Workplace conduct and ethics

Policy Number: E1 (QH-POL-113)

Publication date: March 2018

Purpose: To outline the obligations of management and employees to comply with the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service (the Code of Conduct) and contribute to the achievement of a professional and productive work culture within the Department of Health, characterised by the absence of any form of unlawful or inappropriate behaviour.

Application: This policy applies to all employees working for the Department of Health (including employees of Queensland Ambulance Service).


Legislative or other authority:
- Crime and Corruption Act 2001
- Public Sector Ethics Act 1994
- Public Service Act 2008

Related policy or documents:
- Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service
- Conflicts of Interest Guideline (QH-GDL-113-1:2017)

Policy subject:

1 Employee obligations

All Department of Health employees have an obligation to ensure their conduct is appropriate and reflects the principles, values and standards of conduct outlined in the Code of Conduct and the work performance and personal conduct principles prescribed in section 26 (1) of the Public Service Act 2008. All Department of Health employees also have an obligation to comply with relevant legislation, awards, certified agreements, agreements, directives, policies and standards, Queensland Health values and Queensland Health documents.

An employee’s obligations extend to:
- the performance of an employee’s official duties
- representation of the Department of Health at conferences, training events, on business trips or other work related functions
- attendance at work-related social events
- when suspended or when specifically directed.

An employee who does not comply with their obligations may be subject to disciplinary action, which may include the termination of their employment.
The Department of Health is committed to creating and maintaining an environment for patients, clients, visitors and employees which is professional, client responsive, safe and free of any form of unlawful or inappropriate behaviour.

A requirement to continue to comply with these obligations is to be included in all performance conversations, and formalised through performance and development plans (PDPs).

2 Workplace ethics

There are many ethical challenges that the Department of Health employees encounter and deal with in their day to day work. The processes for dealing with ethical issues are guided by legislation, policy, delegations and the Code of Conduct.

Employees have a responsibility to always conduct and present themselves in a professional manner and to ensure personal conduct displays integrity and maintains public confidence in the Queensland public sector.

Employees must ensure particular caution is taken when dealing with gifts, benefits and conflicts of interest.

Concerns about possible breaches of the Code of Conduct should be reported to managers, local human resource units or the chief executive.

2.1 Ethical decision making

All Department of Health employees are required to ensure their decisions are ethical as there may be times an employee will need to make a decision or take actions that are not specifically covered in the Code of Conduct.

The decision-making requirements for public sector employees include:

- a sound knowledge of public sector values, principles and processes
- robust skills to ensure decisions and actions are consistent with those values
- confidence to make, and be accountable for such decisions, and take required actions.

2.2 Ethics in relationships

Employees are required to exercise integrity in relationships with others (including other employees), by:

- ensuring relationships do not influence work
- exercising appropriate judgement when working with others
- raising concerns about another employee’s actions or conduct which could be considered inappropriate.

3 Manager’s responsibilities

All managers have a special responsibility to support employees by leading by example and assisting employees to understand their responsibilities.

Managers must make fair, transparent and consistent decisions. Managers are accountable for decisions made in their areas of responsibility and must ensure they are effective, policy-aligned and supportive of public sector values and ethics.
Where appropriate, managers should endeavour to address concerning behaviour through local resolution in the first instance. In determining the action to be taken, the nature and seriousness of the concerning behaviour will be considered.

As prescribed by section 26 of the Public Service Act, a manager must take all reasonable steps to ensure each employee under the manager’s management is aware of the following -

(a) The work performance and personal conduct expected of the employee.
(b) The values of the public service and of the department or public service office in which the employee is employed.
(c) What constitutes corrupt conduct under the Crime and Corruption Act 2001.

Further, a manager must pro-actively manage the work performance and personal conduct of public service employees under the manager’s management and take prompt and appropriate action to address cases of unacceptable work performance or personal conduct as they arise.

Definitions:

| Employee | Includes permanent, temporary and casual employees, Visiting Medical Officers, contractors, consultants, students, volunteers and others who exercise power or control resources for and on behalf of the Department of Health. |
| Official duties | Exercising the functions of an employee’s position. |

History:

| March 2018 | Policy:  
- formatted as part of the HR Policy review  
- amended to update references and naming conventions  
- updated to include section 26 of the Public Service Act. |
| May 2014 | Policy reviewed as part of the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) HR Policy Integration project.  
Policy applicable to QAS employees.  
Policy amended to reflect application to the Department of Health only. |
| January 2014 | Policy redrafted and formatted as part of the HR Policy Simplification project.  
Policy amended to:  
- change policy name from ‘Code of Conduct – Workplace Ethics, Conduct and Behaviour’ to ‘Workplace Conduct and Ethics’  
- remove duplication of information contained in the Code of Conduct. |
| January 2011 | Amended to incorporate the single Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service effective 1 January 2011. |
| April 2008 | Developed as a result of the HR policy consolidation project. |
| Previous | IRM 3.1 Workplace Ethics, Conduct and Behaviour – Policy Statement  
IRM 3.1-1 Code of Conduct 2006 |