

## Professional and Personal Code of Conduct for Board Members

Derived from: UWCT Policy # 5.7b

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### 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, parents and staff, and adhere to the values of UWC Thailand. 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 Board Members in the life of the school. When we accept a role that involves working for the benefit of and with children and young people, we need to understand and acknowledge the responsibilities and trust inherent in that role.

\* The Term "Board Members" refers to the following:

- All members of the UWCT School Board; Education for a Sustainable Future Foundation Board; Directors of Banyapura
- Directors of Mobula Services Limited for the duration of the loan.
- All members of Committees of the Boards.

### 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 and of 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 all members of the school community with respect and dignity. Relationships with members of the school community should be professional, objective, and relaxed.
- c. We should work in a collaborative manner with other Board Members, school staff, students, and students' families, assuming positive intent in all interactions.
- d. We should maintain a professional relationship with school staff, parents, and guardians.
- e. We are always in a professional relationship with students whether on school premises or not.
- f. The personal conduct of an individual has an impact upon the professional standing of that person, other Board Members 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. As a UWCT School Board Member, you may be expected to work alongside school students such as Student Representatives. Board Members have a duty of care to protect a student under their charge from reasonably foreseeable risks of exploitation, harm, or injury.

## Confidentiality

8. Board Members have access to confidential information about students and staff in order to undertake our everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances Board Members may be given additional highly sensitive or private information. Board Members should never abuse the trust that is placed through having access to this information. It should never be used casually in a conversation or shared with any person other than on a professional need to know basis.

## Propriety and Behaviour

9. 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, staff, students, parents, and the public in general.

10. 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 both within and outside of the school environment. In Phuket, outside school hours, we will often encounter staff, 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**

11. We need to be aware that it is not uncommon for students to be strongly attracted to adults who work with them 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.

12. 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)**

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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**

17. 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**

18. Where relationships exist between Board Members who are also teachers or parents at the school, or personal friends who are teachers or parents at the school, social networking is acceptable but caution must be exercised so that professional standards are maintained and Board Members do not compromise themselves or the school.

19. It is highly recommended that your profile and photos on social networking sites are 'locked down' as private so that staff, students or parents do not have access to your personal data or images.

20. 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.

21. You should deny current or recent students access to your profile so you do not put yourself in a vulnerable position.

22. 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**

23. 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 as a member of the Board.

24. 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.

25. 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.

26. There may be occasions when a distressed student needs comfort and reassurance. Board members should remain self-aware at all times in order that their contact is not threatening, intrusive or subject to misinterpretation.

### **One-to-One Situations**

27. 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 Board Members and students are met. Pre-arranged meetings with students away from the school premises are ill-advised.

### **Communications with Colleagues**

28. 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 other Board Members, staff, parents and students. We take a proactive approach to correcting members of the school community 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 or Deputy Chair.

## Confidentiality

29. The Board Guidelines (22f) indicate that all Board Members are to respect the confidentiality of communications and communicators. By virtue of sitting on the Boards, Board Members will receive or have access to confidential documents, confidential information about the Boards, Mobula (SPV), the School, its employees, students and their families, and the private opinions of faculty, staff, and Board Members 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 Board Members or as required by law.

30. Gifts to Board Members can create a conflict of interest for the recipient and affect the integrity of the School's and/or the Boards' reputations. Board Members shall not accept for personal use or benefit any gift, favour or service from any individual, organization, or corporation doing business with the School, Banyapura or ESF or their Boards, 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:

- (a) the normal exchange of gifts between friends;
- (b) tokens exchanged as part of protocol; or

Furthermore, under no circumstances will a Board Member accept any gift of cash or cash equivalents. If offered such a Gift, Board Members must decline it. Board Members who are offered such a Gift must disclose the offer of such a Gift to the Board Chair (or Deputy Chair in the case the Gift has been offered to the Board Chair).

## Duty to Disclose and Conflicts of Interest:

(a) The Board Guidelines (22e) indicate that all Board Members are to declare any conflict of interest issue or activities of personal benefit to the Board Chair. Where applicable, the Board Chair is to declare a conflict of interest to the Deputy Chair in any of the below exemplar situations.

Examples of conflicts of interest:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) 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.

- (b) Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair or Deputy 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 school community is involved, or proposes to be involved.
- (c) Conflict of Interest of Others: Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair or Deputy 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(s).
- (d) Contravention of Law: Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair or Deputy 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(s).
- (e) Danger to Health, Safety or Environment: Board Members have a duty to disclose to the Board Chair or Deputy 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(s) may have.
- (f) 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 School Board / Banyapura Board of Directors / Education for a Sustainable Future Foundation Board / Mobula Services Limited or Committees of the Boards of UWC 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 at all times.
- I agree to cooperate with any investigations into any alleged breaches of the above Code of Conduct and acknowledge that refusal to cooperate will, in itself, be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Name (Print)	Name (Signature)
Date Signed	Date filed with UWCT Governance Committee