

A STATEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS



1. Purpose

As an international centre of academic excellence, the University of Edinburgh wishes to demonstrate that its standing as a research and teaching institution of the highest quality is reflected in the professional values and standards it adopts. These values are intrinsic to its teaching and research activities, and to its contribution to the community and society through the process of education and through the students it educates.

By articulating these standards in a formal Statement, the University community also hopes to reflect fully the quality and commitment of its staff, and in so doing:

- to protect and enhance the standing of the academic profession and its associated professions, and
- to reflect the responsibilities which staff have to colleagues and students, to the academic world and to the wider community, and for their own individual professional standing, by demonstrating and promoting high standards of personal and professional behaviour, and
- to establish a framework within which other aspects of staffing policy can be developed.

2. Background

The 'Commissioners' Ordinance' (No 2700 – 1992) placed on the University, by statutory instrument, regulations for various aspects of the employment of academic and academic related staff which it based on the following guiding principles:

- *"to ensure that academic and academic related staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges"*
- *"to enable the University to provide education, promote learning and engage in research efficiently and economically"*
- *"to apply the principles of justice and fairness"*

(from the Commissioners' Ordinance)

As required by the Ordinance, its provisions have been incorporated into the University's internal regulations, and noted within these was the need to produce supporting rules for guidance. In developing these, however, the University has taken the opportunity to make a positive statement, by affirming unequivocally the shared values of the academic community and by indicating internally and externally that the University accepts the need to profess and maintain the highest standards in public life.

3. Scope

The statement was developed through wide consultation with the Edinburgh Association of University Teachers (EAUT) and within Schools/Support Departments and with staff. It has been

adopted by resolution of the Senatus Academicus and by the decision of the University Court. It relates to all permanent, fixed term, full time and part time staff in the following groups:

- Academic staff: All members of the professorial and non-professorial staff in academic teaching (AC and AT) grades or academic research (AM and AR) grades.
- Academic related staff: All members of staff in academic related grades, ie Administrative Staff (AA), Computing Staff (AD), Library Staff (AL), and staff in Other Related (AS) grades.

Through the statement the term 'the University' refers to the University community as a collegial whole. It recognises that some staff have responsibility for colleagues in a leadership or managerial capacity, either as an enduring or temporary feature of their roles, and the statement reflects, therefore, the standards of conduct displayed in the exercise of these responsibilities as well as those of the individual scholar or professional.

The statement describes general standards of professional conduct to which the University community is committed. In supporting and adhering to those standards, staff will also wish, and will be expected, to have regard to other more specific policy statements and Codes of Practice (eg Health and Safety Policy, Code of Practice on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, etc). In addition, some groups of staff have complementary and supporting codes of conduct for their particular or specialist profession.

4. Standards

4.1 *Academic and professional freedom*: to have the right, and to ensure that others retain the right, to question and test received wisdom and put forward new ideas and potentially controversial or unpopular opinions.

4.2 *Responsibility*: within prevailing constraints and opportunities, to act in such a way as to support the highest academic standards and enable the University to provide education, promote learning and engage in research efficiently and effectively.

4.3 *Fairness*: to act with integrity and without bias in dealings with others, whether informal or formal.

4.4 *Co-operation*: to contribute responsibly to the work of the discipline, School/Support Department and/or relevant groups, and to observe the established rules and procedures of the University (which are designed to comply with the law and good practice)

4.5 *Academic and professional capability*: all academic and related staff are expected to have attained an appropriate level of academic and/or professional achievement, knowledge and skills required for their role. Thereafter, they are expected to maintain and update their personal, academic and/or professional development and, whether in an individual, managerial or corporate capacity, to encourage similar personal/academic/professional development in others.

4.6 *Security*: to protect and enhance a working environment for themselves, for colleagues and for students, which is free from harassment and the abuse of power.

4.7 *Equality of opportunity*: to promote and adhere to fair, non-discriminatory working and employment policies and practices.

4.8 *Safety*: to take all reasonable steps to ensure, preserve and promote a safe working environment for themselves, colleagues, students, visitors and the public (as appropriate) in accordance with duties imposed by the law.

4.9 *Information and Confidentiality*: to ensure the full and fair provision of information to those who have the right to expect it (eg students, colleagues, and those charged with the responsibility for organising work, courses, etc); to respect the legitimate needs for confidentiality.

The paragraphs above describe the standards of behaviour supported by the staff of the University of Edinburgh. Implied within them is the converse: that the persistent neglect or undermining of these standards is not acceptable to the University community. It follows, therefore, as part of its positive commitment to the highest standards, that there are some areas of conduct which are, by definition, unacceptable to the academic profession and its associated professions, for example:

- Any act of physical assault, or other offence against the person, bribery and corruption, theft, fraud, forgery or any serious crime any of which is directly associated with the fulfillment of their academic, professional or working function.
- Malicious injury to other(s) so that their academic or professional reputation or effectiveness in carrying out their job is unjustifiably impaired (eg maliciously injuring the professional reputation or practice of a colleague).
- Failures in integrity, eg. Cheating; plagiarism; falsification, wrongful manipulation or fabrication of results or data; failure to declare conflicts of interest; professional negligence; false claims to qualifications, authorship, ownership or honours.
- Financial impropriety at work, abuse or unauthorised use of the University's property or authority.

5. Relationship with Disciplinary and Grievance Regulations

This statement is not part of the University's disciplinary or grievance procedures. The statement has the formal status of a Code of Practice and failure to adhere to the standards described in it would be taken into account by any authorised individual or committee charged with carrying out disciplinary or grievance procedures. These are:

- *Grievance Procedure (Academic and Related Staff)*
- *Disciplinary Policy, Procedure and Regulations (Academic and Related Staff)*

Copies of these can be obtained from your HR adviser or www.humanresources.ed.ac.uk