

# Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy

## Section 1 - Summary

(1) The purpose of this Policy is to promote a professional, inclusive, safe, respectful and productive workplace at Victoria University (VU).

(2) The Policy:

- a. Establishes core professional and behavioural expectations for all VU staff; and
- b. Outlines the consequences of engaging in behaviour that is not acceptable.

## Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(3) HESF Standard 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety; 5.2 Academic and Research Integrity; 6.1 Corporate Governance

(4) ESOS Standard 5 Younger Overseas Students

## Section 3 - Scope

(5) This Policy applies to all Staff of the University:

- a. in the workplace, including outside normal working hours;
- b. during work activities, including dealing with students or attending other external premises in the course of employment;
- c. at work events, including conferences, seminars and social functions;
- d. at all times when performing work on behalf of VU; and
- e. in relation to all interactions with or discussions about a person or people you work with, be it through phone, email, text messaging, social media or any other virtual interaction.

(6) This Policy does not apply to students of the University. Students should reference the [Student Charter Policy](#).

(7) Where there is inconsistency or uncertainty between this Policy and other employment related policies, this Policy prevails.

(8) The examples provided in each section of this Policy are intended as indicative, not comprehensive. Behaviours staff are expected to avoid are not limited to items specifically mentioned within each section.

(9) This Policy is not incorporated into the staff members' contracts of employment but its content does operate as lawful and reasonable directions to staff members.

## Section 4 - Definitions

(10) Staff

(11) Conflicts of interest: - a conflict between a person's personal or private interests and performance of their duties and responsibilities to VU, which influences their actions as a VU employee or is contrary to the interests of VU. Private interests include both financial and non-financial interests, and can include the interests of family members and close friends or associates. Conflicts of interest can be actual, potential or perceived:

- a. Actual conflict of interest: There is a real conflict between a staff member's VU duties and private interests.
- b. Potential conflict of interest: This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken now to mitigate that future risk.
- c. Perceived conflict of interest: The public or a third party could form the view that a staff member's private or professional interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.

## Section 5 - Policy Statement

(12) VU aims to employ and develop a workforce characterised by flexibility, agility and forward thinking. Our workforce is committed to providing and enabling the best possible student experience in everything we do. This informs the way we expect all staff members to perform their roles.

(13) VU is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and safe workplace where staff are enabled to do their jobs well. Expectations of staff are set out in this and other policies to foster and maintain a professional environment where everyone understands their responsibilities and obligations.

(14) As a VU staff member, you are required to comply with:

- a. all relevant Commonwealth and State legislation, regulations, codes, standards and agreements derived from legislation;
- b. University statutes, regulations, policies and procedures;
- c. your particular terms and conditions of employment; and
- d. the VU Values which are a living set of actions that underpin our purpose and require all staff to be:
  - i. always welcoming;
  - ii. always ethical;
  - iii. always shaping the future; and
  - iv. always together.

### Part A - Respect

(15) You must treat students, other staff and members of the community with respect. This includes, but is not limited to, the expectation that you will, in person and in online contexts:

- a. Have due regard for the rights and dignity of others at all times.
- b. Be courteous, honest and fair when dealing with others and when making decisions that impact others.
- c. Treat all people equitably and with dignity, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion, marital status, relationship or family status, age, political conviction or other attributes as protected by law.
- d. Use appropriate language at all times.

(16) You are also expected to use respectful language towards others in any communications related to your employment, including conversations on social media. This requirement exists regardless of:

- a. whether or not the communication took place within working hours;
- b. whether or not the communication took place on VU premises or using VU equipment or networks;
- c. whether or not you purport to speak on behalf of the University.

(17) To uphold clause (15), you must among other things:

- a. Comply with the VU [Bullying Prevention and Management Policy](#).
- b. Comply with the VU [Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Management Policy](#).
- c. Comply with the VU [Sexual Harassment Response Policy](#).
- d. Comply with the VU [Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity Policy](#).

