



University of Fort Hare  
*Together in Excellence*

**UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**CODE OF CONDUCT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE**

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Appendix A: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

## 1. PREAMBLE

The Charter of Ethical Principles and Values (the Charter) guides the University's Vision, Mission, Corporate Goals and Strategic Objectives. It serves as a reference point for all its academic and administrative policies, programmes and procedures and it binds the entire University community by shared ethical principles and values. The Charter seeks to inspire all people to live with nobility, dignity and an active conscience. This Code of Conduct constitutes one of the primary policies giving expression to the Charter.

## 2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish agreed upon standards of conduct which would ensure that all staff and students are related to and would, in turn relate to others with dignity, fairness, sincerity, respect and integrity.

## 3. POLICY

### 3.1 Dealing with People

#### 3.1.1 Respect for the Individual

This Code of Conduct fully subscribes to Principle 8 of the Charter which states that the University community will commit itself "not to discriminate, directly or indirectly, on the grounds of birth, race, colour, national, ethnic or social origin, gender, age, illness or disability, language, culture, political or other opinion, religion, conscience, belief, marital status, pregnancy or sexual orientation". This clause therefore ensures that the University complies with relevant human rights legislation and fosters an environment free of conduct that might be hurtful or offensive.

#### 3.1.2 Equal Opportunities

- (a) The University recognises that exceptional quality begins with individuals and it will support individuals who use their capabilities to the fullest in making their area of work and influence a place of excellence. The University therefore supports personal growth and continuous learning for all its employees;
- (a) There will be equal opportunity for all University employees without unlawful discrimination. This includes recruitment, working conditions, training and development, compensation, benefits and promotion;
- (a) The University recognises that the law allows for reasonable fair an morally defensible discrimination, for example, affirmative action in the Employment Equity Act.
- (a) The University commits itself to processes and efforts to redress the imbalances of the past.

#### 3.1.3 Sexual harassment

The University will not countenance any form of harassment of its employees in any form. All employees are responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from

sexual harassment. Any sexual advances, inappropriate physical contact or sexually orientated gestures, pictures, literature, jokes or statements may result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

#### **3.1.4 Open and honest communication**

- The communication ethos of the University is one of open, honest, courteous and professional communication between Management, staff, students and other stakeholders where all parties will make the effort to understand the points of view of the other. Differing opinions are welcome and respected and healthy debate is encouraged. Simultaneously, all stakeholders must accept that decisions need to be taken, and those decisions would often not satisfy every stakeholder of the University.
- Management commits itself to keeping open channels of communication as well as to encouraging communication in terms of the line of command. Access to line function authority beyond that immediately above the individual is acceptable only if the issue was not resolved at the next immediate level.

#### **3.1.5 Privacy of personal information**

- The University is committed to keeping personal information regarding its employees strictly confidential. Access and knowledge of employee records will be limited to persons who need the information for legitimate University business or legal purposes;
- If there is any doubt about the validity of a disclosure, such doubt must be cleared with the Human Resources Director before the disclosure is made.

#### **3.1.6 Conflict of interest**

- Every employee has a fiduciary relationship with the University and as such is obliged to protect the interests and wellbeing of the University. Therefore the employee will neither seek nor accept financial gain in any interaction on behalf of the University. Conflict of interest may arise as a result of activities in which employees engage as private individuals. Employees must refrain from allowing their dealings on behalf of the University to be influenced by personal or family interests, or the interests of friends or associates. Competition with the University is prohibited.
- Employees may not accept any form of benefit or payment though the transaction of business on behalf of the University;
- Any private work or consultancy or services rendered for remuneration must be declared to the University and permission obtained for the activity;
- Employees may further neither perform such outside work nor solicit business while in University premises or during University time, nor may they utilize the University's equipment, resources, materials or proprietary information for any outside work, unless specific approval has been granted by the University;
- Employees may not have an interest, financial or otherwise, in any of the University's suppliers or distributors or in any other organization which could result in conflict of interest;
- Non-public information about the University may not be used for the employee's own benefit or disclosed to anyone outside the University;

### **3.1.7 Health and safety in the workplace**

The University is strongly committed to making the working environment safe and healthy for its employees and others. The University commits itself to comply with all applicable legislation relating to occupational health and safety;

