

## CODE OF CONDUCT

### PURPOSE

Whitehouse Institute of Design expects that all staff and students will adhere to the highest standards of conduct in relation to their work and studies, and this Code of Conduct specifies minimum standards and obligations for employees and students.

Staff and students at Whitehouse Institute are expected to perform their work in an ethical and collegial manner, and to carry out their duties with efficiency, fairness, impartiality, and honesty. Compliance with this Code will foster and maintain student, staff, and public trust and confidence in the integrity and professionalism of Whitehouse Institute.

Staff are expected as part of their duties at all times to promote and protect the interests of and maintain and enhance the reputation of the Whitehouse Institute.

This Code should be read in conjunction with the approved policies of Whitehouse Institute, and failure to abide by the provisions of this Code or the approved policies of the Institute may lead to disciplinary procedures.

### Respect for Law and Governance

All staff and students of Whitehouse Institute are required to observe and comply with relevant Federal and State laws, statutes and prescribed requirements (see final section 14) as well as the policies and rules of Whitehouse Institute.

### Professional Conduct

**For staff**, the professional conduct required by Whitehouse Institute includes, but is not limited to:

- a commitment to professional standards in teaching and learning, research, administration and industry involvement;
- observance and promotion of the rights of staff and students;
- conduct which is professional at all times and which has regard to the interests of Whitehouse Institute;
- awareness of relevant legislation and adherence to policies and procedures developed by Whitehouse Institute.

**For students**, the professional conduct required by Whitehouse Institute includes, but is not limited to:

- a commitment to learning, appropriate methods of research, and appropriate behaviour at all times while on Institute premises or elsewhere as a student;
- recognition and observance of the rights of fellow students;
- conduct which is fair and which has regard to Whitehouse Institute interests;
- awareness of relevant legislation and adherence to policies and procedures developed by Whitehouse Institute.

In conjunction with this Code, students should also read, familiarise themselves with, and abide by the provisions of the Academic Honesty Policy, the Student Misconduct Policy, Assessment Policy, and the Student Grievance Policy.

## **Academic Freedom**

Whitehouse Institute will:

- promote academic freedom of both inquiry and expression provided such inquiry and expression does not contravene applicable State or Federal legislation (such as defamation and privacy laws) and provided that if disputes arise, the provisions of this Code and Whitehouse procedures are observed;
- encourage students and staff to express themselves using critical judgement and scholarship, subject to confidentiality obligations placed upon them by any privacy and research obligations;
- encourage officers and employees to express themselves using critical judgement and scholarship, subject to confidentiality obligations placed upon them by Whitehouse Institute either through defamation or privacy laws, Whitehouse policies, or under the terms of their contracts of employment.

## **Respect for Individuals**

All staff and students of Whitehouse Institute shall treat other members of staff and students as well as visitors and members of the community with respect, courtesy, fairness and equity. This involves, but is not limited to:

- Fairness in supervising and dealing with students and staff;
- Carrying out work with integrity and objectivity;
- Making decisions that are procedurally fair;
- A client-centred approach to work;
- Avoiding unlawful discrimination, for example on grounds such as: gender, sexual orientation, race, cultural background, religion, or political conviction;
- Avoiding behaviour which might reasonably be perceived as corrupt, harassment, bullying or intimidation;
- Carrying out work in a safe manner and taking precautions to protect the health, safety and welfare of oneself and others;
- Complying with any legislative, industrial or administrative requirements;
- Avoiding behaviour which might reasonably be perceived as creating an unsafe or unhealthy environment, or constraining the legitimate rights of others;
- Respecting an individual's right to privacy and undertaking to keep personal information in confidence;
- Respecting privacy laws and confidential information given to them in the course of their employment.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Staff of Whitehouse Institute should be sensitive to the potential for conflicts of interest to arise between their personal interests and their duties, obligations and responsibilities to Whitehouse Institute, and shall take care to ensure that no actual conflict of interest arises.

Staff of Whitehouse Institute should avoid situations in which their private interests (whether involving personal financial or pecuniary interests, or external associations, or personal and family relationships between staff or between staff and students) conflict with or might reasonably be thought to conflict with or influence judgements made during the course of their professional duties, and perceptions that an unfair benefit may have been attained. Potential conflicts of interest should be assessed in terms of the likelihood that staff possessing a particular interest could be improperly influenced, or might appear to be improperly influenced, in the performance of their duties on a particular matter.

Academic staff have a particular responsibility to their students to assess their work fairly, objectively and consistently across the candidature for their particular unit or course. Because personal relationships between students and staff may involve serious difficulties arising from the unequal power of the parties concerned, as well as the difficulties in maintaining appropriate boundaries between professional and personal life, academic staff have a responsibility to declare such potential or actual conflicts of interest to their supervisor or the Academic Coordinator or the Chief Executive Officer.

Staff or students who believe they may be involved in, or that a situation may arise involving a conflict of interest must inform and should seek advice from their supervisor or Academic Coordinator or the Chief Executive Officer, as the case may be, who will determine what action is to be taken.

Members of staff should take particular care not to take part in the following matters in relation to any student with whom they have a personal relationship:

- i) selection for entry to any course or program or activity where this depends on a judgement other than a pre-determined score or grade in which they have not been involved;
- ii) assessment procedures;
- iii) selection for any scholarship or prize;
- iv) postgraduate supervision.

