

British Council Examinations Services

Code of Practice – Venue Staff

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Introduction

The British Council is an organisation that respects diversity, believes in equal opportunities, and works professionally and creatively to help build a more inclusive and prosperous world. We're here to create opportunities and build trust internationally. To do this effectively, the way we behave must reflect our values and stand up to scrutiny wherever we work.

This Code of Practice sets out the principles you should follow in aspects of your association with the British Council. These principles are designed to help you behave in ways that earn people's trust, create understanding and build mutual respect. Ensuring that you meet them is essential both to our reputation and to the success and effectiveness of our work.

However, this code can't cover everything. So, when dealing with an issue that is not addressed here directly, you should use our values to help resolve it or speak to someone in the Examinations Team with which you are associated. Similarly, if you need clarification about anything in the code, either talk to someone in the Examinations Team, or read the relevant policy in detail. You will be provided access to the most relevant policies for your role as part of your service agreement or contract with us. These and any other policies mentioned in this document are also available at:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies>

Our Values

The British Council's five core values underpin everything we say and do. This code sets the standards for the way we work, including how we work with people, behave towards them and communicate.

Here is a brief description of what each one means to us:

Valuing people: The world is a diverse place, which is why our work starts by giving everyone the chance to participate. This means treating people with courtesy and respect. By listening and responding in a helpful way, we are able to unlock potential and help people be the best they can be.

Integrity: Keeping our promises, and being consistent in what we say and do builds trust. We are always honest and take responsibility for our actions.

Mutuality: Effective relationships are at the heart of our work. It's a two way exchange: we learn from all those we interact with and they learn from us, all with a view to advancing the creation of global citizens.

Creativity: Creativity is the key that will unlock the world's potential. We are constantly looking for new sources of inspiration, encouraging resourcefulness and the development of new ideas that will shape the future.

Professionalism: As leaders in the exams field, it is our responsibility to deliver excellent service to all our customers and colleagues.

1. Legal compliance

Respecting the law

The British Council is committed to complying with the law in all the countries and territories in which we work. This is a fundamental principle and we must follow it in all our dealings and behaviours. If there is any doubt or dispute, you should speak to the local Exams Manager who can seek more specialised advice if required.

2. Working together

Respecting our colleagues

As individuals, you should always treat colleagues with politeness and respect. You should also show respect for each other's cultures and customs. If you are affected by what you believe to be unacceptable or disrespectful behaviour, you should consult your centre's Exams Administrator or Exams Services Manager (ESM). In case you witness what you believe to be unacceptable behaviour towards others, even if you're not directly affected by it, you can raise specific concerns under our Raising Concerns Policy, which is set out in brief as principle 17 of this code in Dealing with Wrongdoing. The complete version of the policy is available from the Exams Centre with which you are associated.

3. Equality, diversity and inclusion

Avoiding discrimination

The British Council is an equal opportunities employer. This means that we are committed to ensuring that there is no unjustified discrimination on the basis of any of the following: age, disability, gender, including transgender, having or not having dependants, HIV/AIDS status, marital status, political opinion, race, religion and belief, sexual identity, socioeconomic

background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, work pattern or any other such grounds.

The principles which underlie our Equality Policy (and our wider commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion - EDI) apply worldwide and must be followed unless local law restricts this in some way. If you believe such a restriction exists, please consult someone in the examinations team for guidance. Meanwhile, please take the time to make sure that you are familiar with the policy's terms and do not allow unjustified discrimination to affect your judgement or behaviour, either with colleagues, or in dealing with anyone outside the British Council such as candidates.

You should read and be compliant with the EDI policy which forms part of your service agreement. It is available:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/equality-diversity-inclusion>.

4. Health and safety (H&S)

Looking after people

As far as it is reasonably practicable, the British Council makes every effort to ensure the health and safety of everyone who works with us, wherever they may be working, and also of candidates, visitors, students, contractors and others who use our premises.

You should take responsibility for your own health and safety and, as far as you are able, that of the candidates and any colleagues you are working with.

You should observe our H & S Policy, which is available in every British Council office, and follow the regulations and procedures that apply in the workplace. This is also available in the link below.

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/health-and-safety>

You will also be provided with any specific guidance for the exams you may be involved with.

5. Child protection

Protecting children

We all have a fundamental duty of care for the children who engage in activities with us. We recognise our responsibility to protect them from abuse, exploitation and negligence, applying zero tolerance and aiming to create a safe environment for them.

NB: A child is defined as any person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, regardless of the age of majority in the country where the child is, or his or her country of origin – UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child 1989.

We are committed to:

- valuing, respecting and listening to children
- ensuring all necessary checks are made when recruiting staff
- maintaining strong child protection systems and procedures for staff
- training our staff and providing a common understanding of child protection issues to inform planning and practice
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately

Anyone working with the British Council, either in a paid or unpaid, full or part time capacity including employees, contractors, agency staff, consultants, volunteers and interns must make sure that they are familiar with and abide by the mandatory Child Protection Policy, a statement of which can be found on the British Council website:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/child-protection>.