(18) To uphold clause (15), you must not, in person or via any other form of activity:

- a. Bully others.
- b. Sexually harass or assault others.
- c. Engage in behaviour or use language in discriminatory ways with respect to attributes protected by law (including, but not limited to, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and parental status).
- d. Commit or threaten any acts of violence.
- e. Act aggressively or in an intimidating manner to others.
- f. Speak loudly and aggressively to others.
- g. [Victimise others](#).
- h. Vilify anyone.
- i. Stalk, or assist another person to stalk, anyone.
- j. Make a false claim of any of these behaviours against another person.

## Part B - Professionalism

(19) You are expected to conduct yourself professionally at all times in your role at VU. This includes, but is not limited to, expectations that you will:

- a. Dress in neat and clean attire appropriate to your work area at all times.
- b. Observe appropriate hygiene and personal presentation standards to facilitate comfort and safety.
- c. Attend work punctually in line with the requirements of your role.
- d. Carry out your duties with diligence and competence.
- e. Complete any required staff training in a timely fashion.
- f. Follow any reasonable direction given to you by your manager with respect to your work.
- g. Protect the privacy of others and maintain appropriate confidentiality regarding personal and commercial matters.

(20) To uphold clause (19), you must not, among other things:

- a. Make statements on social media or other forums in which you claim to speak on behalf of the University, or could be construed as speaking on behalf of the University, unless it is your job to do so or you are authorised to do so.
- b. Fail to notify your manager of your inability to attend work, complete assigned work in a timely manner or

safely carry out the requirements of your role, without reasonable excuse.

- c. Inappropriately disclose confidential or private information that you can access as part of your role or otherwise.

## Part C - Honesty and Integrity

(21) You are expected to behave honestly and with integrity at all times. This includes, but is not limited to, the expectation that you will:

- a. Behave ethically and take action to prevent unethical practices.
- b. Conduct all financial transactions involving University funds to which you are a party with transparency and integrity.
- c. Report suspected breaches of integrity by others where these may occur.
- d. Maintain strict standards of integrity in respect to your own academic and research work, including respecting the intellectual property of others.

(22) To uphold clause (21), you must not, among other things:

- a. Make false or misleading statements to VU during recruitment or during the course of your employment, or fail to disclose a relevant matter.
- b. Accept gifts or favours that may be construed as influencing your decisions on behalf of VU.
- c. Use your position to pursue personal, sexual or financial relationships with other staff, students or members of the community or coerce other staff, students or members of the community into personal, sexual or financial relationships.
- d. Defraud, or attempt to defraud, VU in any way.
- e. Induce or attempt to induce another employee to perform work in competition with the University or to act in a manner contrary to employment obligations.
- f. Solicit the business or service of a student in competition with the University.

## Part D - Children and Young People

(23) You are expected to act appropriately at all times when dealing with children and young people under the age of 18.

(24) This includes, but is not limited to the expectation that you will:

- a. Be familiar with, and abide by, all expectations laid out in the [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Policy](#), [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People Procedure](#) and [Safety and Welfare of Children and Young People - Staff Code of Conduct](#).
- b. Never engage in any behaviour with a child or young person which constitutes abuse, including verbal abuse.
- c. Take steps to minimise any exposure to harm for children and young people.
- d. Follow the directions in the [Appendix 1 - Child Safety Reporting Process](#) if you become aware of a possible instance of child abuse or harm. (NB: Reporting incidents is a mandatory requirement).

## Part E - Managing Conflict of Interest

(25) The University is committed to fostering a culture of honesty, fairness and ethical behaviour and maintaining integrity in decision-making and research. At all times, staff are expected to perform their duties in the interests of achieving the University's mission and strategic objectives.

(26) As part of upholding these standards all staff must take reasonable steps to avoid any actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest and act in the best interests of the University.

(27) There are common situations where conflicts of interest issues can arise, such as during the conduct of certain University bodies or committees, where VU has specific policy instrument in place to address conflicts of interest. A policy instrument may include a University policy, procedure, statute, regulation or committee terms of reference, such as the following:

- a. [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Policy](#);
- b. [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) and [Recruitment and Selection Procedure](#);
- c. [Purchasing Procedure](#);
- d. [University Council - Conduct of Council Business and Standing Orders Procedure](#);
- e. [Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure](#);
- f. [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour - Staff-Authored Texts Procedure](#);
- g. Or another policy instrument applying to a situation, body or committee that requires a conflict of interest disclosure.

