



SYDNEY FILM SCHOOL

Code of Conduct

1. Introduction

The School recognises its staff as its greatest asset. The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to guide and enhance the conduct of staff in performing their duties in the environment of the School. This Code of Conduct applies to all officers and employees of the School.

2. Policy

There are five fundamental ethical principles from which the ethical obligations contained in the School's Code of Conduct are derived:

2.1 Respect for the law

Staff should observe the laws of the State and the Commonwealth, and the statutes and rules of the School.

This obligation is not intended to detract from the concept and practice of educational freedom, which is essential to the proper conduct of teaching and research.

2.2 Respect for persons

Staff should treat students, other staff and members of the community equitably and with respect. This involves:

- Courtesy and responsiveness in dealing with others
- A responsibility of fairness in supervising other staff
- Making decisions that are procedurally fair to people
- Avoiding unfair discrimination, for example, on grounds such as gender, race, religion
- Engaging in rational debate and allowing alternative points of view to be expressed
- Avoiding behaviour which might reasonably be perceived as harassing, bullying or intimidating
- A responsibility of fairness and the encouragement of independent learning in the teaching role

2.3 Integrity

Staff should be honest in carrying out their duties, and avoid conflicts between their private interests and their School responsibilities with respect to:

- Personal relationships
- Sexual relationships
- Financial relationships
- Receipt of gifts
- Outside work
- Use of confidential information obtained in the course of School duties
- External activities and public comment

2.4 Diligence

Staff should carry out their duties in a professional and conscientious manner. This involves:

- Carrying out official decisions and policies faithfully and impartially,
- Seeking to attain the highest possible standards of performance,
- Exercising care for others in employment-related activities,
- Ensuring that personal use of alcohol and other drugs does not interfere with the proper performance of School activities,
- Adhering to professional codes of conduct where applicable.

Staff are encouraged to report fraud or corrupt conduct to appropriate School or external authorities.

2.5 Economy and Efficiency

Staff should use School material and financial resources only for legitimate School purposes.

Staff should avoid waste.

Staff should maintain adequate security over School property, facilities and resources.

Staff should familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct and endeavour to ensure that its principles are observed at all times. Significant departures from the standards of conduct outlined in the Code of Conduct may amount to misconduct on the part of the individual staff member.

3. Procedure

The School's mission is to extend, evaluate, preserve and transmit ideas and knowledge through teaching of the highest international standards.

In achieving this mission, the School recognises that its staff are its greatest asset. The purpose of the School's Code of Conduct is to guide and enhance the conduct of staff in performing their duties in pursuit of this mission.

The Code applies to all officers and employees of the School, whether full-time, part-time or casual appointees. Visitors, and others acting in a voluntary capacity, are also expected to act in a manner consistent with the ethical obligations, while participating in the life of the School community.

Traditionally, students of film have been encouraged to observe and to comment upon or criticise society and its activities. The School also encourages the

development of new concepts through research and open discussion. The exploration of unconventional views is not merely tolerated but encouraged. The Code of Conduct is not intended to derogate from this traditional and independent right to comment on matters of public concern or to pursue research on matters of public controversy. Administrative and support staff, in facilitating learning endeavours, should also seek to protect the appropriate exercise of academic freedom within the scope of their duties.

While the Code of Conduct expresses the professional commitment of staff in their service to the School, the School as an institution also encourages its staff to aspire to the highest standards of conduct. The focus is therefore supportive and educative. Reference is made to specific School policies which provide detailed guidance on particular points and which will assist staff members in carrying out their duties and responsibilities appropriately.

However, the Code of Conduct does regulate staff behaviour. Thus, where conduct falls below the standards outlined in the Code of Conduct, staff may be counselled in accordance with normal performance management strategies. Significant departures may amount to misconduct on the part of the individual staff member.

Staff or students having concerns regarding the application or contravention of the Code in a particular situation should be aware that grievance procedures exist in respect of many School policies. Where grievance procedures do exist, concerns should be raised with the appropriate School officer.

3.1 Respect for the Law and System of School Governance

3.1.1 Obligation to observe the law

School staff, in common with all citizens, have an obligation to observe the laws of the State and the Commonwealth. Staff should comply with the statutes and rules of the School.

3.1.2 Educational freedom

The obligation is not intended to detract from the concept and practice of educational freedom, which is regarded by the School as fundamental to the proper conduct of training and research. Staff should be guided by a commitment to freedom of inquiry. Staff should exercise their traditional rights to examine social values and to criticise and challenge the belief structures of society in the spirit of a responsible and honest search for knowledge and its dissemination. For example, educational freedom entitles a staff member to challenge and criticise ideas and methods but not to defame others.

3.2 Respect for persons

The School seeks to create an environment where all persons are treated equitably and with respect, where persons' rights are respected and where staff and student efforts are encouraged and their achievements given due recognition.

Respect for persons extends to the manner in which School staff deal with students, other staff and members of the community. The School regards a staff member's personal behaviour towards and interaction with others as a vital part of the duties of their position. A collegial working environment is particularly encouraged.

