

Staff Code of Conduct

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish a common understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of all employees. It aims to establish a code of professional ethics in the workplace that are consistent with Unison's purpose, values and objectives.

It is a source of guidance in decision making and does not seek to cover every possible situation that may arise. Instead, it sets out standards of behaviour to help you decide on an appropriate course of action when faced with an ethical issue. The code draws on our values, legislative requirements and the YCH Union Collective Agreement. It should be read in conjunction with YCH Policies and Procedures which give specific guidance and information in a given area.

This Code places an obligation on all of us to take responsibility for our Conduct. Working with colleagues and our community to establish a collaborative, productive workplace where people are happy and proud to work.

2. Who Has To Comply

This Code of Conduct is binding on all management and staff whether employed on a permanent, temporary or casual basis. Compliance is a condition of employment, and extends to any situation when you are representing the organisation and its related entities.

Enterprise Team

This Code of Conduct is binding on members of the enterprise team when they are working as employees of Unison, or representing the organisation.

Contractors

Contractors and third parties engaged by Unison must be aware of this Code of Conduct and act in line with the described conduct. A breach may result in the contract or engagement being terminated.

If you are engaging contractors or external parties it is your responsibility to make them aware of expected behaviours. It is also your responsibility to take the necessary action to address any concerns about their conduct.

Related: [Contractor Induction Policy](#)

3. Our Values (what we believe)

Unison is a values-based organisation. We seek to create a culture founded on quality of service delivery, responsiveness, collaboration and respect for others. Our Values are the basic principles that will guide and shape the way we think and act. This includes the way we provide services to tenants, the way we treat each other within the organisation and the way we relate to the wider community.

We value:

- **People**

We put the customer at the heart of what we do; we value each other and welcome diversity.

- **Respect**

We are respectful of all and welcome open and honest discussion

- **Positivity**

We have a positive and dynamic approach to our work. We embrace change, learn from our mistakes and seek to find solutions.

- **Accountability**

We do what we say we will do

4. Our Commitment to Staff

Unison undertakes to create a workplace that values the contributions of staff and encourages them to maximize their potential. We commit to providing a safe and secure working environment and to supporting staff wellbeing. Ongoing training and professional development opportunities will be provided in line with job requirements and community and cultural practices. We commit to addressing individual employment matters promptly, fairly and confidentially. Any major decision-making process or changes effecting employment will be consultative and transparent. We commit to receiving and providing regular constructive feedback, and to supporting staff in the fulfilment of their duties. Unison has extensive HR policies and procedures to ensure that all staff are treated with honesty, integrity and respect.

5. Equity & Diversity

Unison staff will work to provide a safe, encouraging and supportive work environment that is free of discrimination, harassment and bullying. We value and promote diversity and recognize the abilities and contributions of all. Diversity in this context includes, age, cultural background, disability, ethnicity, family responsibilities, gender, language, religious belief and sexual orientation. Diversity also refers to the other ways in which people are different, such as educational level, life experience, work experience, socio-economic background, personality and marital status.

6. Professional Conduct

Unison staff shall:

- Act honestly, with integrity and towards the achievement of Unison's aims and purposes
- Act in good faith at all times and in the best interests of the organisation
- Act in a manner that is equitable, impartial and fair
- Work lawfully, within their scope of authority, and in accordance with policies and guidelines
- Be professional and conscious not to use influence, or gain personal benefit as a result of their role
- Exercise care and conscientiousness, working safely and responsibly
- Exercise confidentiality and care with information to which they have access
- Keep personal views distinct from professional ones. An individual's personal views should not interfere with the performance of their work duties
- Treat others with courtesy, dignity and respect

You are expected to:

- Perform your duties to the best of your ability and be accountable for your performance
- Follow reasonable instructions given by a supervisor (If you consider an instruction unreasonable, say so to the person and give them an opportunity to respond. If you are still concerned seek advice from the next level of management)
- Work collaboratively with your colleagues

If your role requires you to manage or supervise staff you are also expected to:

- Promote collaborative and collegial workplaces. Develop a positive environment that all employees can contribute to
- Exercise leadership. Work with staff to implement performance and development processes consistent with their employment
- Provide ongoing support and feedback to your staff
- Model the professional behaviour you expect
- Consult and involve staff in appropriate decision making and establish systems that support effective communication
- Be open to constructive questions and concerns
- Take appropriate action if a breach of the Code of Conduct occurs

7. Reporting Misconduct

Unison is committed to supporting employees who report concerns about the conduct of their colleagues. Any staff member, who believes in good faith and on reasonable grounds, that another staff member has engaged in misconduct or dishonest or illegal activity, is encouraged to report it. It can be reported to the Human Resources Manager, a Director or a Senior Manager. In addition to specific protections under law, Unison commit to protecting the staff member from any adverse action taken as a result of making the report. Reports will be dealt with thoroughly and impartially. If some form of wrongdoing has been found, appropriate action will be taken to rectify it.