(28) Staff members should manage any conflict of interest issue in accordance with the applicable VU policy instrument listed above. If none of the above examples are applicable to the situation, body or committee, staff members should manage the conflict in accordance with this policy. If you are unsure as to what policy should apply, you should seek advice from your Manager and/or P&C Business Partner.

(29) Examples of a conflict of interest include, but are not limited to:

- a. Soliciting or accepting outside work within the area of professional expertise for which VU employs you, without declaring this to your Manager.
- b. Directly or indirectly using University funds, resources or assets in a way which may be of benefit to you in a personal capacity.
- c. Directly or indirectly using University funds, resources or assets to make any political contributions or donations or attend any political fundraisers as a representative of the University.
- d. Directly or indirectly entering into a contract or arrangement with VU (other than a contract or arrangement relating to your employment at VU).
- e. Using the University's intellectual property and resources to benefit a third party without prior written authority of the University.
- f. Managing or assessing the performance of or supervising a person with whom you have, or have had, a close personal or familial relationship (including a romantic or sexual relationship).
- g. Teaching, undertaking assessment of, or supervising a student with whom you have, or have had, a close personal or familial relationship (including a romantic or sexual relationship).

## **Disclosure of a Conflict of Interest**

(30) All staff have a responsibility to identify and declare any conflict of interest at any time prior to or during their employment at or service to the University. This includes, but is not limited to, the expectation that you will:

- a. Disclose actual or potential conflict of interest and, where appropriate, withdraw yourself immediately from the situation giving rise to the conflict until the conflict has been addressed under these procedures.
- b. Declare all private paid outside work, including directorships and board memberships.
- c. Declare all commercial relationships that may constitute an actual or potential conflict of interest.
- d. Declare all personal, familial, romantic or sexual relationships that may constitute an actual or potential conflict

of interest.

- e. Declare all affiliations or relationships with a foreign government or foreign institution, including any financial benefit or commitment in respect of any such affiliation or relationship.
- f. Report any concerns you have in relation to a conflict of interest that you have knowledge of that relates to another staff member.

(31) A conflict of interest must be disclosed or declared where possible, prior to the conflict of interest arising and in all other circumstances as soon as practicable after becoming aware of it. In order to disclose or declare a conflict of interest that is not covered by a policy instrument listed in clause (27):

- a. employees must notify their Manager;
- b. members of the Executive must notify the Vice-Chancellor (or nominee); and
- c. contractors, consultants, partners and other associates of the University must notify their Manager or the person within the University who has engaged their services,

by completing the [Conflict of Interest Declaration form](#) and submitting it to the VU Conflict of interest register [COI@vu.edu.au](mailto:COI@vu.edu.au).

(32) Where the circumstances of a previously disclosed conflict of interest change, including where there is no longer a conflict of interest, the staff member must again advise the person previously notified under clause (31) and submit a revised [Conflict of Interest Declaration form](#).

## **Management of a Conflict of Interest**

(33) The staff member with the conflict of interest will be required to formulate and undertake, in consultation with the person notified under clause (31), actions to remove or minimise the risk of the conflict of interest in a conflict of interest management plan. The staff member with the conflict of interest and the person notified under clause (31) are responsible for ensuring the conflict of interest management plan is implemented.

(34) Examples of actions to remove a conflict of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- a. rearranging the staff member and/or colleague's work;
- b. having the staff member or student be managed, supervised, or taught by another staff member;
- c. having the staff member leave a meeting when the matter is to be discussed and/or decided;
- d. requesting or directing the staff member to take actions to remove the conflict of interest, such as relinquish a financial interest or cease outside employment.
- e. a decision by VU not to enter into a particular contract or arrangement.

