

Finance and Resources Committee, 18th September 2007

Paper title: Partners Code of Conduct

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

HPC has partners who provide expertise in some decision making. The Human Resources Work plan for 2007/2008 identified a need for a Partner Handbook to be developed part of which to include a Partners Code of Conduct. The Finance and Resources Committee agreed that policies would be developed throughout the year provided the Committee approves them. Policy and Standards has been working closely with Human Resources to develop the attached Partners Code of Conduct.

Decision

The Committee is asked to approve the attached document.

Background information

As a regulator, the Council sets standards for the conduct, performance and ethics of health professionals on the HPC Register. HPC feels that it is important that partners also maintain high standards in their roles, and that these standards are documented and made public.

Partners represent HPC when they are acting for HPC and in their personal lives. It is important that partners maintain high standards when providing their services to HPC in line with their partner agreements.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

The Code of Conduct will be incorporated into the Partner Handbook and forms part of the Human Resources Work plan for this financial year.

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2007-09-05	a	POL	AGD	Partners' Code of Conduct	Final	Public
					DD: None	RD: None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

6th September 2007

Partners Code of Conduct

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Draft

This document

This is the Code of Conduct which all partners have to keep to. The document has been produced for partners, those who are considering becoming partners and those who are involved with the work of partners. The document explains the Code and the principles that underpin the Code. It then goes on to explain what is expected of partners and the consequences partners may face if they breach the Code. As with the other documents we produce, we have written this document in clear, modern English, so that it is easy to understand.

Please contact the Partner Manager if you have read this document and you have any queries or require information on interpreting the Code.

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2007-09-06	b	POL	POL	Partners Code of Conduct	Draft DD: None	Public RD: None

Introduction

An introduction to this document

Partners work as agents of HPC by providing expertise in some decision-making. It is important that partners maintain high standards when providing their services to HPC in line with their partner agreements.

This Code of Conduct contains rules with which all partners must comply. HPC is an open and transparent public body and partners should be aware that maintaining the highest standards of conduct and personal integrity is essential to maintain public and registrant faith in HPC.

Partners are expected to conduct themselves at all times in the manner expected of someone associated with a public organisation. Partners should refrain from any illegal, dishonest or unethical conduct at all times, not simply when they are providing their services to HPC.

If a partner acts in a manner that undermines this Code, either in an external role or in their private capacity, and such actions have the effect or potential effect of undermining or compromising public or registrant faith in HPC, HPC may take appropriate action, including commencement of the Partner Complaints Procedure.

Partners should also be aware that if they are a member of a regulated profession and their actions breach the standards of conduct, performance and ethics, they could be liable to a fitness to practise investigation and may not act in any capacity as a partner until the issue is resolved.

The Code is applicable to all partner roles.

The role of partners

Partners work in six roles:

- CPD assessors assess CPD submissions against HPC standards (we will be recruiting CPD assessors for the first professions to be audited from November 2007).
- Registration assessors assess international and grandparenting applications to ensure they meet standards required to be eligible to come on to the HPC Register.
- Visitors visit and report on institutions providing and delivering (or proposing to provide and deliver) education and training.
- Panel members make decisions about Fitness to Practise cases at panels and hearings.
- Panel chairs chair Fitness to Practise panels and guide other panel members on Fitness to Practise procedures/processes.
- Legal assessors ensure that the Panel processes are fair and legally compliant.

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The main internal points of contact for partners are:

- Partner Manager;
- Director of Fitness to Practise;
- Education Manager;
- Customer Services Manager;
- Director of Human Resources; and
- Other HPC employees, for example, hearing officers, education officers and registration officers.

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Partners Code of Conduct

General guidelines

Partners should at all times:

- act in good faith;
- act in accordance with HPC's objective of protecting the public;
- act in accordance with the seven principles of public life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (reproduced in full below);
- act in compliance with their partner agreement, including making no personal use of any HPC logos;
- take personal responsibility for ensuring adherence to this Code of Conduct; and
- treat others equally, fairly, and with respect.

Partners should not:

- act in a way that might bring HPC into disrepute; or
- misuse their position as a partner for personal gain or to promote their private or business interests.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

As set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life: 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.

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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.

Confidentiality

Most information to which partners will have access as part of their roles is confidential and must be treated as such. Partners should contact the relevant HPC employee if the status of any information is unclear.

Partners should not disclose any confidential information to which they have access other than for a proper purpose relating to the services performed for HPC or if they are required to do so by law.

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

If a partner becomes aware of a breach in confidentiality, they must immediately notify the director/manager of the relevant department or the Partner Manager.

Roles and attendance

Partners should endeavour to carry out the partner role within an appropriate timescale and to achieve appropriate service standards. If a partner is unable to provide a service as requested by HPC they should notify the relevant HPC employee as soon as possible.

Where a partner is unable to fulfil their partner role over a prolonged period, they may be asked to discuss their position as a partner with the director/manager of the relevant department or the Partner Manager.

Partners' performance review

All partners must participate in the performance review system and follow HPC's performance review procedure.

Gifts and hospitality

Partners must not accept gifts, hospitality, or benefits that might be perceived as compromising their role or influence the decisions that they take on behalf of HPC.

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Gifts, hospitality or benefits offered as a consequence of HPC business must, within a reasonable period of time (usually no longer than one calendar month), be registered with the director/manager of the relevant department or Partner Manager.

If partners are offered a gift or benefit as an inducement for preferential treatment, it must be refused or returned as appropriate.

Conflicts of interests

If partners are participating in HPC business where they might have (or be seen to have) an interest in the outcome, or any interest that could otherwise prejudice their decision, they should declare this before taking part in the decision-making process. If an interest is not declared then this may result in the commencement of the Partner Complaints Procedure.

HPC employees

Partners should treat all HPC employees with respect and dignity. If partners wish to comment positively on the work done by employees, they can speak formally to the employee's director/manager or informally with the employee concerned.

However, any partner with concerns about the behaviour or performance of an employee should always raise these concerns formally with the relevant director/manager.

Breach of this code

Any minor breach of this Code of Conduct will be dealt with informally in the first instance by the relevant director/manager in conjunction with the Partner Manager. However, where there is evidence of a deliberate, serious or continued breach of this code, this may be taken up by the Partner Manager and relevant director/department head in line with the Partner Complaints Procedure.

If a partner is concerned that another partner may be in breach of this code, they should raise their concerns with the relevant director/manager or the Partner Manager. It is important that partners disclose this information to HPC. All such disclosures must be made in good faith as they will be taken seriously and fully investigated where appropriate.

If HPC believes a partner is or may be unfit to continue in their role, either due to public perception or due to the partner's activities (whether or not such activities were in the provision of services to HPC), HPC will review the appropriateness of that partner continuing to provide services to HPC.

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