



Church Of Scotland
Ministries Council – Ministries Development Staff

Code of Conduct

CODE OF CONDUCT

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Version	Date	Author	Details/ Changes
1	April 2011	Ministries Council	New Policy
2	June 2019	HR	Updated Policy
3	September 19	HR	Updated sections 5,6,7 &9
4	July 2023	Karen Smith, HR Manager	Sections 9,13,15&19 – update due to staffing structure and national office terminology



1. Purpose and Scope

Mutual trust is the foundation of the employment contract between the Ministries Council (hereafter referred to as MC) and its employees. The Code of Conduct gives direction on how to behave to avoid any action that could compromise this trust, and sets out fundamental standards expected from employees within and outwith the workplace.

2. Process

This Code of Conduct provides a framework for all MC employees on how they should:

- Conduct themselves towards other employees or colleagues, employee representatives, local churches, members, customers (where appropriate) and others with whom they may come into contact in their work
- Perform their duties and obligations
- Practise fairness and equity

The Code of Conduct is established on the following values; integrity, honesty, conscientiousness, compassion, courtesy, fairness and respect. This relies on individuals being responsible for their own professional behaviour within the provision of this Code, other policies and relevant legislation.

Where there is doubt on the application of the Code or the appropriate course of action to be adopted, employees should discuss the matter with their line manager, thus providing protection for themselves in the conduct of their work.

Those employees e.g. solicitors who are subject to a separate Code of Conduct laid down by their professional body must also comply with its provisions.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Managers are responsible and accountable for:

- Informing employees in their teams about the Code of Conduct and relevant policies and procedures
- Ensuring that employees have received appropriate training and/or performance counselling to ensure the required standard is achieved
- Acting consistently and fairly in dealing with behaviour that breaches this code

All employees have a responsibility to:

- Be personally responsible and accountable for their own performance, behaviour and attendance in the workplace
- Undertake their duties and behave in a manner that is consistent with the provisions of the Code of Conduct
- Comply with MC procedures
- Promote a positive, safe and healthy environment in the conduct of their work

4. Use of facilities and equipment

Employees should take all possible care when using the Church's property and goods and ensure that they are used efficiently, carefully and honestly. Unless permission has been granted by the employee's manager, resources are not to be used for private purposes.



5. Privacy and use of personal and official information

Employees have an obligation to ensure that professional information is secured against loss, misuse, unauthorised access, modification or disclosure. Employees have a duty to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and security of official information for which they are responsible. Further details are available in the following policies; Data Protection; Data Retention and Data Security Breach Management.

6. Information Technology

Employees must not access information which they are not authorised to access or use, and must not allow any other person access for any reason. Employees must take all reasonable precautions, including password maintenance and file protection measures to prevent unauthorised access and have an obligation to maintain the security and confidentiality of the information systems over which they have responsibility or control. Further details are available in the following policies; Bring Your Own Device; Mobile Phone and Acceptable Use; Data Protection; Data Retention and Data Security Breach Management.

7. Conflict of interest

There may be situations where employees' outside interests could be seen to compromise their role or the reputation of their Department or the wider Church. It is important that employees do not allow their private interests to interfere with the performance of their duties. If an employee becomes aware of the potential for conflict of interest, they must advise their line manager. The MC expects employees to avoid any detrimental outcome as a result of a conflict of interest.

Employees must also ensure that there is no conflict or incompatibility between their personal interests and the impartial fulfilment of their duties. It should be noted that any involvement in voluntary work and organisations constitutes outside interests and as such advice should be sought from the line manager if there is potential for conflict of interest.

Any MC employee with a personal relationship with their line manager or colleague, will be required to declare this interest and for both parties to work with MC/HR to complete and sign a personal relationship at work form.

The separate Conflict of Interest Policy provides more details and guidance.

8. Financial interests

Employees should avoid any financial involvement or undertaking that could directly or indirectly compromise or undermine the performance of their duties or the Church's activities. Financial conflict of interest may arise where an employee or their spouse, partner or close relative has a financial interest in a company or other business and is in a position to influence contracts or transactions between the Church and that business.



9. Acceptance of commissions, gifts or benefits

Employees should not accept a gift, secret commission or a benefit if the intent of the gift or the benefit is to induce the employee to waive or reduce requirements or to extend a financial or other benefit to a person or organisation outside the Church. As a general rule, no employee should accept a gift or benefit if it could be seen as intended or likely to cause that person to:

- perform their job in a particular way, which the person would not normally do,
- or deviate from the proper or usual course of duty.

Employees may accept token gifts or benefits in circumstances approved by a member of the Senior Management Team provided that there is no possibility that the employee might be perceived to be compromised in the process.

Gifts of a nominal value generally used for promotional purposes by the donor, or moderate acts of hospitality may be accepted by employees. As a general rule of thumb, a token gift or benefit should be taken as being cash or other goods/services worth less than £25.