All staff are responsible for implementing the Child Protection Policy, which includes a responsibility to report any allegations or expression of concern involving either a:

1. child who has contact with the British Council who is at risk of harm within the family or community; and / or
2. employee of the British Council, either in a paid or unpaid , full or part time capacity including contractors, agency staff, consultants, volunteers and interns

You must promptly report any allegations or expressions of concern to your country Child Protection Focal Point. **The name and contact details of your focal point:**

In addition to abiding by the policy you must complete the mandatory Child Protection Basic Awareness training , and have read and be compliant with the Child Protection Code of Conduct which outlines what is and is not acceptable behaviour towards children.

6. Our relationships with customers

These are the people who are already using our services or may do in future, such as candidates, visitors, scholars, students and their parents. In all our dealings with them – face-to-face, over the telephone, digitally or in print – we should be helpful, quick to respond, polite and efficient.

7. Our relationships with clients

These are the organisations and people who pay for our services and it is important for us to build lasting and successful relationships with them. We should take the time and trouble to understand their needs and provide them with timely and effective service.

8. Dealing with competitors and suppliers

Treating and competing with people fairly

The British Council is committed to conducting all its trading activities in a fair, reasonable and transparent manner.

We are working in an increasingly competitive environment and need to compete strongly and successfully. But, however fierce the competition, we should always behave professionally and conduct our business in a way that is ethical, fair and legal.

Being even-handed

Our suppliers, for example venue/equipment suppliers, quite rightly expect to receive decent treatment from the British Council and be measured by their ability to deliver the right products and services, and offer us value for money. To make sure this happens, we must always be fair and transparent in our dealings with them and follow our established procurement procedures. For more information on these procedures, speak to your Examinations Manager.

Furthermore, you must not engage relatives as suppliers nor give any endorsements, testimonials or comments on the performance of suppliers, without first getting approval from a Senior British Council Manager such as the ESM.

9. Upholding public trust

Behaving ethically and responsibly

Trust is at the heart of everything we do and everyone who works with us has a duty to behave in ways that actively uphold public trust and give people confidence in the integrity of the British Council as an organisation.

You must never abuse or harm colleagues, customers, clients, partners, associates or any member of the community, nor exploit them in any way, nor form inappropriate personal or financial relationships.

You should also never behave, at work or in public, in a manner which may damage the British Council's reputation.

10. Confidentiality and information security

Being careful with information

Managing information and confidentiality is crucial to the way the British Council operates and is viewed in the world at large. This part of the code is in three parts – information about the British Council, information about individual people and information security.

Information about the British Council

We are legally obliged to provide information about our activities, operations, policies and staff to the general public on request. Doing this helps us to build trust worldwide, and we are committed to making the maximum amount of information about us readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost.

We do, however, have to balance this obligation with the need to protect the British Council's operational interests and its responsibilities towards partners, the public and anyone else who works with or for us.

You must not disclose any information that is commercially or politically sensitive to anyone outside the British Council. Furthermore, such information may only be disclosed to colleagues on 'a need to know' basis. If in any doubt, consult a senior manager such as the ESM before you do so.

Information about individual people

We treat all personal information about colleagues, customers, clients, competitors and other business contacts as confidential. You must make yourself aware of policies and procedures relating to personal information. You should read and be compliant with the Information Security and Privacy policy which forms part of your service agreement or contract. For further guidance you should contact the ESM.

Information security

We all have a role to play in protecting the information held on our systems and must adhere to the guidance and standards set out in our Information Security and Privacy Policy.

These principles apply whether information is held manually or electronically. Information which is considered confidential during your association with the British Council, remains so after your association ends.

For more on information security, please refer to the policy at:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/transparency/policies/information-security-privacy>

Being sensible online

Many of us make personal use of the internet, email, websites and social media, such as blogs, microblogs, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. However, when you are online please do not identify your association with the British Council by discussing our work or by other means.

You must not reveal confidential information about the British Council, its people or activities nor disclose any information that might bring it into disrepute or prompt a conflict of interest. Also, you should never make offensive comments about people; this could be seen as 'cyber-bullying' and would be a serious matter which could lead, for instance, to the British Council terminating its association with you or which could be a disciplinary offence.

11. IT and telecommunications

Using our systems

If you use the British Council's IT and telecommunications equipment and systems you must adhere to the standards set out in our Acceptable Use of IT Systems Policy. This includes controlling access and avoiding inappropriate use of the British Council's hardware, software, internet and email. You should be provided with a copy of the Acceptable Use of It Systems Policy.

12. Gifts, entertainment and payments

Avoiding unethical rewards and inducements

In carrying out your duties, you should not seek to gain advantage by giving or accepting any improper gifts, entertainment or payments. We do not tolerate any level of corruption. You should always be sure that your conduct is ethical, would be justifiable under internal or external review or assessment by individuals or organisations, and can stand up to examination by those the British Council is accountable to.

No gifts or services

When dealing with existing or potential contacts on behalf of the British Council, you must never give or accept any gift or service which has financial value or could be viewed as a reward or inducement for business. A gift may be accepted if it has only a nominal value, is a genuine token of thanks and is declared to the ESM.

