of professional integrity and transparency.

2.11.2 DMU staff, and those acting on the university's behalf, should be aware that they may be committing a criminal offence eg under the Bribery Act 2010, if they receive, or give, or offer or promise to receive or give, any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage (financial or non-financial) for doing, or not doing, a particular act, or showing favour or disfavour to any person while the staff member is acting in his or her official capacity or on behalf of the university. An offence may be committed even where the advantage offered is to be provided to a third party, or where the activity takes place overseas.

2.11.3 It should be noted that, as well as committing a disciplinary offence that could result in dismissal, staff could also be committing a serious criminal offence. Conviction for offences under the Bribery Act 2010 carries severe penalties including up to ten years' imprisonment and fines for an individual and/or unlimited fines for a company convicted of bribery.

2.11.4 In conducting university business, staff and other associated persons must ensure they are acting in accordance with the university's policies and procedures and in particular the following:

- **Financial Regulations**
- **Anti-Fraud Policy**
- **Gifts and Hospitality Policy**

2.12 **Conflict of interest**

2.12.1 De Montfort University recognises that its staff engage in a wide variety of external activities, such as serving on government, business and community boards, providing expert advice, media commentary, professional practice, schools outreach, international projects and collaborations with the commercial world, including via consultancy, research and development, intellectual property, licensing and involvement in 'spinout' companies or are members of 'secret' societies (eg Freemasons). It is also recognised that, on occasion,

such activities/interests may give rise to conflicts of interest.

2.12.2 DMU staff should be aware of any potential conflict of interest, whether potential or actual, perceived or alleged, between their position within or their work for the university and any external role, interest, society membership, activity or office held, especially where individuals are in positions to make decisions which may have a significant impact on others or the way in which the university conducts its business.

2.12.3 All DMU staff are required to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of a conflict of interest and to ensure that such conflicts are seen to be properly managed or avoided. The university has developed a separate policy on conflict of interest as part of its financial regulations: **Statement of Policy and Procedure on Conflict of Interest**.

2.12.4 In addition, academic members of staff should be aware of the following guidelines in relation to external work that might conflict with the interests of the university: **Guidelines for the Management of External Activities within the Current Exclusivity Agreement- Lecturers in Higher Education**.

2.13 Use of contractors for personal use

2.13.1 Wherever possible DMU staff should avoid making use of the services of or purchasing goods from any consultant, contractor or other supplier of goods or services to the university. Where a staff member wishes to do so, they must obtain written permission from the Director of People and Organisational Development prior to any contact whatsoever being made on a personal basis.

2.13.2 The register of interests will be kept up to date in relation to these matters.

2.14 Relationships

2.14.1 The university recognises that staff may have close personal relationships with other colleagues or students or people who they come into contact with as part of their work for the university. While the university does not wish to interfere with the personal relationships of its staff members, it recognises that on occasions, such relationships can create a conflict of interest for the staff member - potential or actual, perceived or alleged. Even where a conflict of interest does not exist, such relationships can become disruptive within a work context.

2.14.2 A 'close personal relationship' might include a relative eg current or former partner or spouse, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, first cousin and guardian, by blood, marriage or adoption, cohabitee, business partner or associate, intimate friendship (as opposed to acquaintance), membership of associations pledged to render mutual assistance, and any other relationship where an impartial observer might reasonably conclude that the individual's judgement would not be wholly impartial in making a decision in respect of the person or persons with whom they have a close personal relationship.

2.14.3 A conflict of interest might exist where the staff member has access to

confidential information or has authority to make or influence decisions in respect of the person with whom they have the close personal relationship either in their favour or to their detriment eg in respect of decisions on applications for employment/promotion, on staff development funding, deciding on an application for special leave, certifying a claim for expenses or awarding a contract. Examples concerning students include marking, assessment and awarding places on courses. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive.

- 2.14.4 A staff member who has a close personal relationship with a colleague, student, governor, contractor, client, customer or supplier must not allow that relationship to influence their conduct while at work or adversely impact upon the operation of the university's business or its reputation. This duty applies equally to individuals who are potential colleagues or students, eg job applicants, shortlisted candidates or students who have applied to the university for a place.
- 2.14.5 Where a close personal relationship exists, the staff member is expected to declare a potential conflict of interest to their PVC/dean or director. The information may be recorded on the staff member's personal file and will be treated in the strictest confidence and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (see also 2.18). The specific nature of the relationship does not need to be disclosed. [A standard form is available for this purpose.](#)
- 2.14.6 Where the close personal relationship is between a member of lecturing staff and a student (current or prospective), the need for openness and transparency is particularly important to protect both the staff member and the student from any criticism of bias or potential conflict of interest. Again, the nature of the relationship does not need to be disclosed but could extend to situations where the student is known to the staff member through close contact established in a context unrelated to the university, for example in a previous role or outside of work capacity, and where previous knowledge of the student might impact on the staff member's behaviour, or the student's, or that of anyone else in the learning situation.
- 2.14.7 The university may treat any failure to declare a close personal relationship (as described within this policy) as an act of gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action. The university shall be entitled to suspend one (or, where applicable and/or necessary) both staff members on salary during any investigation in accordance with the disciplinary procedure.
- 2.14.8 In order to avoid any allegations of unfair bias, any decision concerning a relative or person in a close relationship should not be made by the individual with the conflict of interest. Where a number of people will be involved in making a decision, the person with the conflict of interest may be required to withdraw from the decision-making process before it begins.
- 2.14.9 Where a personal relationship is deemed by the university to constitute a conflict of interest and/or to impact negatively in the work context, it may become necessary for the university to take reasonable and appropriate action. The individuals involved will be consulted and are expected to comply with any reasonable proposed action.

