



STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT AND GRIEVANCE POLICY

<u>Revision History</u>			
Revision No & Date	Date of Approval	Changes Made	Remark
2/1/2024	02/05/2024	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Merged two policies (Code of Conduct and Discipline and Staff Grievance)2. Constituting the Staff Disciplinary and the Staff Grievance Committees3. Timeframes introduced in the process as per the Labour Law.	Approved by BoD
03/11/2024	26/01/2025	New or Revised clauses added based Labour Law changes.	Approved by BoD

INTRODUCTION

Middle East College (MEC) believes in ensuring a high level of probity, conduct and discipline. MEC upholds intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and expression, along with respect and dignity of each individual.

Additionally, one of the key values of MEC is to provide a fair, equitable and open working environment. In recognition of this value, the Staff Grievance Policy provides a fair opportunity to a staff member to appeal against a perceived unfair treatment.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the behaviour expected of its staff assisting them to understand their responsibilities, and obligations both within and outside workplace. The code of conduct should be read in conjunction with the Labour Law, MoHERI guidelines and policies and procedures of MEC. The policy also aims to provide directions on raising a grievance observed in relation to any of the staff decisions.

AUDIENCE



This policy shall apply to all MEC employees, full-time (FT), part-time (PT) and short-term (ST).

DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Code of Conduct: The principles of honesty, openness, tolerance, fairness, integrity and responsibility in official, social and moral matters, ethical principles, values and behaviours expected from the staff

Part-Time Staff: Those staff who work for limited number of hours in a week.

Full-Time Staff: Regular staff who are required to handle the workload of 45 hours per week, as per the Omani Labour Law and/or as identified by MEC.

Short-Term Staff: Short-term appointments are specifically semester-based appointments which are temporary in nature.

Value System: MEC's values are clearly articulated and should drive the behaviour of every staff member. Refer to MEC Strategic Plan document.

Confidential Information: All data, business strategies, operations related information, student and staff related information which could be either tangible or intangible in nature is considered as classified and confidential information of MEC.

Misconduct: The Labour Law read along with other applicable regulations of the country enunciate the unacceptable behaviour by employees, termed as misconduct, which may attract disciplinary action. This includes academic misconduct involving instances of academic integrity violation.

Disciplinary Action: Disciplinary action is taken to penalise and discourage staff members from any behaviour which is against the law of the land or policies of MEC. MEC ensures that the disciplinary action is set in good faith, impartially applicable to all employees and personnel of MEC.

Disciplinary Appeal: With its policy of openness, equitability and fairness, MEC provides all aggrieved employees an opportunity to appeal for review of a disciplinary action imposed on him/her.

Grievance: Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints raised by a staff member based on perceived unfair treatment.

Grievance Appeal: The process that provides an employee with a formal method for initiating a complaint and getting a solution through a set procedure, usually where the solution does not come through the employee's Line Manager.

Staff Disciplinary/Grievance Committee: It is the committee formed by the Director of Administration and Legal Affairs (DALA) from the 15-member panel constituted by the Dean, to investigate the grievance/disciplinary matter.



DDR: Deputy Dean and Registrar

DALA: Director of Administration and Legal Affairs

HRD: Human Resources Department

HoD: Head of Department

POLICY STATEMENT

The Dean shall constitute a panel of 15 members once every 2 years from which the DALA will constitute a specific Staff Disciplinary or Staff Grievance Committee of five members in addition to a representative from the HRD nominated by the HoD of HRD (as per the Terms of References (ToRs) of the Staff Disciplinary and Staff Grievance Committees) for considering the specific case brought to his / her notice. The appointment of such a committee shall be pertinent to a specific case and the Committee shall be dissolved automatically upon the closure of the case.

Section A: Staff Code of Conduct:

1. Staff members at MEC shall maintain high ethical standards while discharging their responsibilities thereby abiding by all applicable governmental laws, rules and regulations, college policies and procedures and all other common standards of ethical conducts.
2. Staff should not threaten, intimidate, or use physical force in a manner that endangers the health and safety of another person both physically and mentally.
3. In the event of any staff not abiding by the college policies and procedures, the staff may be subject to disciplinary action based on the severity of violation of the code of conduct.
4. In all such cases where specific action for violating a policy is not explicitly stated within that particular policy, disciplinary action and process/procedures provided under this policy shall be applicable for violating that particular policy.
5. The disciplinary action could vary from verbal, written warnings to compulsory leave and/or suspension from his/her responsibilities for a specific period of time or demotion and up to termination based on the severity of the violation.
6. Misconduct will be subject to formal disciplinary process.
7. HRD initiates the formal disciplinary process which is informed to the HoD concerned.



