

REVIEW OF SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

WORKING GROUP: STAFFING, LEARNERS & LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Code of Practice

An Interim Report

Introduction

1. SFEU and HMle were asked to take the work of the SLALE sub-group on codes of practice further. The SFEU work on codes of practice related to child protection has been considered by the group and during discussion it was suggested that existing college approaches be considered.
2. An email was sent to Assistant and Depute Principals in all colleges requesting codes of practice and indicating the context of the request. Fourteen colleges responded. These are reported upon below. Other colleges indicated, while they did not have such a code, they would be interested in developments. One college provided a set of detailed working conditions document and indicated they did not see value in anything beyond this.
3. The diversity of returns prompted thinking about the purpose of the exercise. SFEU and HMle would value discussion at the group to assist completion of the task. To assist the discussion, this paper begins with some general discussion attempting to gain clarity on purpose of such codes.

Governing Individual Autonomy

4. The requirement to exercise some degree of autonomy is a feature of modern working life. Few occupations are so predictable that all circumstances are known and in which expected behaviour for all these circumstances can be determined and learned. In most occupations, new circumstances have to be dealt with. These new circumstances may arise from a complex set of internal and external drivers including changes in legislation, business pressures including changing stakeholder demands and new knowledge and technology.
5. This is reflected in the modern use of the term 'profession'. Many working individuals would describe themselves as 'professional' to reflect the degree of autonomy which they are expected to apply. It has entered into common usage. Generally, practitioners in the occupation value this label.
6. In addition, some occupations operate in areas where there is significant public interest and the need to regulate the exercise of individual autonomy. Indeed, the more traditional use of the term 'professional' is

specific to particular job occupations in which there are high levels of individual autonomy with mechanisms within which that autonomy needs to be applied. These mechanisms can come with some statutory requirement.

7. The degree of autonomy and the exercise of it needs to be governed in some way in order to provide users (internal and/or external) of the service confidence in the quality of service received. The means by which it is governed provides employees in organisations with clarity of expectation and protection against poor employment practices.

8. Codes of Practice are one means by which individual autonomy may be governed. However, many other terms are used with essentially the same function of providing a broad statement of expectations to help govern behaviour in a range of circumstances. Other terms such as 'code of ethics', 'professional values' and 'code of conduct' will have subtle differences in meaning. For the purposes of this paper, these are subsumed under the broad term 'code of practice'. They have a significance in that activity out with these expectations can lead to action impacting upon employment status.

9. Codes of Practice are not the only means to govern individual autonomy. Employees will work with a framework of job descriptions, role profiles and policies which will impact upon individuals. These codes of practice (or their equivalent) can exist at three levels – 'traditional professional', 'employer expectations' and 'specific circumstances'.

Traditional professional

10. This covers situations where a professional body governs individual autonomy in particular occupations. Becoming a member of a professional body involves making a commitment to a code of practice or equivalent. In addition, the professional body will set out entry and experience requirements. Most modern professional bodies also take an interest in continuous professional development and maintenance of expertise through CPD can a requirement for continuing membership.

11. Significant numbers of staff in Scotland's Colleges belong to such professional bodies eg in Finance and in HR. Membership of the relevant body is sometimes sought in recruitment and encouraged in staff development. In addition to indicating certain standards of performance, such membership is valued as public recognition of expertise and commitment in the relevant specialist area. Such staff operate to a professional code of practice or equivalent determined out with the specific workplace.

12. Some members of staff in colleges will be members of the General Teaching Council of Scotland and so operate within a code of practice incorporating (i) Professional Knowledge and Understanding, (ii) Professional Skills and Abilities and (iii) Professional Values and Personal Commitment.

13. The Higher Education Academy, while not a professional body, has developed a professional standards framework for teaching and supporting

learning in higher education. This incorporates a set of professional values. Registration is voluntary and staff in FE Colleges supporting HE learners may apply.

Employer Expectations

14. Some employers have introduced codes of practice or equivalent to govern staff autonomy. These have been developed through consultative processes and have a status as part of contractual arrangements.