All staff are required to inform their Manager or Human Resources if they:

- are charged with or convicted of a serious offence
- become aware of a crime committed by another staff member
- have concerns about inappropriate actions of other employees that involve children or young persons
- suspect corrupt conduct or improper administration

8. Breach of the Code of Conduct

As an employee you hold a position of trust and are accountable for your actions. Breach of this Code of Conduct could lead to disciplinary action, including and up to termination of employment or cessation of engagement with the organisation.

- Employees should report breaches by colleagues to their supervisor. If the breach involves their supervisor it should be reported to the next line of management
- If you are a supervisor / manager you have a responsibility to address a breach as soon as you become aware of it. Each case should be determined on the facts and circumstances when deciding on the appropriate action to take

Related: Disciplinary Action Policy
Disciplinary Action Procedure

9. Working Hours

Unison staff shall comply with the prescribed terms and conditions of their employment/engagement. They will start and finish work at the agreed times and notify their supervisor promptly on occasions when they are unable to do so. They will not undertake personal/ business activities for personal gain while at the organisation or while conducting business of the organisation.

Related: Individual Employment Contract
Individual Position Description
Individual Contractor / 3rd Party Agreement

10. Attire

Dress standards should be appropriate to work role and have regard to circumstances such as function performed, occupational health and safety factors, cultural diversity, local community standards and climatic conditions. All staff should maintain a clean and tidy appearance. Dress standards should reflect a professional image for the organisation.

- For Health and Safety purposes, closed shoes must always be worn by staff attending any property in the course of their work duties
- External staff that carry out work on site (such as cleaners, ground staff, and maintenance) are required to wear a uniform. It should be clean, un-torn and tidy. Uniform should only be worn for work. On occasion staff may be in uniform outside of work (i.e., on the way to and from work), however it is not acceptable to attend social or personal events in company uniform
- When wearing your uniform you are representing the organisation and will be referred to accordingly
- Where a disagreement exists between a staff member and their Manager with regard to appropriate attire, then the matter should be raised with the next level of management or Human Resources Manager for resolution

11. Maintaining Professional Requirements

It is the responsibility of individuals to notify Unison of any changes that affect their ability to meet standards or perform their duties. This includes any changes to, loss of, or suspension of; registration, accreditation, working with children checks, licence or other qualification

12. Secondary Employment

Unison employees may undertake paid secondary employment within or outside of the organisation. However, employees must ensure that; their responsibility to Unison is not adversely affected, that no conflict of interest arises, and that the other paid work is not undertaken during times that the person is employed to undertake duties for Unison

Full Time employees (whether permanent, contract or temporary) must seek approval in writing from their manager prior to engaging in any secondary employment. This must be reviewed annually.

In cases where a perceived or real conflict exists, the employee must advise their manager. An assessment will be made regarding the manageability of the conflict of interest and the continuation of the secondary employment.

Related: Individual Employment Contract
Individual Position Description
Individual Contractor / 3rd Party Agreement

13. Enterprise Team

The Enterprise Team are unique in that they are both employees and tenants of Unison. Sometimes a distinction will have to be drawn as to whether the person is acting in their capacity as an employee of the organisation, or as a tenant of our housing. Guidelines have been developed to provide clarity around some areas of potential confusion. The enterprise team and staff working with them should familiarise themselves with these guidelines.

Related: Employee Tenants Guidelines

14. Communication to the Wider Community

Unison staff shall not criticize or undermine Unison, other members of staff or the Board of Directors to or in front of Unison clients or members of the public. Nor should they express their personal views as being representative of Unison. Concerns and complaints regarding Unison, other members of staff or the Board of Directors should be raised using the appropriate internal procedures.

Unison staff shall only make public comment representing Unison to the media, newspapers or third parties when specifically authorized to do so by the CEO. Such comment is restricted to factual information. Any media requests should be referred to the CEO.

