
Professional and Personal Code of Conduct for Board Members

Policy # 5.7b

Approved: May 2018

Circulation: B

Review: May/June 2020

Introduction

1. The School is founded on the fundamental principle of providing a caring, supportive and joyful environment for all members of our community so that they grow as individuals: the well-being of each and every individual is seen as both a personal and a collective responsibility.
2. This document should be read in the context of our mission, vision, values and educational philosophy. It aims to clarify what we should expect of each other in terms of professional and personal conduct whether in school, whilst on school business and as a member of the Phuket community.
3. We are expected to act as role models for students and adhere to the values of UWCT. We are responsible for our own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct that would lead any reasonable person to question our motivation and intentions.
4. There are legitimate high expectations about the nature of the professional involvement of staff in the lives of students. When we accept a role that involves working with children and young people, we need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

Professional Judgment

5. This guidance cannot provide a complete checklist of what is, or is not, appropriate behaviour. There will be occasions and circumstances in which we have to make decisions or take action in the best interests of the students and the School which could contravene this guidance or where no guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgments about their behaviour in order to secure both the best interests of the students in their charge and the School. In so doing, you will be seen to be acting reasonably and responsibly.

Core Principles

6. There are six underlying principles:
 - a. We should be conscious at all times that the school exists for the education of students. The interests and welfare of the students must therefore be paramount.
 - b. We should treat students with respect and dignity. Relationships with students should be professional and objective but relaxed.
 - c. We should work in a collaborative manner with our colleagues, students, and students' families, assuming positive intent in all interactions.
 - d. We should maintain a professional relationship with parents and guardians.
 - e. We are always in a professional relationship with the students whether at school or not.
 - f. The personal conduct of an individual has an impact upon the professional standing of that person, their colleagues and the School as a whole. We have a mutual responsibility.

Power and Positions of Trust

7. All adults working with students in education settings are in positions of trust in relation to the young people in their care. A relationship between a member of staff and a student cannot be a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable young people; we have a responsibility to ensure that an unequal balance of power is not used for personal advantage.

Confidentiality

8. We all have access to confidential information about students and staff in order to undertake our everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances we may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. We should never abuse the trust that is placed in us through having access to this information. It should never be used casually in a conversation or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis.
9. There are some circumstances in which we may be expected to share information about a student, for example when abuse is alleged or suspected. In such cases, we have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated child protection responsibilities. If any of us are ever in any doubt about whether to share information or keep it confidential we should seek guidance from the school counselor, the Head of School or a member of the School Leadership Team.
10. We need to be aware that although it is important to listen to and support students, we must be aware of our duty of care responsibilities and not promise confidentiality when receiving sensitive information.

Propriety and Behaviour

11. We all have a responsibility to maintain confidence in our ability to safeguard the welfare and best interests of our students. We should adopt high standards of personal conduct in order to maintain the respect of our peers, students, parents and the public in general.
12. Our behaviour, either in or out of the school, should not compromise our position within the work setting so it is important we exercise due care and attention when outside of the school environment. In Phuket, outside school hours, we will often encounter parents and students. We should be friendly but circumspect in our interactions and mindful of our responsibility to others in terms of our behaviour.

Infatuations

13. We need to be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to a member of staff and/or develop an infatuation. We should be aware that such circumstances always carry a high risk of words or actions being misinterpreted and for allegations to be made against us.
14. We should be vigilant in maintaining our privacy and mindful of the need to avoid placing ourselves in vulnerable situations, maintaining professional boundaries at all times.

Communication with students (including the use of technology)

15. Communication with students, by whatever method, should take place within clear and explicit professional boundaries. This includes the wider use of technology such as mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites, social networking sites, online gaming and blogs.

16. We should not share any personal information with a student, nor should we request, or respond to, any personal information from the student, other than that which might be appropriate as part of our professional role. We should ensure that all communications are transparent and open to scrutiny.
17. We should also be wise in our communications with students so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation of our motives or behaviour. We should not give our personal contact details to students including e-mail, home or mobile telephone numbers, unless the need to do so is agreed with the appropriate people or there are exceptional circumstances.
18. Communication with former students who are over 18 is left to your discretion. However, please be conscious of the fact that former students may be in contact with current students.

Social Contact

19. We should not establish or seek to establish social contact with students for the purpose of securing a friendship or to pursue or strengthen a relationship. Even if a young person seeks to establish social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, we should exercise our professional judgment in making a response. We should all be aware that social contact, in certain situations, could be misconstrued as grooming.

Social Networking Sites and online Activities

20. Where relationships exist between staff who are also parents at the school, or personal friends who are parents at the school, social networking is acceptable but caution must be exercised so that professional standards are maintained and staff do not compromise themselves or the school.
21. It is highly recommended that your profile and photos on social networking sites are 'locked down' as private so that students or parents do not have access to your personal data or images.
22. In making decisions about whether to share information on social networks, we need to be aware that we leave ourselves open to a charge of professional misconduct if images of ourselves or our colleagues in a compromising situation are made available on a public profile by anyone. In a similar vein, we should acknowledge that you could also be compromising the personal privacy of a colleague. Once an image is posted online and shared, you have lost control of it.
23. You should deny current or recent students access to your profile so you do not put yourself in a vulnerable position.
24. For those who participate in online gaming, if you become aware that you are in an online game with a student, you should cease to play against that student and should not enter any games containing that player as part of the group. You should not seek out students and/or share your own gamer tags/ID with students unless it is a school-supervised activity.

Physical Contact

25. There are occasions when it is entirely appropriate and proper to have physical contact with students, but it is crucial that we only do so in ways appropriate to our professional role.