8. The DALA shall consider the recommendations of the Staff Disciplinary Committee and take legal advice before making the final decision.
9. The DDR shall approve the disciplinary action based on recommendations from the DALA.
10. If an employee is dissatisfied by a disciplinary decision taken, he/she has the right to appeal to the Dean through the approved procedure.
11. The decision taken by the Dean shall be final and binding.
12. The College shall inform the staff concerned about the imposed penalty in writing before imposing it.
13. The college shall impose the penalty within 60 days from the date of proving the incidence/violation.
14. The college shall not impose against the staff for each violation a fine whose value exceeds the wage of 5 (five) days in one month, nor suspend him disciplinarily from work along with depriving him of all or part of the wage for each violation for a period exceeding 5 (five) days in one month.
15. In case of gross or major misconducts, where summary dismissal may be applicable, MEC reserves the right to notify the appropriate law enforcement authorities of any unlawful activity and cooperate in the investigation of any such activity.
16. The expected code of conduct for various scenarios and actions which could possibly attract disciplinary action against an employee are detailed as below:

13.1. Harassment

- 13.1.1. Staff should not harass another person including staff members, students and visitors to the college.
- 13.1.2. The term ‘Harassment’ would cover a wide range of intentional behaviors of an offensive nature which may be either physical or psychological, which is intended to disturb or harm others, and shall include stipulations as attributed under appropriate regulations of the Sultanate of Oman
- 13.1.3. They include not being restricted to impeding, bothering and unwanted or unwelcome sexual behavior, which makes a person awkward, offended, intimidated or humiliated.

13.2. Dress Code

- 13.2.1. All staff at MEC must wear culturally acceptable and professional attires at all times.



- 13.2.2. Omani male and female employees are encouraged to dress in their national dress. Staff of other nationalities may dress in their national dress provided they are in line with the social norms of the Sultanate of Oman.

13.3. Work Ethics

- 13.3.1. All employees should avoid discriminatory, unequitable or unfair practices on any ground through its work-related actions, at all times. Preference should not be given to any specific individual or group of individual/parties because of any vested interest. Staff should ensure appropriate standards of conduct are maintained; and exhibit fairness and equity in decision making.
- 13.3.2. Staff must conduct themselves in a manner that will foster and protect the reputation of the College. Staff should perform their responsibilities that safeguard and ensure public trust and confidence.
- 13.3.3. Staff must be committed to ensure highest levels of quality in their assigned responsibilities.
- 13.3.4. Staff has the responsibility to act with integrity, honesty, transparency and impartiality in all their professional dealings with colleagues, students and other stakeholders.
- 13.3.5. Staff must act to create a fair, inclusive and safe environment, where diversity is valued.
- 13.3.6. Staff must devote their official time to performing their duties faithfully. During the official duty hours, the staff must not leave the college premises without permission.
- 13.3.7. Staff must not indulge in false accusations or deliberate misleading information which may lead to harm or vexation of any person in any specific official activity. No staff must falsify any information whatsoever.
- 13.3.8. Staff should always maintain the decorum of the office. Staff should not behave in a way which would disturb or hinder the performance or work of other employees in the department. Some illustrative examples are, by not speaking loudly over the phone or putting loud music, or standing in a group and discussing loudly or inviting friends for socialising.

13.4. Fraud & Felony



- 13.4.1. Staff entrusted with MEC's funds or property shall be considered personally responsible for any damage or loss of entrusted items.
- 13.4.2. Staff should not intentionally and without authority use, possess, remove, misappropriate, damage, destroy or sell the properties belonging to another person or the college.
- 13.4.3. Staff should not alter, possess, duplicate, use or remove documents, records, keys or any other physical identification items without consent from the appropriate college authorities.
- 13.4.4. Staff should not misuse their position or authority or decision-making power for one's own benefit either directly or indirectly.

13.5. Conflict of Interest

- 13.5.1. Conflict of interest arises when there is a conflict with a personal agenda or interest and the official work responsibility of the concerned person.
- 13.5.2. Staff must ensure that no conflict of interest is observed while discharging their duties.
- 13.5.3. The potential for a conflict of interest can arise while a staff member influences or appear to influence judgments due to personal interests while discharging their duties.
- 13.5.4. Staff should not accept gifts or favors from vendors, students or contractors owing to the decision-making power they hold. Academic staff specifically should avoid any gifts or favors from their students, in all circumstances.
- 13.5.5. Whenever a staff member finds that there is a potential conflict of interest, they should declare it to the DALA.