Where you have reason to think that a polite refusal may cause offence or damage the British Council's interests, you should consult the ESM, who can consult the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

No other payments without consultation

Depending on where in the world you are working, you may find yourself in a situation where these principles are in conflict with local business practices, for example on facilitation payments.

This is a difficult area and the following guidance is designed to help you to deal with this dilemma. You must always behave with honesty and integrity when dealing with business contacts and public officials, and must not offer or give them inducements, tips or payments. If you find yourself in difficulty, you must consult the ESM or Country Exams Manager (CEM) for advice.

13. Conflicts of interest

Separating the personal from the professional

To maintain our standards of integrity, it is important to avoid any activities that are in conflict or competition with the British Council's business or are, in some other way, prejudicial to its interests. You should never use your position in the British Council for personal advantage or gain. If you think that there may be a potential conflict of interest, you should follow the guidance set out below.

Outside business interests

For example, if you run your own business, hold directorships or trusteeships, or have any interests in the businesses of existing or potential British Council clients, competitors or suppliers, you should inform ESM in writing by completing a self-declaration form available from the exams centre you are associated with.

If the British Council feels that there is a conflict, we may ask you to give up your association with us, or restrict your involvement on our behalf.

The business interests of family members may also create conflicts. If you think that this might be the case, you should ask the advice of the ESM, who will consult with the CEM or Country Director as required.

Outside work or employment

If you want to take up any similar paid employment outside the British Council, you should first discuss this with the Exams Administrator or ESM, to ensure the work is not likely to either create a conflict of interest or adversely affect your ability to carry out your British Council work effectively.

14. Duty of disclosure

Telling us what we need to know

As well as disclosing any outside activities which may be in conflict with the British Council's interests (see principle 16 below), you also have a duty to disclose the following.

Bankruptcy and Legal proceedings

If you are declared bankrupt, involved in legal proceedings or have any criminal convictions that may affect your suitability for certain activities (working with children and young people, for example), or which may discredit the British Council or bring it adverse publicity, you must report these. You should declare these using the disclosure form which you can obtain from the examinations office, and may be asked to give details of the case.

Other situations

You may find yourself in another situation where non-disclosure might prejudice the British Council's interests. If you think that this might be the case or you're unsure, talk to your ESM.

Confidentiality

All disclosures will be treated in confidence by the British Council. If there is in any doubt about how to deal with the information you have disclosed, any information shared, will be on 'a need to know' basis in consultation with Human Resources.

15. Personal relationships at work

Being professional about relationships

When people form close personal relationships at work it is not usually the business of the British Council to interfere with them. However, our conduct and performance at work should not be adversely affected by such relationships with colleagues, candidates or suppliers.

To avoid bias and conflicts of interest, we should not work in the immediate management line as colleagues who are partners or relatives.

If you do have a close personal relationship with a colleague working in the exams department, or taking an exam that is delivered by the British Council, you should let the ESM know. Similarly, if you have a personal relationship with someone who reports to you, you should tell the Exams Administrator or ESM. Where this is the case, the information will be treated in confidence.

16. Recruiting relatives and friends

Giving everyone the same opportunities

If you receive a query or request regarding employment from a friend or relative, you must speak to someone in the exams office for advice and agreement of the ESM before encouraging their application or any appointment or job offer is made.

Agreement will usually be given so long as the appointment does not compromise the integrity and independence of the financial or other management control systems in place in the office or workgroup concerned.

If your partner, relative or friend is recruited, these control systems may need to be altered to make sure that the necessary separation of duties is maintained.

17. Dealing with wrongdoing

Raising Concerns

The British Council is committed to upholding the highest ethical and legal standards and has zero tolerance for malpractice or wrongdoing anywhere in the organisation, and is extremely important in the examinations work we do. To deal with this, we want people to feel that they can speak-up and raise concerns about wrongdoing confidentially, and our Raising Concerns Policy enables us to do this.

Examples of malpractice or wrongdoing include child abuse, theft, fraud, facilitating cheating, false accounting, misuse of assets, receiving bribes, failing to disclose outside business interests, and breaches of regulatory requirements, as well as breaches of this code of practice and other British Council policies.

If you become aware of, or suspect, any serious wrongdoing, you must report it as soon as possible to the ESM or someone else in the examinations team. Do not confront the suspected perpetrator, discuss the case with colleagues, anyone outside the British Council, or try to conduct your own investigations.

If you feel unable to discuss the matter with the ESM, or you still have concerns, you should contact the CEM or Country Director.

Please note: if you ask for your identity to be protected, it will not be disclosed without your consent unless in response to a legal requirement. Concerns should not be raised to pursue private disputes, and malicious false allegations will be regarded as a serious matter which could lead, for instance, to the British Council terminating its association with you or which could be a disciplinary offence.

Breaches of this code

This code is in everyone's interests and you must familiarise yourself with it, refer to it and follow it.

Please be aware that breaches of this code can lead to action under the disciplinary procedure applicable in the British Council office with which you are associated, and serious breaches will result in suspension of any agreements we have with you. All breaches will be investigated before formal disciplinary action is taken. Investigations will take account of all the relevant circumstances, including the seriousness of the breach and the guidance which had been provided to the people concerned.