15. Returns from eight colleges indicated they had adopted this approach. The key document came in a variety of forms. These documents came in a variety of forms and they are summarised in the annexe. The variety emerging from colleges indicates the diversity of the sector, the different understanding of the place of code of practice and their value.

Specific Circumstances

16. A number of returns interpreted the request for code of practice to provide documents to cover specific circumstances. These are often necessary in order to deal with specific requirements. Four colleges submitted their code of practice related to the protection of under-18's and vulnerable adults. One college submitted a document relating to professional conduct between staff and students.

**Code of Practice
Analysis of Returns**

Employment Expectations

College	Title	Scope	Notes on Content
Aberdeen College		Two documents exist for (i) lecturers and (ii) support staff.	
Adam Smith College	Code of Conduct	All staff	<p>'The aim of this Code is to provide guidance on the expectations that the Board of Governors and the Principal have of all staff employed by the college. It provides a framework of principles. It is not intended to be exhaustive, and staff who have any questions should contact their Line Manager or a member of the HR team.'</p> <p>Statement of College Values</p> <p>Statement of Specific Principles (Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life)</p> <p>Statement of Expectations (Eg – It is important for the College to project a positive and professional image to the community. Staff are therefore expected to carry out their activities with integrity, objectivity and efficiency.)</p> <p>References to college policy statement.</p>

Angus College	Employment Charter	All Staff	<p>'The purpose of this charter is to outline the obligations and standards all staff can expect in respect of their employment with Angus College.'</p> <p>'This charter aims to make explicit the aspirations of Angus College in encouraging, involving and empowering all staff to achieve excellence within a professional and supportive environment. The Charter aims to make clear the College's recognition of the importance of the development of an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect within the workplace.'</p> <p>Sections on relevant college policies, processes and procedures. Includes a section on 'Rights and Obligations' in which staff requirements are stated followed by college actions. For example, 'Staff should accept responsibility for developing their skills and abilities to increase effectiveness at work' In return the College will offer appropriate and focused staff development opportunities to ...'</p>
Elmwood College	Staff Charter	All Staff	<p>Short document introduced with a short statement 'Elmwood College is committed to providing staff with a positive and supportive work environment where they will be given the opportunity to achieve success for both themselves and for the college.</p> <p>This followed by a section on expectation of managers in managing staff and expectations of staff.</p>

Glasgow Metropolitan College	Code of Conduct	Senior Management	<p>'This code sets out the minimum standard of conduct expected of senior managers within the college.'</p> <p>Nolan Principles of Public Life expanded to clarify expectations eg 'as a senior manager you must assist the College to make the decision-making process transparent and open.'</p>
North Glasgow College	Staff Code of Conduct	All staff	<p>The aim of the Code of Conduct is to ensure consistency in the understanding of expected conduct and/or performance and also consistency in the understanding of conduct and/or performance which is not acceptable.</p> <p>Sections on Communications, College Facilities, Confidentiality, expenditure, Harassment, Discrimination, Canvassing, Suppliers, Course Materials, Identification, Professionalism.</p>
Moray College	Code of Conduct for College Employees	All staff	<p>... 'Management and Staff Unions are agreed that the College must adopt the highest level of ethical standards. Accordingly, it is deemed appropriate to publish a Code of Conduct for ALL College staff.'</p> <p>Sections are the Nolan Principles of Public Life together with relevant college policies.</p>

West Lothian College	Professional Code of Practice	Two separate documents for (i) curriculum delivery staff; and (ii) service area staff.	<p>'The key areas, which underpin the professional code of practice and the development and enhancement of professional standard, are:</p> <p>Expertise, Collegiality and Partnerships, Responsibility, Legislation, Responsiveness to individual needs, inclusiveness, Conduct, Professional Relationships.</p> <p>For example : 'Staff will achieve and maintain the highest level of expertise in the areas of learning and teaching and in relevant subject areas.</p> <p>The differences in the two documents reflect different job functions.</p>
----------------------	-------------------------------	--	---