- 2.14.10 Where appropriate, the university reserves the right to elect to transfer one or, where applicable, both staff members involved in the relationship to a job in another part of the university. Before taking such steps, the university will consult the staff member(s) and seek to reach a satisfactory agreement regarding a transfer.
- 2.14.11 If a transfer arrangement is not possible, for example because no suitable vacancies exist, or if a staff member refuses to transfer, the university reserves the right to dismiss the staff member, or, where applicable, both staff members with notice in accordance with the staff member's contract, or pay in lieu of notice. Dismissal would be undertaken only as a last resort in circumstances where no other course of action was reasonably open to the university.
- 2.14.12 For the avoidance of doubt, this provision is not intended to apply to close friendships that may develop between colleagues in a work context and where those friendships extend to social contact outside of and unconnected with work. However, where there exists that imbalance of power, staff are expected to exercise their judgement in declaring any potential conflict of interest.

See also the: **Statement of Policy and Procedure on Conflict of Interest.**

2.15 **Whistleblowing**

- 2.15.1 It is important to the university that any perceived or actual fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff working for or on behalf of the university is reported and properly dealt with. The university therefore encourages all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the university or the way in which the university is run.
- 2.15.2 In doing so, staff should ensure that they follow the proper channels for raising such concerns within the university and, in particular, are required to follow the procedures outlined in the **Raising serious concerns: Whistleblowing Policy.**
- 2.15.3 Staff are required to use the internal procedure when it is appropriate to do so rather than disclose to an external person or body, for example, by 'leaking' information to the press or via online forums/social media. Staff may only make an external disclosure as permitted by the provisions of the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 2.15.4 If an individual is not sure whether or not to raise a concern or the appropriate procedure to follow, they should discuss the issue with their line manager or an appropriate Human Resources adviser. Staff may also wish to take advice from their trade union if they are a member, or Public Concern at Work.

See also the **Policy on the use of email, internet and social media.**

2.16 **Political neutrality**

- 2.16.1 As an organisation with charity status, the university is required by law to be politically neutral and independent and cannot show bias in favour of or against any political party.
- 2.16.2 However, the university is also mindful of the importance of enabling students to

develop their political awareness by exposure to a number of views and of the wish for students to actively campaign.

- 2.16.3 On that basis, the university's resources (staff, premises and monetary resources) should not be used in direct pursuit of a party political activity although they may legitimately be used to support students' participation in these activities, in line with the students' union's or the university's educational purpose and objectives. The use of resources in support of these objectives should be deployed in a politically neutral manner.
- 2.16.4 All university staff are required to carry out their work for the university in a politically neutral manner and not engage in party political activity during work time, using the university's resources or in connection with their work for the university.
- 2.16.5 The university does not wish to interfere with what staff members do outside work in their own time, but it is important that staff members do not conduct themselves in a way that is detrimental to the university, its relationships with students, partners and customers, or its image or reputation.

See also:

- **Freedom of expression and academic freedom policy**
- **Policy on the use of email, internet and social media.**

2.17 **Access to confidential information**

- 2.17.1 The university strives to conduct its business in an open fashion; however, there will be times when individual staff members in the course of their work for the university eg as members of committees, selectors/recruiters or line managers, become aware of confidential information, either about other individuals or in connection with the university's commercial/academic activities. Individuals should be aware of the need to keep such matters confidential and to respect the proper channels of communication for such information.
- 2.17.2 Staff members should not use any information obtained in the course of their employment with the university for personal gain or benefit. Nor should they pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.
- 2.17.3 Where staff members have access to and are entrusted with confidential information concerning the business or finances of the university, or its suppliers, agents, contractors, customers, students or staff, they shall not, during the period of employment, divulge such information except in the proper course of their duties or in any circumstances after the period of employment without the written consent of the university or as required by the law.

2.18 **Data protection**

The university holds and processes information about staff, students, and other data subjects for academic, administrative and commercial purposes. When handling such information, the university, and all staff or others who process or use any personal information, must comply with the Data Protection Principles which are set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. Any doubts or queries about

data protection issues should be referred for guidance to the Data Protection Officer.

2.19 **Covert recordings**

- 2.19.1 The university prohibits staff members entering into covert monitoring whether it be of their colleagues, managers, or students. Covert monitoring means monitoring carried out in a manner calculated to ensure those subject to it are unaware that it is taking place. This means that staff members must not secretly record workplace interactions with or between colleagues, managers, or students using audio/video/digital recording devices or otherwise regardless of whether the interaction being recorded takes place during times and in rooms/locations where the member of staff making the recording is also present. This includes but is not limited to 1:1s and appraisal meetings, team meetings, consultation meetings, investigation meetings or grievance and disciplinary hearings.
- 2.19.2 The university recognises that staff members should be aware of the nature, extent and reasons for any monitoring unless, exceptionally, covert monitoring is justified. Staff members should be able to expect that they can keep their personal lives private and the university recognises that staff are entitled to a degree of privacy in the work environment. For these reasons, the university will regard any breach of this section 2.19 as potential gross misconduct irrespective of the motive for the recording. Covert monitoring can only be authorised by senior management in circumstances where there are grounds for suspecting criminal activity or equivalent malpractice. No staff member should assume that they are permitted to enter into covert monitoring.
- 2.19.3 Subject to 2.19.2 and 2.19.4, staff members will be notified of any video/audio/digital recording that is to take place. This rule does not inhibit normal and accepted social behaviour between work colleagues e.g. where work colleagues might wish to take photos of each other on work social occasions.
- 2.19.4 The university, as employer will at all times have regard to its legal obligations under the relevant legislation including the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Information Commissioner's guidance contained in the Employment Practices Code. Please note that this section does not override or in any way limit the provisions set out within section 7 of the **Policy on the use of email, internet and social media**.