Related: Crisis Management Communication Policy

15. Conflict of Interest

As an employee you must be objective and impartial, and be seen to be so. A conflict of interest can be said to arise if it is likely that, in the course of carrying out your duties, you could be biased or influenced by other interests (private, personal or professional), or that a reasonable person would believe that you could be influenced. A conflict of interest can involve monetary and non-monetary interests and extend to family or associates. In situations where a conflict of interest may be present, Unison staff must declare it to their manager. Once declared an assessment will be made if it is appropriate for the staff member to be involved in the relevant process. If you are concerned that any of your outside activities, financial interests or relationships may constitute, or be perceived as constituting, a conflict of interest, please talk about your concerns with your manager.

Recruitment

Recruitment and selection processes must be ethical, fair and effective. They are conducted in line with relevant legislation and Unison policy and procedures. In order to avoid accusation of bias:

Selection panel members need to declare prior personal knowledge of or interest in applicants to ensure that any conflict of interest is carefully managed.

Staff must not be involved in the appointment of, or decision making (relating to discipline, promotion, pay or conditions) for anyone to whom they are related or have a close personal or business relationship with.

Relationships at Work

Occasionally staff may be related to one another or develop an intimate personal relationship. Unison does not wish to intrude on the reasonable privacy expectations of any staff. However, the potential for conflict, or perceived conflict, between personal/family relationships and work responsibilities may arise. Where close personal relationships exist, employees should disclose this to their manager. Management of a disclosure will include consideration of the nature of the relationship and each staff member's role and function.

**Related: [Conflict of Interest – Staff Policy](#)
[Conflict of Interest – Staff Procedure](#)**

16. Gifts & Hospitality

Unison has a “No Gifts” protocol, however, as an employee you may be offered a gift or benefit as an act of gratitude. The process should be honest, transparent and accountable. There are some instances when to refuse a gift would be perceived as rude or insulting. You are expected to exercise sound judgment when offered a gift or benefit. Under no circumstances should staff ask for money, gifts or benefits, or accept any gift or benefit greater than \$20 in value. Staff must never accept an offer of money or any offer that may reasonably be perceived as influencing them, or undermining the integrity of the organisation or themselves. This includes, but is not limited to cash, loans, gifts, awards, prizes, tickets, meals, favours, accommodation and travel. It also includes gifts or benefits for family, friends or associates. Always discuss any concerns with your manager.

- Consider the value and purpose of a gift or benefit before deciding whether to accept it. A gift that is more than nominal (approx. \$20) value must be declared to your manager.
- The manager will advise Corporate Services (CS). Depending on the nature of the gift it may be distributed to our tenants, donated to the workplace, approved as a gift for you, or returned to the party who gave it. In all cases a letter will be sent thanking the contributor but explaining that Unison does not encourage gifts.
- If a staff member is invited to attend an event that is more than nominal in value (e.g. a sporting event) but that may provide a significant benefit to Unison as an organisation (e.g. in terms of relationship building) it does not automatically meet the definition of a gift. Approval from the CEO is required prior to attendance. Approval will be based on genuine benefit to YCH.

17. Privacy & Confidentiality

Unison collects and stores confidential information. Staff must only use official information for the work-related purpose it was intended, in accordance with legislation and Unison policy. Unless authorized to do so, you must not disclose or use any confidential information without appropriate approval. You must ensure that confidential information cannot be accessed by unauthorized people. Sensitive information should only be provided to those authorized to have access to it, including when dealing with other agencies or authorities. Exercise caution and sound judgment when discussing someone's personal information with other employees. Information should be limited to what is required in order to undertake your / their duties.

Any information or knowledge gained about the affairs of the organisation or its business transactions shall only be used for official purposes and in an approved manner. The confidentiality of Unison's business transactions and the privacy of individuals dealing with Unison shall be observed at all times.

Related: Information Privacy Policy and Procedure

Internal Communication Policy

Internet & Email Use Policy

CCTV & Images Policy

THM Data Collection & Consent Policy & Procedure

18. Leaving Employment & Former Employees

When ceasing employment with Unison you should not use or take advantage of any confidential information obtained in the course of your official duties until it has become publicly available. You must return any property you have belonging to Unison.

If dealing with former employees, current employees must take care that no favourable treatment or access to privileged information is given or appeared to be given. Any attempts by former employees to influence you or seek favour should be reported to your manager.

19. Procurement

Procurement is the process of selecting and purchasing goods and services from an external source. Staff involved in procurement should familiarise themselves with the Procurement Policy. All procurement decisions are based on best value received. This means assessing cost, quality, performance and suitability. The selection process aims to be fair and clearly inform potential suppliers of our expectations and requirements. Any possible conflict of interests, or concerns about a supplier's integrity or ability to deliver, should be discussed with your manager.