26. A 'no touch' approach is impractical for most and will in some circumstances be inappropriate. When physical contact is made with a student this should be in response to their needs at the time, of limited duration and appropriate. We should use our professional judgment at all times about the appropriateness of any physical contact, taking into consideration the circumstances, age, culture and gender of the student.
27. Physical contact, which occurs regularly with an individual student, is likely to raise questions. We should always be prepared to explain our actions and accept that all physical contact could be open to scrutiny.
28. There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. Staff should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

One-to-One Situations

29. When working in one to one situations with children and young people we are more vulnerable to allegations. We should recognise this possibility and plan and conduct such meetings accordingly. Every attempt should be made to ensure the safety and security needs of both staff and students are met. Pre-arranged meetings with students away from the school premises are ill-advised.

Communications with Colleagues

30. We work in a collaborative manner with our colleagues, assuming positive intent in all interactions. We treat and speak to one another with respect and ensure that we maintain a positive perspective of our colleagues when conversing with staff, parents and students. We take a proactive approach to correcting staff who are speaking ill of others or the school.

In conclusion, if you have doubts about what is appropriate behaviour under particular circumstances or an incident has occurred that is causing you concern, then you are advised to consult with the Board Chair.

Confidentiality

31. The Board Guidelines (22f) indicate that all Board Members are to respect the confidentiality of communications and communicators. By virtue of sitting on the Board, Board Members will receive or have access to confidential documents, confidential information about the School, its employees, students and their families, and the Society, and the private opinions of faculty, staff, and Governors on a variety of school-related topics (collectively, "Confidential Information").

All such Confidential Information is intended to be kept confidential and without limitation, in the case of Board or related meetings, wholly within the confines of the Board or Committee room and among Board or Committee members only. Board Members must not discuss, copy, distribute, or convey any Confidential Information to any person not entitled to receive such Confidential Information, including but not limited to their spouses, family members, friends, acquaintances, business associates, and other members of the School community, and must not disclose in any manner any Confidential Information to anyone except as obligated in their position as Governors or as required by law.

Acceptance of Gifts

32. Inappropriate gifts to Board Members can create a conflict of interest for the recipient and affect the integrity of the School's and/or the Board's reputation. Board Members shall not accept for personal use or benefit, a gift, favour or service from any individual, organization, or corporation doing business with the School or Society, or from a student or a person whose child or relative is a student or prospective student (whether they have submitted a formal application to the School or not), other than:
- the normal exchange of gifts between friends;
 - tokens exchanged as part of protocol; or
 - other nominal gifts of a cumulative value of less than 5,000 THB.

All gifts received having a cumulative value in any academic year greater than 5,000 THB must be disclosed in the following manner:

- Board Members (other than the Board Chair), will disclose to the Board Chair (the Board Chair will report to the other member(s) of the Executive Committee when they are the gift recipient)
- Upon receipt of such disclosure, the Board Chair (or Executive Committee member(s)), will consider whether acceptance of the gift(s) by the recipient could create a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest for the recipient, the School, and/or the Board, and will make a determination of whether the gifts can be retained by the recipient, must be returned in whole or in part to the person making the gift, or some other action must be taken.
- The recipient must comply with the determination and related directions.
- Under no circumstances will a Board Member accept any gift of cash from any individual, organization, or corporation doing business with the School or the Board, or from a student or a person whose child or relative is a student or prospective student (whether they have submitted a formal application to the School or not). If offered such a gift, Board Members must decline it, or, if already received, must immediately return it to the person who made the gift. Governors who are offered such a gift must disclose the offer of such a gift in the same manner as they are required under this Code to disclose gifts received having a cumulative value in any academic year greater than 5,000 THB.

33. **Duty to Disclose and Conflicts of Interest:**

- The Board Guidelines (22e) indicate that all Board members are to declare any conflict of interest issue or activities of personal benefit.
 - Different conflict of interest:
 - A real conflict of interest occurs when a Board Member exercises an official power or performs an official duty or function where there is an opportunity to further his or her private interest.
 - A potential conflict of interest occurs when there is a reasonable possibility that a Board Member will exercise an official power or perform an official duty or function where there is an opportunity to further his or her private interest.
 - A perceived conflict of interest occurs when a reasonably well-informed person could have a perception that a Board Member's ability to exercise an official power or perform an official duty or function was or will be affected by his or her private interest.
 - Governors have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair or Vice Chair, any relationship, benefit, opportunity, activity, or transaction that could lead to or result in a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. This duty includes, but is not limited to, the duty to disclose private interests in properties or transactions in which the Society is involved, or proposes to be involved.
- b. Conflict of Interest of Others: Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair, any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest that they are aware of between any other Board Member, faculty or staff member and the School or the Board.

- c. **Contravention of Law:** Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair any knowledge, concern, or reasonable belief they have related to any potential contravention of any law by any member of the School community that in any way could affect the School or the Board.
- d. **Danger to Health, Safety or Environment:** Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair any knowledge, concern, or reasonable belief they have that there exists a risk or danger to the health or safety of any member of the School community or the environment as it relates to any environmental obligation the School or the Board may have.
- e. **Misuse of Society Funds or Assets:** Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair any knowledge, concern, or reasonable belief they have that there has been or will be a misuse of the School and/or Board's funds or assets.

Certificate of Understanding and Compliance

As a Member of the Board of Governors of United World College Thailand International School:

- I certify that I have read and understand the above Code of Conduct; and
- I agree to conduct myself in accordance with the above Code of Conduct and all times.

Name (Print)

Name (Signature)

Date Signed

Date filed with the Board Chair