University of Sheffield

Staff Code of Conduct
Living our Values

This version as at December 2025 replaces all previous versions of this document.

Contents

Introduction

Since our University was formed back in 1905, we have never stopped exploring new ways to understand and change the world.

Today, our vision sets out how we will continue to shape the world we live in. We are a global university, welcoming students and staff from over 140 countries and nurturing research and alumni links across the world.

If we want to drive progress in a way that is inclusive, diverse and represents the actions of a world-class university, we must be led by our values. Our values guide the way we work with each other, our students and our external partners and help us create a university we're proud of.

As is central to our One University pillar, we are all active participants in the success of the University.

Because of this, it's important that we all know about the Code of Conduct and use it in our day-to-day work, whether that be remotely or in person.

Living our values means doing what we believe in every day we're at work or representing our place of work. This is how we create the best University community we can be and maintain our reputation as a world-leading university. Below you will find a guide to the types of behaviours we are all expected to consider.

Our vision
values

We are **ambitious** and strive for excellence in all that we do.

We believe in **collaborative** working.

We are **responsible** – for our people and the wider world.

We champion an **inclusive** and **diverse** community.

We are open and **transparent** about the decisions we make.

Code of Conduct principles

Staff should consider the following principles and expectations set out within this Code of Conduct alongside their day-to-day interactions and work at the University.

- We are respectful, considerate and courteous at all times to all members of staff, students, customers, suppliers and the wider community;

- We conduct ourselves at all times with professionalism and carry out our duties in accordance with the requirements of our roles;

- We behave with independence, consistency, honesty and transparency in all University activities;

- We have the freedom to pursue, advance and disseminate knowledge and ideas;

- Freedom of expression and intellectual debate is valued within the law. This Code of Conduct is underpinned by and shall be applied in accordance with the University's **Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**;

- We all (staff and students) have the right to work and study at the University without fear of discrimination, bullying or harassment;

- We have a collective responsibility to create and contribute to a supportive culture for all staff and students, by exhibiting such behaviour ourselves and challenging or reporting unacceptable behaviour witnessed within the University community;

- Any member of staff who acts contrary to the expectations set out in the Code of Conduct will be asked to reflect, and where appropriate, change their behaviour. They may also be subject to University disciplinary procedures;

- The Code of Conduct is applicable to on-campus working, remote working, personal time, and includes interactions via social media. For example, it is possible that certain situations which may occur in personal time, including online, may be relevant to your University role and have a negative impact on other members of our community.

Scope

The Code of Conduct is applicable to all employees of the University and also applies to:

- Atypical/casual workers;
- Visiting academics/researchers;
- Honorary staff;
- Emeritus staff;
- Agency staff;
- Self-employed/consultant/independent contractors who are undertaking work with the University.

Creating an inclusive and collaborative workplace

Why it matters

At our University we have people with a wide range of skills and backgrounds, who bring their different approaches, insights and views together to collaborate every day. It is important that our University community is fully inclusive and open to the free exchange of ideas, opinions and perspectives, and that we feel able to be ourselves, express ourselves and to flourish. We should embrace differences, foster respectful relationships, and work together to find solutions whilst supporting one another to deliver the priorities set out in our University vision.

What it means

We will:

- Abide by the **Equality Act 2010** at all times, which includes ensuring that we do not discriminate either directly or indirectly, or harass each other, in relation to the protected characteristics of age, race, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, disability, religion or belief and marriage or civil partnership. For further information visit our **Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy** and **equality, diversity & inclusion** web pages;

- Uphold freedom of speech, and academic freedom obligations as set out in our **Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**;

- Approach differences in viewpoints, opinions, beliefs and arguments with respect and a willingness to learn, and adopt an inclusive approach to our work, and the exchange of ideas and opinions within our University community;

- Be mindful of how our biases such as preconceived attitudes and perceptions may impact on our everyday behaviour, interactions and decisions;

- Communicate openly and positively and engage in dialogue with colleagues whilst also striving to ensure that our words and actions would not reasonably be expected to have a detrimental impact on others;

- Value opportunities to share expertise and engage in collaborative working;

- Value the contributions of others and provide support and guidance to colleagues where feasible and appropriate;

- When interacting with students, recognise our position of trust and maintain boundaries with students at all times;

- Withdraw from situations where a real or perceived conflict of interest may exist. This may include managerial and supervisory relationships. See **Conflicts of Interest** for further information;

- Declare **personal relationships** with students or colleagues and any other real or perceived conflicts of interest to your Head of School or line manager.