Details of gifts or benefits such as tickets to an event; dinner; a gift hamper; etc. should be included in the centralised Benefits Register. Recurring gifts should also be entered onto the Benefits Register.

The employee must immediately advise their manager of any gifts and benefits they have been offered or received and must not take advantage or seek to take advantage of their position to obtain a benefit, either for themselves or for someone else. The employee must also advise the Ministries Development Manager of the following details: date benefit was offered or received; confirmation of whether it was accepted or declined; details of host company or giver; type of benefit; and estimated value, so that this may be recorded in the centralised Benefits Register. The Benefits Register will be reviewed annually by the Head of HR or the General Treasurer who will report to the Trustees' Governance Group that this has been done.

10. Employee/client boundaries

The term 'employee/client boundaries' identifies the importance of the trust inherent in the relationship between employees and their clients. Breaching of employee/client boundaries is going outside the limits of the employee/client relationship. Employees are expected to maintain proper boundaries with clients. In the church context, "clients" should be interpreted as meaning members of Councils and Committees, local office bearers and others whom employees work with in the Church and beyond in the course of their employment.

11. Personal and Professional Behaviour

Employees should perform the duties associated with their position to the best of their ability, diligently, impartially and conscientiously. In the performance of their duties, employees should:

- comply with legal and regulatory obligations and administrative policies as applicable



- fulfil their Equal Employment Opportunity and Occupational Health & Safety obligations
- strive to keep up to date with advances and changes in the knowledge and the professional and ethical standards relevant to their areas and expertise
- maintain and retain adequate documents to support decisions made
- treat all persons with courtesy and sensitivity to their rights and provide all necessary and appropriate assistance
- not take or seek to take improper advantage of any official information gained in the employment within the Church
- not harass or discriminate against employees nor engage in discriminatory work practices on the grounds of gender, race (including colour, ethnic origin or national identity), marital status, disability, sexual orientation, or religious belief, or age
- seek continuously to improve work performance. All employees should actively pursue quality improvements
- not make disparaging remarks about other employees

12. Compliance with lawful instructions

Employees must comply with any lawful instruction given by any person having authority to make or give such an instruction.

13. Criminal Convictions

Employees who are charged with a criminal offence should report this to their line manager and those convicted of a criminal offence must report this immediately to the Head of Faith Action Programme.

14. External Employment

The MC will not prevent employees from engaging in other paid employment outside business hours provided that employees do not undermine or compromise the Church.

Employees should not engage in such employment, if that employment:

- places them in conflict with their official duties, or would lead to the perception that they have placed themselves in conflict with their duties;
- is likely to affect their efficiency in the performance of their duties; or
- involves the use of Church resources for private purposes without authorisation or recompense. In particular, employees may not accept outside payment for activities which would be regarded as part of their normal work activities.

15. Media contact

Employees should be aware of the potential for reputational risk both for the Church and for themselves when making media comment either formally in a work capacity or otherwise and guidance on this can be given by the Head of Faith Action Programme or the staff in the Communications Department.



Employees must not make direct contact with the media or respond to media enquiries on work related matters unless it has been agreed in advance that they can do so by the Head of Faith Action Programme in consultation with the MDS line manager. Anything which is contentious, has the potential to be contentious or is an inquiry from the national media should be referred to the Communications Department.

16. Role of Employees at General Assembly/Presbytery/ Session Meetings

Where employees are fulfilling the role of Commissioner at the General Assembly, or are in attendance at other meetings of Courts of the Church, they must make relevant declarations of interest where the topic of debate makes it appropriate to do so. Failure to do so may result in a breach of the Code of Conduct.

17. Social Networking

While recognising the positives attached to social networking, staff should be aware of the potential implications and consequences in engaging in communication through social networking. In particular, employees should be extremely careful in corresponding with people on social networking sites. Employees should also bear in mind who may access their own profiles on such websites and so should take care as to the information they display about themselves and their working and personal lives. The posting by employees of inappropriate comments about the Church on their profile/blog may constitute misconduct.

18. Breach of the Code

Employees who breach this Code of Practice may be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with established procedures. The penalty imposed will depend upon the nature of the action but serious breaches may be regarded as gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken on the behaviour or acts of an employee which results in:

- disclosures outside the office of information acquired in the course of employment or any wilful act or default which prejudices the interest of the Church of Scotland
- actions or behaviour outside the office likely to reflect adversely on the Church of Scotland or bring its name into disrepute;
- deliberate failure to comply with statutory or regulatory requirements or internal rules, policies or procedures that has a major impact on The Church of Scotland as employer;

Further details can be found in the MDS Discipline Procedure.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by HR, The Hub and Faith Action senior managers to ensure adherence to best practice, and any related legislation. If necessary, the policy will be taken to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (Ministries Council is the employing body of FAPLT) as part of a consultation process.