- Employees involved in the procurement, installation and maintenance of products, services and equipment will ensure that the item or process is safe for those who come into contact with it.
- Management will also ensure that employees are adequately trained to perform their tasks in a safe manner. Sufficient safety and emergency equipment will be made available in the workplace at all times and these will be regularly inspected for safety practices in their functional areas;
- Employees must be aware that safety in the workplace is the joint responsibility of the University and every employee. Employees are required to ensure full awareness of safety rules and regulations. Any instruction given to employees regarding safety must be carried out and the prescribed safety measures applied at all times. If any employee believes that an unsafe condition exists in the workplace, such condition must be reported to the relevant manager without delay;
- The University is committed to preserving the environment. All employees share in the responsibility to conserve our country's natural resources and are required to employ environmentally safe and friendly practices in the performance of their duties.

### **3.1.8 Threats and violence in the workplace**

- The University has a direct interest in safety of its employees. Physical violence or any perceived threat of violence shall be dealt with in accordance with the University disciplinary codes and procedures;
- Any employee who is aware of prohibited conduct or has concerns regarding his/her safety or the safety of a colleague, client or service provider/supplier should immediately report such concerns to a manager who, in turn must immediately contact security and the Human Resources Department;
- Unauthorised possession of any weapon or instrument which might be used as a weapon is strictly prohibited from University premises, from University vehicles or while conducting University business outside University premises;

### **3.1.9 Substance abuse**

- The University is committed to a drug-free workplace. Drugs are barred from University premises. The University specifically prohibits the use, possession, distribution or sale of drugs in its premises, in its vehicles and while conducting University business. Furthermore, no employee may conduct University business while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Further, employees must report to the employer any medical prescription which may impair their concentration, judgement and/or vision, to allow the employer to take the necessary precautions and steps to minimise risk of exposure to hazards as contained in Schedule One of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997.

### **3.1.10 Protection of employees during pregnancy and after the birth of a child**

- The University is committed to the protection of the health of women against potential hazards in their work environment during pregnancy, after the birth of a child and while breast feeding.
- It is the employees' duty to inform the employer that they are either pregnant or breast feeding, to allow the employer to take the necessary precautions and steps to minimise risk of exposure to hazards as contained in Schedule One of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997.

## **4. SAFEGUARDING OUR ASSETS**

### **4.1 University Funds and Property**

- We are all responsible for safeguarding and making proper and efficient use of University funds and property. University funds and property include, the university's time, money, land, buildings, records, vehicles, equipment, including fax machines, copiers, telephones, computer hardware and software, scrap and obsolete items and all other items belonging to the University;
- When travelling on University business, employees should take special care as regards travel and accommodation expenses. It is unacceptable for an employee to conduct himself/herself such that financial gain is the result of the conduct. Such conduct could result in disciplinary action;
- Actual or suspected loss, damage, misuse, theft, embezzlement or destruction of the University funds or property could result in disciplinary action.

### **4.2 Proprietary Information**

- Proprietary information is information or knowledge that the University does not want disclosed to outsiders, except as required by law, because doing so could disadvantage or harm the University. When a legitimate business need arises to disclose proprietary information outside the University the party seeking the information is required to request such information from the Registrar;
- If disclosure is authorised the requesting party will enter into a non-disclosure agreement with the University. Proprietary information includes but is not limited to information about:
  - University business, financial, marketing and service plans;
  - Research and development activities and results;
  - Client and employee records;
  - Minutes of any meetings;
  - Non-public information about the University business;
  - Any other confidential organizational information.
- Such information, once provided, is done so on the basis that it is confidential information and will not be made public during and after the term of employment. Where the recipient of the information is not a member of staff such recipient is required to treat the information as confidential and will use the information strictly for the purpose for which it was requested and will not pass on the information to anyone else or to the mass media.

### **4.3 University records**

- University records include employee and payroll records, vouchers, bills, performance records and other essential documentation;

- Records must be retained according to legal requirements and the University's filing systems.