3.2.1 Courtesy and responsiveness

School staff are expected to be responsive, courteous and prompt in dealing with others, whether students, other staff (irrespective of their position or seniority) or members of the community. Rude or insulting behaviour towards other members of staff is unacceptable.

3.2.2 Obligations of staff supervising other staff

School staff who supervise other staff have special responsibilities to treat their staff fairly and to afford staff equality of opportunity, to maintain open and honest communication with them and to ensure that their staff understand performance standards expected of them.

Evaluations of staff performance should be undertaken against these standards objectively and without bias.

3.2.3 Making fair decisions

When making a decision, taking action of a discretionary nature or resolving a grievance which may adversely affect a person's rights, liberties, interests or legitimate expectations, the principles of procedural fairness should be applied. This means that persons affected should have the opportunity to respond to allegations or assertions made and to have a decision made without bias. Decisions should be based on considerations relevant to the matter at hand. Decisions may be accepted more readily if reasons are given. For example, where an adverse report is received concerning a staff member's performance or conduct, that staff member should be given the opportunity to respond.

3.2.4 Staff must not unfairly discriminate

Staff should treat other persons equitably, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability or medical condition, cultural background, religion, marital status, age or political conviction. For example, it is irrelevant to the determination of the grade to be awarded to a student to take into account factors such as gender.

3.2.5 Respect for the opinions of others

At a School, different opinions and perspectives are accommodated and respected, and disagreements are dealt with by rational debate. Rational debate presupposes open communication and the freedom to voice alternative points of view. Staff should not cut off rational debate by verbal or physical violence or intimidation.

Criticism of ideas should be distinguished from personal criticism; and staff should not verbally abuse, vilify or belittle students or other staff (including their supervisors) either personally or to others.

3.2.6 Harassment and bullying unacceptable

Staff must not engage in conduct which amounts to or may be perceived as sexual, racial or gender-based harassment. Staff should not behave towards other persons in a manner which may reasonably be perceived as intimidating, overbearing or bullying.

3.2.7 Obligations of School teachers

Staff involved in training should encourage the pursuit of independent learning, critical judgment, academic integrity and ethical sensitivity in their students, and should themselves demonstrate these qualities in their interactions with students.

Teaching staff should behave courteously towards students and should be sensitive to students' need for feedback and consultation. The interests of students should be given primary consideration in the relationship of trust which exists between teaching staff and their students. Evaluations of students should reflect each student's true merit.

Expectations of students in respect of assessment criteria should be explained clearly and in a timely fashion.

Teaching staff should make themselves available for individual consultation by students for reasonable periods of time, whether in person or by other means.

A student should not be unfairly penalised for adhering to a defensible alternative view or approach.

3.3 Integrity

School staff are placed in a position of trust: they manage School resources, have access to School information and make decisions that affect the interests of others. Staff may be in a position of power over more junior staff or students.

3.3.1 Avoiding conflicts of interest

The trust that is placed in School staff requires that staff conduct themselves with honesty, fairness and propriety. This means that staff should avoid conflicts between their private interests and School responsibilities and should avoid situations where there is a reasonable basis for the perception of such a conflict. The obligations outlined in the following paragraphs detail specific occasions when conflicts of interest might occur.

3.3.2 Personal relationships

A conflict of interest can arise where a staff member makes or participates in decisions affecting another person with whom the staff member has a personal relationship (such as near relative, spouse, close friend or personal associate).

Where the relationship is not so close, the staff member should discuss the issue with someone in authority. For example, a member of the staff should not participate in decisions relating to assessment or the determination of a grade for a close friend, and a member of staff should not participate in decisions relating to the appointment of a relative.

3.3.3 Sexual relationships

While it is recognised that staff may sometimes form consensual sexual relationships with other staff or, in some cases, with students, such relationships should not intrude or be seen to intrude on the teaching environment or on the workplace generally, since workplace practices may be compromised. Such relationships may also create difficulties in maintaining the boundaries between professional and personal life and may compromise the professional or personal standing of either one or both of the persons involved. Difficulties may also arise from the unequal power of the persons concerned. This is particularly acute in relationships between staff and students.

Staff involved in a sexual relationship giving rise to a potential conflict of interest should discuss this with the Director.

Staff who become involved in a situation where a sexual relationship is a source of conflict of interest must withdraw from the situation giving rise to the conflict.

Staff in supervisory positions, in particular, must be alert to the conflicts which such a relationship may create in the workplace, and to the need to handle such situations in a sensitive manner. For example, a staff member who becomes involved in a sexual relationship with a student under his or her supervision should withdraw from the supervisory role.

3.3.4 Financial relationships

Financial relationships (for instance, where a staff member has a pecuniary interest in a company from which equipment is purchased or services obtained) can also give rise to a conflict of interest. Such a relationship must be disclosed before any question of purchasing or other financial or contractual decisions or dealings may arise. In general, staff should avoid involvement in such transactions.