(35) Examples of actions to minimise the risk of a conflict of interest may include, but are not limited to:

- a. requiring additional levels of review, approval or authorisation;
- b. reducing decision-making authority;
- c. requiring self-reporting by the staff member of steps taken to ensure impartiality;
- d. setting criteria for decision making; and
- e. review of documentation of decisions against set criteria by a third party.

(36) Where a conflict of interest is determined to be of high risk, for example where the conflict of interest cannot be readily minimised or removed through a conflict of interest management plan, the person notified at clause (31) must notify and consult with People and Culture.

## Part F - Using University Resources

(37) You must use all VU facilities resources, including IT resources, appropriately and avoid waste by reducing, reusing or recycling where possible.

(38) You must safeguard, properly use, protect and care for VU resources at all times.

(39) To uphold the principles above, you must not, among other things:

- a. Use any VU owned or managed resources to engage in any activity that is illegal under state, federal or international law.
- b. Use any VU owned or managed resource for the purpose of creating, accessing or transmitting or otherwise dealing with content which may reasonably be regarded as objectionable, obscene or offensive, or in a manner which is contrary to other University policies or which may otherwise expose the University to legal liability.
- c. Use any VU network or IT equipment to breach copyright or intellectual property rights of others, including the viewing, downloading or installing of pirated material or applications which are not licensed for use by the University.
- d. Use VU IT facilities and services for your own private gain, unless you have been given specific permission to do so.

## Part G - Health and Safety

(40) You must comply with occupational health and safety legislation and the University's health and safety [policies and procedures](#).

(41) You must ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that you adopt best practice occupational health and safety processes in the performance of your role.

(42) You must take care not to put yourself or others in the University community at risk through unsafe practices or inappropriate behaviour.

(43) If you observe a hazard that may create a health and safety risk, you must take appropriate steps to mitigate or report the hazard.

(44) You must inform your Manager of any injury or health issues that may affect your ability to carry out the inherent requirements of your job.

(45) Specifically, you must not:

- a. Fail to declare a medical condition or immunisation status that may impact on your employment or put others at risk, or fail to quarantine following a known infectious illness.
- b. Fail to observe any safety protocols that apply to your work area.
- c. Fail to obey the directions of any designated Wardens in an emergency or emergency drill situation.
- d. Fail to properly use any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issued to you.
- e. Engage in University activities, especially the operation of University plant or vehicles, while impaired by any substance.

## Part H - Academic Freedom

(46) You have a right to intellectual freedom of enquiry and expression. This applies to areas of intellectual life over which you, as an academic, can demonstrate that you possess a level of expertise.

(47) When exercising intellectual freedom, you must, among other things:

- a. respect the intellectual property rights of others;
- b. exercise intellectual freedom in a manner consistent with a responsible and honest search for and dissemination of knowledge; and,
- c. support the role of the University as a place of independent learning and thought, where ideas may be put forward and reasoned opinion expressed freely while maintaining respect for others.

(48) Intellectual freedom does not justify breaching any aspects of this or any other VU policy.

## **Part I - Consequences of Breaching this Policy**

(49) If you fail to behave in accordance with this Policy, the University may take disciplinary action against you.

(50) You should report suspected breaches of this Policy in the first instance to your manager or other senior staff member as appropriate. Particular breaches may be dealt with in accordance to the [Staff Complaints Resolution Procedure](#), the relevant enterprise agreement, or another policy of the University where applicable.

(51) Nothing in this Policy restricts your right and ability to report concerns as set out within the [Public Interest Disclosures Policy](#).

## **Section 6 - Procedures**

(52) [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour - Staff-Authored Texts Procedure](#)



## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	7th January 2022
<b>Review Date</b>	7th January 2025
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Vice-Chancellor
<b>Approval Date</b>	10th December 2021
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Staff"** - Staff means: - all employees of the University, on all domestic and offshore locations, including student residences, and while engaged in all work-related activities such as conferences and work-sponsored social occasions; - all contractors and consultants performing work on University sites or on behalf of the University; - visiting academics, honorary, adjunct and exchange staff; - the Council and its committees; and - any volunteer in the workplace and study environment.