We will not accept:

- Inappropriate behaviour towards any other staff member, student or affiliates of the University, for example, honorary academics or emeritus staff. This may include behaviour which is disrespectful or deliberately non-cooperative;

- Any behaviour which constitutes bullying, whether this occurs face- to- face or on digital platforms such as email, video meetings or online messaging platforms. For further information visit our **Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy web pages** and the Office for Students **statement of expectations** for higher education institutions. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;

- Inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about someone's performance;

- Abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority;

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour, for example physical or verbal abuse;

- Deliberate disregard for the experiences of others, for example telling an individual that they are overreacting or being overly sensitive about what is being said;

- Deliberate disregard for or exclusion of the contributions of others;

- Disrespectful or discourteous behaviour towards any individual, for example rudeness;

- Inappropriate, disparaging or intimidating remarks/references/ comments, or non-verbal gestures;

- Rude or discourteous behaviour towards another person based on their personal circumstances, for example caring responsibilities or socio-economic status;

- Discriminatory or offensive behaviour towards an individual or group, in accordance with the **Equality Act 2010**;

- Any behaviour which constitutes harassment, for example behaviour which has the purpose of, or may be reasonably considered to have the effect of, violating a person's dignity, or creating a hostile environment;

- Any behaviour which constitutes sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault or violence;

- Any behaviour which constitutes victimisation, for example derogatory or insulting behaviour or language based on personal characteristics;

- Failure to declare a **conflict of interest** through the appropriate reporting channels;

- A persistent lack of engagement with wider school activities, for example team meetings, research seminars, administrative or leadership responsibilities – existing priorities, commitments and individual workloads notwithstanding;

- Uncollegiate behaviours, such as unwillingness to engage with colleagues and their ideas or reasonably provide support to other colleagues.

Responsible and ethical conduct

Why it matters

We promote honesty, fairness and openness in every aspect of our work, research, education and student experience. We all have an obligation to ensure that our actions are responsible as members of the University community. We need to be accountable for our actions, and where our roles require us to make ethical decisions, we need to ensure that we make the right choices.

What it means

We will:

- Ensure appropriate conduct as representatives of the University;

- Ensure actions and decisions within our roles are responsible and ethical. See the **Code of Ethics**;

- Use University equipment responsibly, and ensure this is returned either when requested or when we leave the University. See the **employee leaving checklist**;

- Ensure activities involving children and vulnerable students and adults are carried out in accordance with the **University Safeguarding Policy**;

- For those working in chartered or regulated occupations, for example medicine and law, abide by standards of conduct as required by professional bodies.

We will not accept:

- Some actions or behaviour within the wider community which may bring the University into disrepute or impact on your job role, for example criminal proceedings. In such cases we will follow the principles in our **disciplinary procedure** and the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974);

- Irresponsible and/or unethical use of University property or resources;

- Deliberate damage to University property.

University processes, procedures and regulations

Why it matters

We all have a responsibility to ensure that University processes, procedures and regulations are followed at all times. They exist to ensure fairness and consistency, and in many cases to manage risk for ourselves, the University and our community. If you become aware of a breach of University procedures you should act responsibly and report these to the relevant contact.

What it means

We will:

- Undertake the required **mandatory training** specified for our role and ensure this is refreshed as needed;

- Ensure University information and data is kept confidential and secure. Visit our **IT Services** web pages for further information;

- At all times comply with the requirements of the University's health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures. See **Health and Safety** for further information;

- Report any perceived health and safety hazards and all accidents, incidents, diseases and dangerous occurrences whether people are injured or not;

- Where a risk assessment determines it is required to do so, use appropriate safety equipment/ devices, and wear and make full use of all personal protective equipment;

- For those involved with research activities: Uphold research integrity and ensure all research is carried out within the proper legal framework and University rules and regulations. See the **Good Research & Innovation Practices (GRIP) Policy**;

- Ensure that aspects of your role which include University finances are carried out with integrity and in accordance with the **financial regulations**, and **procurement guidance**;

- Report activity which is in breach of University regulations via established procedures, for example the **Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Procedure**.

We will not accept:

- Failure to comply with established policies or procedures without reasonable cause;

- Failure to comply with information security rules and regulations, including training, processes and policies, and protection of data and devices. See **Information Security** for further information;

- Deliberate or deliberately negligent actions which breach **health and safety regulations**, and/or University policy which may cause injury;

- Failure to report unsafe practices;

- Actions which constitute research misconduct – for example, any fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or deception, or deviation of accepted practices in carrying out research. See the **Research Misconduct Policy**, **Research Misconduct Guidance** and **Research, Partnerships and Innovation** for further information;

- Acts which are in direct contravention of the University financial regulations, for example falsification of University records or data;

- Failure to report acts of financial misconduct, for example **fraud**, **bribery** or **tax evasion**;

- Refusal to participate in the **Staff Review and Development Scheme (SRDS)** or other appraisal methods (for clinical staff).