#### **4.4 Security devices to safeguard assets**

- Where security devices such as alarms, tachographs, safes, tracking systems, etc. have been installed to protect University assets - be it money, movable/immovable property, proprietary information or the University's records - such equipment must be used at all times;
- Non-compliance with the above or any negligence committed in this regard is viewed seriously and will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

#### **5. Copyright**

- Copyright laws protect the original expression in, inter alia, written material, works of art, etc. and prohibits its unauthorized duplication, distribution, display and performance. Employees of the University are prohibited from producing, distributing or altering copyrighted materials from literature, computer software, or play visual or audio recordings thereof without the permission of the copyright owners or their authorized agents;
- Computer software used in connection with University business must be properly licensed and used only in accordance with the license. Using unlicensed software could constitute copyright infringement;
- Violation or suspected violation of computer security measures, controls or software licensing agreements should be reported to information technology management. Violation could lead to disciplinary action.

#### **6. Financial reporting**

It is important that the University's accounting, financial and other systems provide accurate and timely reporting on all transactions involving the University. Every accounting or financial record, as well as the supporting data, must accurately describe the transaction without omission, concealment or falsification of information.

#### **7. Contact with or statements to the media**

- Contact and communication with the media is extremely important to the University. This relationship must therefore be handled in a professional manner;
- Media matters will be dealt with by the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director for Marketing & Communications and the Executive Deans.
- When approached by the media, employees must refer them to the individuals occupying the posts indicated immediately above this point.
- Any other employee may deal directly with the media only after authorisation which may be given by the Director of Marketing and Communication after he has consulted with either the VC or DVC or one of the Executive Deans.
- Staff are free to provide expert opinion to the media where such expert opinion is related to their particular field of academic expertise.

- As employees of the University, it is expected that staff members are required to be supportive of, and to enhance the core business of the University. In this contact staff are requested to protect the reputation of the University, either on campus within the University community, or off-campus, for example, through the mass media.

## **8. BUSINESS RELATIONS**

### **8.1 Clients**

The University recognizes that integrity and client satisfaction go hand in hand. The University is committed to professionalism and to adhering to the highest ethical standards in dealing with any given situation involving clients, competitors, suppliers, the public, fellow employees and University matters in general. The following guidelines for ethical conduct must be observed at all times:

- Complete honesty, integrity and open communication are fundamental to ethical behaviour. We communicate clearly and precisely so that our clients understand the terms of our agreements/contracts, including performance criteria, schedules, prices and responsibilities;
- Credibility is essential for sound and lasting relationships, and misrepresentation of our services must be avoided at all times;
- Whenever we act or do business on behalf of the University, it must be remembered, whoever we do business with is entitled to fair and equitable treatment;
- Details of services/business that have not yet been officially announced may not be divulged without prior authority of the CEO.

### **8.2 Privacy of customer communications**

- Privacy of customer communications is fundamental to the University business and must be adhered to.
- Except when compelled by law, the University does not disclose customer information including their location, to unauthorized person/s;

### **8.3 Other organizations**

- Many organizations have different and at times, more than one relationship with the University. They may be service providers, customers, competitors, etc. It is imperative therefore, that employees of the University understand the particular relationship involved in any dealings they have on behalf of the University.
- It is suggested that, should the organization with whom an employee is dealing with at any given time, have more than one relationship with the University, the employee should confine himself/herself to the legal and ethical parameters of whatever the University approved transaction would be.

### **8.4 Competitors**

The University and its competitors, it is inevitable, will meet, have discussions and attend same business meetings from time to time. In all contacts with competitors, it is a general

rule to avoid discussing proprietary and/or confidential information pertaining to the University.

#### **8.4 Selection of Suppliers/Service providers**

The University strives to build healthy relations with its suppliers and/or Service Providers. Selection of suppliers and service providers must always be done on a level playing field, applying fair, legally sound, equitable, consistent and transparent procurement processes. The following must, amongst others be taken into account when making the choice:

- Price and quality of their product and/or service;
- Delivery capability;
- Reliability;
- Reputation for good service and integrity.

**NB:** A decision must never be on the basis that there exists a personal relationship with the employee making the decision.

#### **8.5 The University, Stakeholders and the Department of Education.**

The link between the University's stakeholders and the Department of Education should aid the principle of transparency and assist in forging a good working relationship. The University should keep its stakeholders and the DoE informed of major developments. The various reports, namely, monthly or annual, should serve this purpose and provide the main link between the University and its stakeholders.