Where a potential conflict of interest exists in relation to any of these academic matters, the Academic Coordinator should approve alternative arrangements.

Failure to disclose a potential or actual conflict of interest by staff or students of Whitehouse Institute may render decisions null and void, and can lead to disciplinary proceedings.

## **Outside Work and Private Practice**

The employment obligations of Whitehouse staff who receive full-time salaries are to the Whitehouse Institute. Full-time staff wishing to engage in any outside work, including private practice, must seek approval to do so from the Chief Executive Officer or the delegated nominee, who may approve or not approve such requests.

All Whitehouse Institute staff, including those employed for less than full-time, must not accept outside work where it may cause a direct or indirect conflict with their duties to Whitehouse or otherwise adversely impact the conduct of Whitehouse work or reflect poorly on the reputation and public standing of Whitehouse Institute. If there is any doubt whatsoever, the potential direct or indirect conflict must be reported to the Chief Executive Officer.

## **Duty of Care and Safety**

The staff and students of Whitehouse Institute must take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect the health, safety and welfare of all those in the workplace. In particular, they must comply with the Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000 (NSW) ("OHS Act") and relevant Codes of Practice as well specific Whitehouse Institute Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures. Whitehouse staff and students should also actively promote safe working practices and environments for everyone using Whitehouse facilities.

Staff should ensure that the personal use of alcohol or other drugs does not affect work performance or the health, safety and welfare of others, especially students in their care.

Relevant staff should take steps to ensure that all contractors engaged on site are aware of the Whitehouse Institute's OH&S Act obligations and are compliant with Whitehouse Occupational Health and Safety policies and procedures.

## **Discrimination and Harassment**

Staff and students of Whitehouse Institute must not harass or discriminate against their colleagues, students, members of the public or other persons with whom they may interact on the grounds of (including but not limited to) sex, marital status, pregnancy, age, race, ethnic or national origin, physical or intellectual impairment or sexual preference. Such behaviour may constitute an offence under several Federal Anti-Discrimination laws as well as the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW) and will be considered a serious breach of Whitehouse policies. In addition, staff and students must not harass or discriminate on the grounds of political or religious convictions.

Whitehouse supervisors must make every effort to ensure that the workplace is free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. They should understand and apply the principles of equal employment opportunity and ensure that the employees they supervise are informed of these principles.

## **Diligence**

Staff are expected to be diligent in their work and to carry out their duties in a professional, responsible, and conscientious manner, and to be accountable for their official conduct and decisions. Staff have an obligation to professionally implement and carry out official and authorised decisions and to adhere to policies faithfully and impartially.

All employees of Whitehouse Institute are expected to maintain and enhance their skills, scholarship and expertise, and to keep up-to-date the knowledge associated with their particular field or area of work. High standards of performance and a keen focus on client service are expected.

## **Confidential Information**

Official information must only be used for the work-related purpose intended and not for other reasons or personal benefit. Officers and employees must make sure that they do not disclose, disseminate or make use of any information marked confidential without prior authorisation or unless specifically authorised by legislation. All staff of Whitehouse must take reasonable steps to ensure that any information marked confidential in any form (e.g. computer files), cannot be accessed by unauthorised people and that sensitive information is only discussed with people who are authorised to have access to it. Any Whitehouse document marked confidential should only be accessed by those authorised to do so. Unauthorised access to, disclosure or use of confidential information may result in disciplinary proceedings for misconduct.

## **Use and Security of Information**

All staff have a duty to maintain the confidentiality, integrity and security of information for which they are responsible. In addition, staff of Whitehouse Institute have an obligation to:

- ensure that personal information concerning students or staff is secured against loss, misuse or unauthorised access, modification or inappropriate disclosure;
- report in confidence to their supervisor, or to the Chief Executive Officer, any actual or suspected misuse of information, or any actual or suspected breach of the provisions of this Code. Privacy and confidentiality must be maintained in all such cases, and particular care should be taken to avoid vexatious or malicious allegations without reasonable evidence.

## **Security Maintenance**

Staff and on-site contractors must maintain adequate security of the Whitehouse Institute premises in which they are working and must maintain security of keys and swipe-cards issued to them for the purposes of opening, accessing and using Whitehouse buildings, vehicles, equipment and other facilities. Keys and access devices are to be used only in the performance of approved and scheduled duties, and use for any other purpose requires authorised prior approval.

## **Related Policies and Legislation**

This Code should be read in conjunction with the policies and rules of Whitehouse Institute and with the relevant State or Federal legislation, as appropriate and amended from time to time, which includes, but may not be limited to:

- Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)
- Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998 (NSW)
- Copyright Act 1968 (Fed)
- Crimes Act 1914 (Fed)
- Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Fed)

- Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999 (Fed)
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Fed)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 (NSW)
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 (NSW)
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Fed)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Fed).

This Code of Conduct was approved by the Board of Governors on 27 August 2007 and is set out in the Student Handbook, Staff Handbook, Policy and Procedures manual and published on the Whitehouse Institute website [www.whitehouse-design.edu.au](http://www.whitehouse-design.edu.au)