Related: [Procurement Policy](#)
[Delegations Overview](#)
[Contractor Management Policy](#)

20. Signatures

As an employee you are accountable for any document that you sign. Therefore you should carefully read all documents you are asked to sign.

- You must not sign a document which you know is not true and correct
- You must only sign your own name and never permit anyone to sign a name other than their own
- In correspondence you should only use your own name. Do not give the impression that you have someone else's authority without their permission
- Never give someone else your staff log in details. Take care to ensure that you are logged off fully from your computer before leaving it unattended

Related: [Delegations Overview](#)

21. Requesting a Support Person in Meetings

An employee may ask to have a support person present to support them in meetings regarding serious issues such as performance, conduct, job role, pay or conditions. A 'Support Person' is someone nominated by the employee and could be a friend, family member or union representative.

A support person should not be a fellow employee whose involvement may result in an apparent or possible conflict of interest.

Guidelines for a support person in the meeting:

The support person is entitled to be present, but cannot advocate, answer questions, provide explanations or make submissions for the employee; this is for the employee to voice. A support person can take notes at the meeting and generally assist in discussion.

22. Written References

Staff may occasionally receive requests from tenants or clients for references. If providing a reference in a professional capacity (e.g. for a prospective landlord or employer) information provided should be restricted to factual, relevant details.

Managers and supervisors may provide a statement of service for employees / ex-employees as part of internal or external recruitment processes, that outlines the duration of employment and the role and responsibilities the staff member undertook.

If you are asked to provide someone a personal reference (e.g. any current or former; staff member, tenant or client), you must not represent it as being provided from the organisation. You are not to provide written personal references on Unison Letterhead, nor use your title and position for this purpose.

23. Asset Protection

Unison is committed to the responsible management of our assets and to being accountable for the assets we purchase. Unison aims to efficiently and effectively manage the purchase, register, protection and ongoing maintenance of our assets. All staff should treat our company's property, whether material or intangible, with respect and care.

24. Use of Work Resources

As a not for profit organisation we are obliged to exercise efficiency and care with resources used at work. This includes your time. Unison staff shall:

- Use work resources and equipment efficiently and only for appropriate purposes
- Make decisions relating to the use of Unison resources that are reasonable and correctly authorised
- Treat Unison property with due care and ensure it is secured against theft and misuse
- Be economical and avoid waste. This applies to the use or purchase of equipment, office facilities, motor vehicles, travel or catering
- Seek to achieve value for money and identify opportunities for increased efficiency

25. Copyright and Intellectual Property

Unison employees share in the creation, use and protection of the organisation's intellectual property. When creating material you need to ensure the intellectual property of others is not infringed and any third party copyright is recorded. Prior to sharing documents or intellectual property seek the permission and advice of the relevant Director. If you create material that relates to your employment with Unison, the Intellectual Property will belong to Unison. You must not use Unison's intellectual property for private purposes, unless you have obtained permission from the relevant Director.

26. Record Keeping

Records serve an essential administrative function. Employees have a responsibility to keep full and accurate records as required in the fulfilment of their duties. This includes capturing, storing, managing and maintaining records in Unison's systems and databases and files.

Related: Information Privacy Policy & Procedure
THM Data Collection & Consent Policy & Procedure

27. Duty of Care

Duty of care can be defined as an obligation, recognised by law, to avoid conduct that presents unreasonable risk of danger to others. Unison staff must:

- Take reasonable care for the health & safety of themselves and others at work
- Comply with OH&S and security practices. Report any circumstances in the workplace that appear to represent a threat to their safety, that of other people, or to Unison assets
- Take reasonable actions to protect themselves and others in the workplace from risks of harm that can be reasonably predicted
- Seek assistance if someone is injured or becomes sick in the workplace

Related: Duty of Care Policy

28. Relationship to Service Users

Unison staff shall respect the worth and dignity of all service users and promote this value in their work.

