

Partner Code of Conduct

Introduction

Partners work in several roles for the HCPC. They make important and valuable contributions to HCPC's decision-making processes by providing the following expertise:

- **Panel Members** and **Panel Chairs** together form Panels which conduct hearings and make other decisions in Fitness to Practise cases;
- **Legal Assessors** advise those participating in Fitness to Practise proceedings, ensure those proceedings are fair and legally compliant and help Panels to draft their decisions;
- **Registrant Assessors** and **Medical Assessors** provide professional expertise in Fitness to practise proceedings;
- **Visitors** evaluate and report on institutions providing and delivering (or proposing to provide and deliver) approved education and training;
- **Registration Assessors** assess registration applications to ensure that applicants meet the required standards of proficiency;
- **CPD Assessors** assess registrants' CPD submissions to ensure that they meet the relevant HCPC standards.
- **Registration Appeals Panel Members** consider and determine appeals made against decisions of the Education and Training Committee (the Committee) or the Registrar

HCPC is an open and transparent organisation and Partners should be aware that high standards of conduct and personal integrity are essential to maintaining public confidence in the HCPC.

In performing their roles, Partners are expected to maintain high standards of conduct. This Code of Conduct applies to all Partners and compliance with its terms is part of the contract between each Partner and the HCPC. Partners must ensure that they are familiar with the Code and that their actions comply with its provisions.

The Code of Conduct

General principles

Partners are expected to act at all times in the manner of someone associated with a public regulatory body. They should refrain from any illegal, dishonest or unethical conduct at all times, not just when they are providing services to the HCPC.

Partners must:

- act in good faith, with honesty, integrity and probity;
- promote the HCPC's objective of protecting the public;
- comply with the seven principles of public life (set out below);
- treat others equally, fairly and with respect; and
- take personal responsibility for adhering to this Code of Conduct.

Partners must not:

- act in a manner which may bring HCPC into disrepute; or
- misuse their position for personal gain or to promote their other interests.

Non Discrimination

Partners must treat others with dignity and fairness. Partners must not discriminate against anyone because of their religion, belief, race, colour, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, social and economic status or national origin.

Conflicts of interests

Partners must disclose any interest which they may have (or might be seen to have) in the outcome of any decision in which they are asked to participate. Partners must also disclose any interest that could otherwise prejudice any service they are asked to perform.

Partners must consider potential conflicts of interest at the earliest stage possible and declare any interest as soon as they realise it is necessary to do so. A Partner must not participate in any decision or perform any other service until the potential conflict is resolved.

Partners must recognise that:

- in dealing with conflicts of interest, the test to be applied is not whether an interest would influence their decision, but whether a member of the public, acting reasonably, may think that it might have such an influence;
- similar considerations apply to the interests of a spouse or close relative, as a member of the public, acting reasonably, may regard those interests as effectively being the interests of the Partner; and
- the key principle is the need for transparency in respect of any interest which may be regarded by a member of the public, acting reasonably, as potentially affecting the Partner's objectivity.

A Partner who is unclear about any potential conflict of interest should seek guidance from the HCPC Partner Manager.

Confidentiality

Partners must not disclose or make any other use of confidential information to which they have access other than for a proper purpose relating to the performance of services for the HCPC or as required by law.

Partners must take appropriate steps to ensure that confidential papers and information are stored securely.

Partners must promptly notify the HCPC Partner Manager of any breach in confidentiality of which they become aware.

A Partner who is unclear about the status of any information should seek guidance from the HCPC Partner Manager.

Performance

Partners must perform their services within the timescales set by the HCPC and to a reasonable and appropriate standard.

A Partner who is unable to provide services which are requested by the HCPC must notify the relevant HCPC employee as soon as possible.

A Partner who is unable to provide services for a prolonged period should notify the HCPC Partner Manager.

Partners must not perform services for the HCPC:

- whilst on sickness leave or suspended from their employment (unless the employer has provided prior written consent);

- if they are subject to any fitness to practise, disciplinary or similar proceedings;
- in the case of Panel Members and Panel Chairs, if any provision of Rule 8 of the Health and Care Professions Council (Practice Committees and Miscellaneous Amendments) Rules 2009 (suspension of committee membership) applies;
- in any other circumstances which would bring the HCPC into disrepute.

Training

Partners are expected to take full advantage of the training opportunities which the HCPC provides to enable them to keep up to date with best practice.

Partners must complete their induction and refresher training and a Partner who fails to do so will not be permitted to perform services for the HCPC until such time as the training has been undertaken.

Partners must also complete any mandatory online training e.g. annual information security training within any timescales specified.

A Partner who, without reasonable excuse, persistently fails to attend or does not complete online training is liable to have their contract terminated.

Performance review

Partners must participate in the HCPC's performance review system and comply with the associated procedures.

Fees and Expenses

Partners must comply with the HCPC's policies and procedures for the payment of fees and expenses.

Anti-bribery, gifts and hospitality

Partners must comply with the HCPC's Partner Anti-Bribery, Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

Partners must not accept any gift, hospitality or benefit from any person which might be perceived as being capable of improperly influencing any decision the Partner may make on behalf of, or any advice that the Partners may provide to, the HCPC.

Partners are personally responsible for the decision to accept any gift, hospitality or benefit and must ensure that their decisions and advice are not improperly influenced by the promise or acceptance of any gift or other inducement.

A Partner who is unsure about the appropriateness of accepting any gift, hospitality or benefit should seek guidance from the HCPC Partner Manager.

Information Technology

Partners must comply with the HCPC Information Technology Policy and must sign the HCPC Information Systems Agreement prior to being granted access to HCPC information systems.

Methods of communication

Partners must support the ongoing development of HCPC processes and adapt to variations in methods of communication and distribution of information, for example receipt of documents online instead of by post.

HCPC employees

Partners must respect all HCPC employees and the roles they perform and treat them with courtesy and dignity at all times. It is expected that HCPC employees will show the same consideration in return.

A Partner who wishes to commend the work of any HCPC employee may speak to the employee concerned. However, a Partner who wishes to raise concerns about the behaviour or performance of an employee should not speak to the employee directly but inform the HCPC Director or manager who is responsible for that employee.

Breach of the Code

Compliance with the Code of Conduct is a contractual obligation.

Minor breaches of this Code will, in the first instance, be dealt with informally by the HCPC Partner Manager in conjunction with the relevant HCPC Director or manager.

Where there is evidence of a serious, deliberate or continued breach of this Code, formal action may be taken against the Partner concerned, including termination of the Partner's contract.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

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www.public-standards.gov.uk

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.