Additional expectations for University leaders and managers

University leaders and managers at all levels, including professors, academic leaders, principal investigators and supervisors, play an important role in creating and sustaining an environment where we can all flourish and succeed. In addition to their responsibilities as employees, leaders and managers are also expected to:

- Model the core University **values**;

- Create a team environment which is inclusive, welcoming of individual differences, and which supports positive wellbeing;

- Promote and protect freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law;

- Be mindful of the wellbeing of team members;

- Be aware of available sources of support for signposting, for example, the **Wellbeing Services Hub**, **Staff Disability Hub**, **Staff Disability Adviser Service**, the **Mental Health Hub**, **Staff Mental Health Adviser Service** and **Alliance Psychological Services**;

- Address concerns in a timely manner and at the lowest appropriate level, for example with a discussion, avoiding unnecessary escalation;

- Challenge unacceptable behaviour including that which constitutes bullying and harassment in a swift, proportionate and timely manner, and escalate through the existing procedures, where necessary;

- Support staff in their professional and skills development, and in accordance with the business needs of the department. See the **staff development** web pages for further information;

- Be aware of and familiar with employee policies and procedures – see the **Manager Toolkits**. Ensure that team members adhere to University policy and procedures, and address actions which deviate from standard procedures;

- Respond appropriately to disclosure of disabilities and **reasonable adjustments** required, in line with legal requirements and your duty of care as a manager. Further support regarding reasonable adjustments can be accessed through HR;

- Consider any wider development activity that may support the Code of Conduct expectations;

- With regards to **health and safety**, line managers:

  - Have a general duty to manage the health, safety and welfare of their direct reports, and ensure direct reports with line management responsibilities are effectively managing the health, safety and welfare of their own direct reports;

  - Ensure the clear communication of health and safety information;

  - Ensure that suitable and sufficient risk assessments are undertaken and ensure that suitable control measures are identified and implemented for all significant hazards, including stress;

  - Ensure cooperation between individuals and others to ensure the effective provision of health and safety for the areas and activities under their control;

  - Encourage a positive reporting culture, including near misses and positive observations;

  - See **organisational arrangements (roles and responsibilities) for the management of health and safety** for the comprehensive list of responsibilities.

Challenging and reporting unacceptable behaviour

We all have a responsibility to reflect on our own behaviour, consider how it impacts on other people and report unacceptable or discriminatory behaviour when we see it. The University will not tolerate such behaviour and promotes an environment in which people who are subject to unacceptable behaviour or witness it feel able to raise complaints without fear of victimisation.

No disciplinary sanction shall be imposed on a member of staff without consideration of whether doing so would be an infringement of their right of freedom of speech, or (where applicable) academic freedom, within the law.

Staff who report any such behaviour will be supported, and where appropriate, signposted to appropriate resources or help. The University takes complaints and reports very seriously. If you have experienced unacceptable behaviour yourself, or have witnessed behaviour which you feel is unacceptable, you should either:

a. **Challenge this behaviour in a respectful manner if you feel able; or,**
b. **If you do not feel comfortable with this, report this behaviour via:**

i. The University's **Report + Support** web platform, either by sharing personal details, anonymously, or as a bystander;

ii. A trusted manager or leader;

iii. For early career researchers, via your faculty lead or ECR champion;

iv. Your line manager;

v. **Human Resources contact**;

vi. Head of school;

vii. Vice-president/head of faculty (in the event of concerns regarding a head of school);

viii. Vice-Chancellor (in the event of concerns regarding a vice-president);

ix. Chair of Council (in the event of concerns regarding the Vice- Chancellor);

x. You could also seek advice from your trade union representative (if applicable).

Report + Support enables staff and students to report, either anonymously or using names, instances of unwanted or unacceptable behaviour, including but not limited to bullying, harassment or similar behaviour based on race, sex, sexuality or other protected characteristics.

See the **Bullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct policy** and **Report + Support procedures and guidance** for information on definitions, the objective assessment of whether harassment has occurred, and dealing with allegations.

All reports are directed to an appropriate contact in either Student Safeguarding and Welfare or Human Resources depending on the nature of the report. Reports are addressed sensitively and as confidentially as possible. For named reports, contact is made with the reporting individual before any action is taken and their views are taken into account about how they would like the report to be addressed. Only in the most serious cases where we believe someone's health or safety is at risk would action be taken in the absence of the reporting individual's consent. Explore the **Report + Support** platform for more information about reporting processes.

Consequences of unacceptable behaviours

If appropriate and necessary, unacceptable behaviours will be addressed under the relevant policy or procedure, for example the agreed **disciplinary policy and procedure**.

University policy signposting and useful resources

The Code of Conduct is also designed to work together with the **University Code of Ethics**, the **Student Code of Conduct** and **Our Commitment**, which sets out the dedication of both staff and students towards providing the best learning experience at the University. It is governed by, and shall be applied in accordance with, the University's **Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**.

The **Human Resources** web pages contain information on policies, procedures and guidance in relation to employment at the University. The web pages also contain other useful information and resources for staff support:

- **Policies, procedures and related guidance**
- **Staff health and wellbeing**
- **Staff Disability Adviser Service**
- **Mental Health Hub**
- **Staff Mental Health Adviser Service**
- **Alliance Psychological Services**
- **Staff development**
- **Reward and recognition (The Deal)**
- **Mediation**