13.6. Confidentiality

- 13.6.1. The staff must maintain and safeguard the intellectual property of the college at all times and not use it for any personal use.
- 13.6.2. All information is shared based on the job responsibilities of a staff member. Staff is expected to respect this and share or disclose information appropriately.
- 13.6.3. Information that is classified as confidential should not be disclosed to any unauthorised parties.

16.7. Substance Abuse



- 13.7.1. Any alcoholic or banned drugs are not allowed to be brought, stored or consumed in the premises of MEC. No staff shall use, possess, sell, distribute any narcotics, dangerous drugs, items prohibited by law and/or contraband substances at any time.
- 13.7.2. Serving liquor or any other intoxicating drinks is strictly prohibited in the parties, events, or functions conducted by or on behalf of MEC.
- 13.7.3. Reporting to duty under influence of alcohol or banned drugs constitutes an actionable offence and shall attract appropriate disciplinary measures, inclusive and not exhaustive of appropriate legal action in case of any mishaps occurring, resultant to or consequential to the influence of alcohol or such drugs on the said personnel.

13.8. Smoking shall be limited to areas designated for the same.

13.9. Remuneration or Compensation Issues

- 13.9.1. All compensation and benefits information is personal and staff are required to maintain confidentiality of their remuneration package.
- 13.9.2. Staff having specific issues regarding remuneration practices of the college can seek redress as per the approved grievance procedure.

17. Attendance

Poor time keeping or attendance issues shall be regulated through the initial disciplinary process as identified through the Guidelines on College Timing. However, staff with a strong history of attendance violations may be subject to higher disciplinary action resulting in denied right to opportunities and benefits and even lead to dismissal.

Section B: Staff Grievance:

Grievances can be related to complaints against another employee, HoD or MEC policy implementation. The resolution of a staff grievance shall not exceed seven days from the first day of raising the grievance. Staff grievances may be raised for cases where:

- 1.1. The employee feels that he/she has not been treated fairly with regards to facilities or benefits for his/her role or position.
- 1.2. If an employee feels mistreated by his/her department (colleagues or line manager or group) and feels threatened or feels insecure in any form.
- 1.3. In case of a dispute between members of the same department or different departments.



2. All formal staff grievances shall be routed through the line manager and the line manager shall resolve the issue within Two working days from the date of receipt of the grievance. The line manager may consult the HoD or the Assistant Dean or the reporting Director or Deputy Dean wherever applicable.
3. In case the employee does not receive a reply within Two working days or was not convinced by the resolution/response given by the line manager, he may further appeal and forward his grievance to the HRD.
4. HRD constitutes a panel, that is nominated by the DALA to resolve the matter as per the below description of formation of the panel.
5. The DALA will constitute a specific Staff Grievance Committee of five members from the panel of 15 members constituted by the Dean. In addition, a representative from the HRD nominated by the HoD of HRD (as per the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Staff Grievance Committee) shall be part of the Committee for considering the specific case brought to his / her notice. The appointment of such a committee shall be pertinent to a specific case and the committee shall stand dissolved automatically upon the closure of the case.
6. Members of the Staff Grievance Committee and any other person involved in the process shall ensure confidentiality and information shared shall not be made available publicly whatsoever.
7. Staff members can provide evidence to support their grievance if it is relevant to the case.
8. The hearing is closed to the public and no external members are permitted to be a part of the proceedings.
9. The Staff Grievance Committee shall conduct the hearing, and the hearing shall be documented/recorded by one of the members of the Committee selected by the Chairperson.
10. All staff who are relevant and party to the dispute may be required to provide testimony at the hearing. The Chairperson may impose reasonable restrictions in terms of length of testimony, type of testimony or evidence in order to maintain order and quality of the process.
11. Recommending any disciplinary action shall not be within the purview of the Staff Grievance Panel. However, if the Committee finds enough reasons for probing the matter beyond its mandate, the Committee shall recommend to the DALA that the matter may be investigated by the Staff Disciplinary Committee or Student Disciplinary Committee as may be the case.
12. A decision on the grievance shall be taken by the DDR considering the recommendations of the Staff Grievance Committee and the DALA in Three working days.



13. If an employee is dissatisfied by a grievance decision taken by the DDR, he/she has the right to appeal to the Dean whose decision is final and binding. The Dean shall give a decision in Two working days.
14. The employee can only approach the concerned authority in the Ministry of Labour after Seven working days from the first day of raising the grievance. The employee must report to duty during the grievance process.

This document does not seek to encompass all possible scenarios arising while in employment with MEC but provides a set of guiding principles to staff on acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.

REFERENCE (OPTIONAL)

Oman Labour Law, issued by the Royal decree No. 53/2023

Guidelines on College Timing