- When dealing with clients, staff shall be respectful, honest and courteous. They will give accurate information and prompt attention, and observe fairness and equity in their dealings with others. No employee should abuse, threaten, harass, discriminate against or assault Unison clients under any circumstances
- Staff shall work with clients in a way that encourages a sense of co-operation, allows them to participate in creative problem solving and gives them a sense of ownership and control over any given decision

29. Professional Boundaries

Unison staff are in a position of privilege and trust in relation to their clients, and are responsible for setting and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

- Any sexual relation between a Unison staff member and client constitutes unethical behaviour. Staff shall set and maintain the appropriate professional boundaries to minimise the risk of exploitation or harm
- Staff shall not use their position to financially, sexually or emotionally exploit past or present clients of Unison
- Staff should not borrow money to or loan money from Unison clients, carry on trade with clients or undertake paid work for clients
- Social contact with clients, including engaging on social media, should be limited to work related events

30. Working with Children and Young People

Child protection and reporting information about suspected child abuse is the responsibility of all Unison staff. In addition to complying with legal reporting obligations, all people who come into contact with children on behalf of Unison will:

- Hold a current Victorian Working With Children Check as required
- Establish and maintain a child-safe environment in the course of their work
- Treat children and young people with respect, acting as positive role models
- Be professional in their actions and maintain strict impartiality
- Contact the police if a child is at immediate risk of abuse (telephone 000)

No person shall:

- Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade children or young people
- Unlawfully discriminate against any child
- Engage in any activity with a child or young person that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
- Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child or young person, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- Be alone with a child or young person unnecessarily and for more than a very short time
- Develop a 'special' relationship with a specific child or young person for their own needs
- Show favouritism through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention
- Arrange contact, including online contact, with children or young people outside of the organisation's programs and activities
- Photograph or video a child or young person without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians
- Work with children or young people while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature or use inappropriate language in the presence of children

Related: Child Safe Policy
Child Safe Procedure

31. Appropriate use of Electronic Communication and Social Media

Unison staff are provided with access to Information Communication and Technology (ICT) in the course of their work. Staff must meet expected standards of behaviour in regards to the use of information systems, email, databases, computers, internet and social media as outlined in policy. Unison reserves the right to monitor and view any data stored or transmitted using its facilities.

When using electronic communication staff must:

- Exercise good judgment and ethical behaviour
- use appropriate language
- Avoid getting personal
- Not send messages that are harassing, defamatory, threatening, abusive or obscene
- Report a situation if you become aware of inappropriate communication or use of social media
- Never use Unison's networks to view, upload, download or circulate messages or material that is; sexually related, violent, offensive or racist, malicious or libellous, related to illegal activities

Related: Internal Communication Policy
Internet & Email Use Policy

32. Smoking

Unison is a smoke free workplace. Staff members are representatives of Unison and as such smoking at Unison offices and properties is prohibited. Under law:

- Smoking is not permitted in any enclosed area of a workplace, including car parks and garages
- Everyone in a workplace must observe the smoking ban, including employers, employees, volunteers and customers
- Smoking is only permitted in outdoor areas that are not substantially enclosed

33. Drugs and Alcohol

Unison employees have a responsibility to comply with the law, and a duty of care for their own safety and their colleagues. Employees have the responsibility to be fit for work and avoid impairment associated with alcohol and drugs, both prescription and non-prescription.

Unison staff shall not consume alcohol or illicit drugs during working hours or while in any property managed by YCH. The use of drugs that could impair a staff member's ability to safely undertake their work or increases the risk of injury to themselves or others is prohibited. Employees that are taking medication likely to affect their ability to work must discuss with their doctor and disclose to their manager. If it is assessed that prescribed treatment may impair judgment or performance, an employee may be required to take sick leave.

When attending functions or celebrations as a representative of Unison, staff must conduct themselves in a professional and responsible manner and access safe and suitable transport home. Alcohol should never be consumed when returning to work duties after an event.

The possession, use, sale or distribution of illegal drugs is prohibited on Unison property, at Unison sanctioned events, or when representing Unison as an employee.

34. Illegal Activities

Unison staff shall not engage in illegal activities of any kind, including activities conducted via the internet or email, while at work or in properties managed by Unison.

Related legislation includes:

- Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986
- Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914
- Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009
- Commonwealth Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Commonwealth Age Discrimination Act 2004
- Relevant state Public Administration Act
- Relevant state Equal Opportunity Act
- Relevant state Freedom of Information Act
- Relevant state Information Privacy Act
- Relevant state Occupational Health and Safety Act
- Relevant state Health Records Act
- Relevant state Racial and Religious Tolerance Act
- Relevant state Whistleblowers Protection Act
- Relevant state Wrongs and Other Acts (Law of Negligence) Act

This Code of Conduct has been developed with reference to the YCH Code of Conduct, the UCL Code of Conduct, the Victorian Public Sector Employee Code of Conduct and the NSW Department of Education and Communities Code of Conduct.