

United Learning Guidelines for Professional Conduct

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with our commitment to provide an excellent education for children and young people, United Learning aims to act at all times with the utmost integrity. This is an expectation of all colleagues and in all dealings, internal and external. In line with our 'Best in Everyone' ethos, we are committed to acting in the best interests of children; protecting public and charitable resources; treating others with dignity and respect; promoting an open, honest and transparent working environment; and enabling all colleagues to carry out their job role free from conflict, risk, harassment or any other behaviour perceived to be compromising, demeaning or demoralizing.

2. Principles

- 2.1 We aim to bring out the best in everyone who works in United Learning, for the benefit of the children they serve and their own working lives and careers. We aim to provide a work environment where all staff:
- Act with honesty, integrity and probity in all their dealings;
 - Work in a purposeful, calm environment, where staff and pupils show respect for one another;
 - Are encouraged to show leadership and take responsibility, regardless of their role or career stage, have a sense of agency and are challenged and able to contribute their best;
 - Are encouraged to aspire, learn, succeed and progress in their careers, experience high quality professional review conversations and professional development appropriate to their role and career stage.
- 2.2 We set high expectations for all our staff and expect that all colleagues will contribute to such a working environment by:
- Acting with integrity and probity at all times, including always acting in the best interests of children and young people and fulfilling the responsibilities of their role to the highest standards;
 - Taking seriously their responsibilities to other adults, including supporting them to meet the highest expectations, succeed and develop, especially in management roles;
 - Acting with openness, honesty and transparency in both their work and relationships and reporting any potential conflict of interest as soon as it occurs;
 - Speaking, acting and writing with courtesy on all occasions and promoting fairness and an inclusive environment;
 - Encouraging and embracing open and honest feedback and communication with their line manager and colleagues;
 - Maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour in the workplace and ensuring that they do not contribute to the creation of a working environment in which conflict, indignity, bullying or harassment are present;
 - Raising all safeguarding concerns promptly and appropriately, no matter how seemingly low level.

3. Probity



- 3.1 Working in a culture of honesty, openness and transparency provides the best guarantor of probity. It is inherently a cause for concern if a decision is made untransparently; if it appears that a decision does or may give rise to personal gain, or gain for a connected person, transparency is particularly important in avoiding misperception. It should also be transparent when a decision-maker has withdrawn from a decision due to the actual possibility of personal gain. Open decision-making allows rationale to be shared, is less likely to be open to criticism, can reduce the risk of improper conduct and inspires confidence.
- 3.2 All colleagues should be mindful that any action or decision taken in our working environment could, in principle, give rise to an issue of propriety, conflict of interest or a perceived lack of objectivity, particularly where it involves financial or employment decisions where there may be a risk of inappropriate personal gain. Colleagues should ensure that they are not involved in any decisions about the employment or pay of a personal friend or family member, must leave any meeting or discussion where these matters are under discussion and ensure that they are not thought to be trying to influence such decisions. Colleagues must familiarise themselves with the [Business Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#) when managing a potential conflict of interest or a possible connected party or related party transaction.

4. Speak Up and We Will Listen

- 4.1 Any colleague who has any concern about working practices, conduct, ethical behaviour or the way they or others have been treated is encouraged to speak up about those concerns.
- 4.2 You can speak up about anything that falls short of the expectations and commitments set out in these guidelines. It is appropriate to speak up about anything which does not seem to be putting children first, gets in the way of providing excellent education, affects your professional experience or wellbeing or those of your colleagues or pupils or otherwise creates a culture where some people are not included or cannot give of their best.
- 4.3 Most concerns will be raised locally and informally in discussions with colleagues and line managers. However, where you do not feel it appropriate to discuss concerns with your direct line manager, you can speak to another senior colleague at school or in the United Learning team.
- 4.4 You can raise a concern in person, by phone or in writing (including email). We want everyone to feel safe to raise concerns. It is unacceptable to prevent or deter a colleague from speaking up or to treat someone less well because they have spoken up – this would be a disciplinary matter.
- 4.5 We therefore hope you would feel comfortable speaking directly to an appropriate person. There is also a confidential helpline for you to leave a message raising your concern. Messages will only be accessed by a small number of designated senior staff based at Central Office. Please contact 01832 864498 or Speak.Up@unitedlearning.org.uk. Concerns can be raised anonymously, although this can make it more difficult to resolve the issue and provide feedback.
- 4.6 When you raise a concern with us, we will:
 - a) Thank you for speaking up.
 - b) Help to identify the options for resolution, bearing in mind the seriousness of the case and your preferences for handling. This may include referral to an established procedure.
 - c) Signpost you to wellbeing support, if appropriate.
 - d) Support a low-key/informal resolution if that is what you are looking for (and no serious wider issues are raised). Investigate the concern where needed and where it is not appropriate to



- manage the concern through an alternative established procedure (e.g. within the grievance policy or a finance policy).
- e) Support you with the next steps and share the outcome with you wherever possible and whilst respecting the confidentiality of others.
 - f) Learn from the experience to ensure our schools offer an excellent professional experience and high-quality education.
- 4.7 Employees can obtain free and confidential information, support and counselling on a wide range of work, personal, financial and family issues. All employees can access free support from Health Assured through [Perkbox](#). Health Assured can be contacted through <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/home/>, 0800 756 0861 or 0800 028 0199. Employees can also contact their trade union for support.

5. Review

- 5.1 These guidelines will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they remain current in light of any changing legislation and best support United Learning and its employees.
- 5.2 Failure to meet the expected standards of professional conduct will be dealt with under the United Learning Disciplinary Policy.

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UCST/ULT/Both:	Both	Reason for version change:	2023: Speak Up section added and expectations updated in line with strategy
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