#### **8.6 Business courtesies, gifts, invitations and favours**

- Invitations to meals, local sporting events, the theatre, cocktail parties or other forms of modest entertainment from customers and suppliers, extended as a courtesy during the normal course of business, may only be accepted if it is not being offered to influence the employees' decision/s;
- While employees are advised not to accept gifts or money from suppliers and customers, where, for reasons of cultural sensitivity it is considered rude and/or inappropriate to return a gift or present which is not permissible in terms of this policy, such a gift or present should be declared to the University. Management has the prerogative whether or not to allow the employee to retain or offer such gifts or presents to charity. In the event of the latter, the donor must be diplomatically advised of the action taken and the reason thereof;

**NB:** The above provisions apply to all employees even if such employees are on vacation at the time the offer is made.

#### **8.8 Competition**

##### **8.8.1 Competition Laws**

- The University prohibits the following behaviour:

- Reaching agreements or understandings with competitors to set minimum or maximum terms to allocate customers, products, services or territories, or to set production/service levels for any product or service;
- Reaching agreements or understandings with competitors not to deal with any customer, supplier or competitor or any group of customers, suppliers or competitors;
- If in doubt in the above regard, it is advisable to escalate the query through the University hierarchical structure.

### **8.9 Information about competitors**

- Gathering information about competitors is a legitimate business practice when it is done legally and ethically. It broadens our knowledge of the market place/s in which the university operates;
- It is imperative that our employees understand and note that, proprietary information of competitors should never be obtained directly or indirectly by improper means such as bribing a competitor's employee or misrepresenting the fact that one is an employee of the particular competitor.

### **9. Advertising**

The way in which we advertise and market the University and its services is central to maintaining the trust of our clients, stakeholders and the public in general. To maintain this trust, our advertisements and other communications must always accurately and fairly describe what we intend communicating. Anything that could be construed as deceptive could harm the name and image of the University.

### **10. PATENT RIGHTS**

If an employee during his/her employ by the University invents or makes a discovery that is related to the University's product or service, such an invention will be regarded as the exclusive property of the University, unless an alternative agreement has been entered into with the University.

### **11. COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

The University encourages its employees to participate in community activities. It is the employees' responsibility though, to ensure that no conflict of interest - be it actual or potential, exists between their employment duties and the community affairs, whether elective, appointed, paid or voluntary. Employees may for instance find themselves in situations where they are called upon to participate in decisions that might affect the university. If any employee finds himself in such a situation, the employee is advised either to recuse himself/herself or abstain from voting.

## 12. INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

- The University acknowledges the rights of its employees to participate in the political process, however, employees are prohibited from using their position/s with the University or the assets of the University to try to influence the personal decisions of others to contribute to or otherwise support a political party or candidate;
- University employees participate in politics as private citizens and not as the employees of the University. It is therefore the policy of the University not to make contributions of resources such as money, goods or services to political parties or candidates;
- If an employee has been elected to a political position which requires him/her to be absent from work to attend meetings or if an employee is required to undertake any other political activity during normal working hours, such absences will be regarded as leave without pay/condoned absence. Alternatively, he/she may take vacation leave to cover absence in that regard. Prior approval of the absence must be obtained;
- The guiding principle for the approval should always be that the interest of the University must not be unfairly/unduly prejudiced.

## 13. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 13.1 Responsibilities of supervisors

Every employee in either a supervisory or management position has the following responsibilities with regard to the administration of this code of conduct:

- Ensure that all employees under his/her control receive a copy of this code;
- Ensure that this code forms part of inducting new employees;
- Ensure that any standards and procedures comply with the code and are communicated to the affected employees;
- Report any violation of the code.

### 13.2 Responsibilities of employees

All the University's employees must commit themselves to the following responsibilities:

- Read the code and familiarize themselves with its contents;
- Abide by the standards embodied in the code;
- Keep a copy of the document for personal reference;
- Seek information and advice when needed;
- Report violations of the code;
- Know the details of the policies, especially those that pertain to their work.

**Appendix A**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

I.....(Employee's name),  
an employee of the University of Fort Hare in the capacity of  
.....(Job title)

hereby acknowledge and confirm that I have read and understood the contents of this  
Code of Conduct. I further confirm and undertake to abide by the behavioural standards as  
set out in this Code.

I know and understand that non-compliance could result in disciplinary action being taken  
against me which may lead to the termination of my services.

SIGNED AT ..... ON THIS ..... (DAY)  
.....(MONTH) OF..... (YEAR)

SIGNATURE:.....