3.3.5 Receipt of gifts

School staff should not ask for or encourage the giving of any form of gift or benefit in connection with the performance of their duties. Receipt of gifts can be perceived as an inducement to act in a particular way, thus creating a real or apparent conflict of interest.

3.3.6 Acceptance of outside work

The School permits staff to undertake paid outside work in accordance with School policy and guidelines, but it must be recognised that staff have a commitment to the duties of their appointment and position in the School.

Any use of School facilities in connection with outside work may only occur where prior approval has been obtained; the School must be recompensed for the full cost of such use.

3.3.7 Appropriate use of School information

School staff will gain access to information while engaged in teaching, research, administrative, technical and support activities. Some information may be unavailable to the School community generally or the public. Staff should respect the privacy of others and ensure that information of a personal nature, for instance, is accessed and used only for School purposes and is not disclosed except where School policy expressly permits this. Information of a commercial or strategic nature should also be handled with the utmost sensitivity, and should not be used for personal gain.

Staff having computerised access to personal information about others should not access or use that information for private purposes, and where a student confides in a staff member, the information should not be discussed with or revealed to others, except where this is necessary to take action or decisions concerning the student who has provided the information.

3.3.8 External activities and public comment

School staff are free to engage in party-political, professional, interest group and charitable activity, provided that participation does not give rise to a conflict of interest or impede the performance of a staff member's duties.

Where a School staff member comments publicly in connection with trade union, party political or interest group activities, it should be made clear that such comment is made on behalf of the union, political party or association which they represent and not in their capacity as members of staff of the School.

Public comment by staff in their capacity as private citizens is certainly permitted. In making private comment (including via electronic means such as electronic mail and the Internet), every effort must be made to ensure that the opinions expressed are not represented as an official view of the School.

Comment made by a staff member in a private capacity should not compromise or be perceived to compromise the staff member's ability to carry out his or her duties or implement duly approved School policy.

3.4 *Diligence*

The School aims to achieve the highest standards of excellence in teaching, research and administration. All School staff contribute to the achievement of this aim when they carry out their duties honestly and to the best of their ability.

3.4.1 Duties to be carried out in professional manner

School staff are expected to carry out their duties in a professional, responsible and conscientious manner, and to be accountable for their official conduct and decisions.

Generally, School staff have an obligation to carry out official decisions and policies faithfully and impartially. This obligation applies even though staff have the right to institute grievance procedures where they believe a decision is improper or they seek to have decisions or policy changed through appropriate channels.

3.4.2 Standards of performance

Staff members should endeavour to maintain and enhance their skills and expertise and keep up-to-date the knowledge associated with their particular field or area of work. High standards of performance and a focus on client service (whether clients are students, other staff, members of the academic or wider community) are expected. Staff should not allow outside work to interfere with the performance of their School duties.

3.4.3 Duty to take care

School staff should exercise due care in undertaking their activities, particularly where others will rely on advice or information offered. School staff have a duty to take reasonable care to avoid causing harm (including physical harm) to anyone. Thus, School staff should actively promote safe working practices and environments for everyone using School facilities.

When giving advice to students about School administrative or training procedures, staff must ensure that the information is up-to-date and accurate. Staff training others in workplace health and safety practices should make available written instructions, explain or give demonstrations.

3.4.4 Substance abuse

School staff should ensure that the personal use of alcohol or other drugs does not affect work performance or the safety and well-being of others.

3.4.5 Disclosure of fraud or corrupt conduct

Fraud, corrupt conduct or maladministration is contrary to law and is to the detriment of the School community generally. Staff are therefore encouraged to report genuinely suspected or known fraud or corrupt conduct to appropriate School or external authorities.

Where a person discloses impropriety or corrupt conduct to appropriate authorities, this must not result in harassment or other reprisal action by staff.

3.5 *Economy and Efficiency*

The resources required for the provision of teaching, research and community services by the School are significant. Staff therefore have a responsibility to ensure that these resources are managed effectively and without harm to the community or the environment.

3.5.1 Use of property and resources for School purposes

Material, financial and computerised resources should be used only for the legitimate School purposes for which they are provided.

Electronic mail and access to the Internet are provided to staff to support their employment activities, and should be used for this purpose.

Staff should not remove School equipment from the campus, except where this is necessary for use by the staff member for School purposes and where they have appropriate permission.

Staff members may occasionally need to use School resources, for instance, to make a telephone call for private purposes, or to use computerised systems such as the

Internet to enhance their skills in respect of these technologies. Staff should be sensitive that in doing so they are using School resources and should endeavour to ensure that such use is kept to a minimum.

3.5.2 Avoidance of waste and security of School property and facilities

Resources should be used economically and waste avoided. Equipment, materials and School facilities should be treated with appropriate care and secured against theft or misuse. This ensures that the maximum level of resources are available to discharge the School's functions. For example, School meeting and lecture rooms and staff offices should be secured when unoccupied.

The skill and time of School staff is the most significant School resource. Effective interpersonal and human resource management skills, and the provision of training and development opportunities, enhances this resource for the benefit of the individuals concerned, of the School generally and the wider community which the School serves.