

## Introduction

The code of conduct has been developed to be in line with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) Code of Conduct, with input from the leaders and staff of Alamanda College. It identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of all staff at Alamanda College by their colleagues and the community.

It is based on the values set out in the VIT Code of Ethics, namely:

**Integrity:** by acting in the best interest of learners, maintaining a professional relationship with learners, parents / carers, colleagues and the community.

**Respect:** acting with care and compassion, treating learners fairly and impartially, holding our colleagues in high regard and acknowledging parents and carers as partners in the education of their children.

**Responsibility:** providing quality teaching, maintaining and developing our professional practice and working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our learners at Alamanda College.

and draws on the VIT's Standards of Professional Practice, and Codes of Conduct for teachers developed by schools and other registration authorities.

## Purpose

The code of conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to:

- Promote adherence to the value staff see as underpinning their profession
- Provides a set of principles which will guide staff in their everyday conduct and assist them to solve ethical dilemmas
- Affirm the public accountability of the teaching profession
- Promote public confidence in the teaching profession.

The code of conduct is not a disciplinary tool.

The code of conduct will not cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by Alamanda College, or there may be specific issues that are covered by an industrial agreement or award.

## Statement of commitment to child safety

Alamanda College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. Our school community recognises the importance of, and a responsibility for, ensuring our school is a safe, supportive and enriching environment which respects and fosters the dignity and self-esteem of children and young people, and enables them to thrive in their learning and development.

This Code of Conduct aims to protect children and reduce any opportunities for child abuse or harm to occur. It also assists in understanding how to avoid or better manage risky behaviors and situations. It is intended to complement child protection legislation, Department policy, school policies and procedures and professional standards, codes or ethics as these apply to staff and other personnel.

The Principal and College leaders of Alamanda College will support implementation and monitoring of the Code of Conduct, and will plan, implement and monitor arrangements to provide inclusive, safe and orderly schools and other learning environments. The Principal and College leaders of Alamanda College will also provide information and support to enable the Code of Conduct to operate effectively. This code of conduct will be used during induction of new staff and of current staff annually or where reasonably practical.

All staff, contractors, volunteers and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work are required to comply with the Code of Conduct by observing expectations for appropriate behaviour below. The Code of Conduct applies in all school situations, including school camps, excursions and in the use of digital technology and social media.

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### Acceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work individually, we are responsible for supporting and promoting the safety of children by:

- always upholding the school's statement of commitment to child safety.
- treating students and families in the school community with respect both within the school environment and outside the school environment as part of normal social and community activities.
- listening and actively responding to the views and concerns of students, particularly if they are telling you that they or another child has been abused or that they are worried about their safety/the safety of another child
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- promoting the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of students with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- promoting the safety, participation and empowerment of students with a disability
- reporting any allegations of child abuse or other child safety concerns to the school's leadership and well-being co-ordinators.
- understanding and complying with all reporting or disclosure obligations (including mandatory reporting) as they relate to protecting children from harm or abuse.
- if child abuse is suspected, ensuring as quickly as possible that the student(s) are safe and protected from harm.
- understanding we are an equal opportunity workplace. We endeavour to ensure no person is discriminated against by sex, gender, religious affiliations, race, cultural background and beliefs or disability.

### Unacceptable behaviours

As staff, volunteers, contractors, and any other member of the school community involved in child-related work we must not:

- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of child abuse
- develop a relationship with any student that could be seen as favouritism or amount to 'grooming' behaviour (for example, offering gifts)
- exhibit behaviours or engage in activities with students which may be interpreted as abusive and not justified by the educational, therapeutic, or service delivery context
- ignore behaviours by other adults towards students when they appear to be overly familiar or inappropriate
- discuss content of an intimate nature or use sexual innuendo with students, except where it occurs relevantly in the context of parental guidance, delivering the education curriculum or a therapeutic setting
- treat a child unfavourably because of their disability, age, gender, race, culture, vulnerability, sexuality or ethnicity.
- communicate directly with a student through personal or private contact channels (including by social media, email, instant messaging, texting etc.) except where that communication is reasonable in all the circumstances, related to school work or extra-curricular activities or where there is a safety concern or other urgent matter.
- photograph or video a child in a school environment except in accordance with school policy or where required for duty of care purposes<sup>1</sup>
- in the school environment or at other school events where students are present, consume alcohol contrary to school policy<sup>2</sup> or take illicit drugs under any circumstances.

\*School council agreement and Policy guidelines state the school must obtain school council approval before alcohol can be consumed on school grounds or at a school activity. The policy says staff members should not consume alcohol during camps and excursions. It is silent on whether they can consume alcohol at other school events where students are present, this is a matter that the school needs to decide upon

\*The policy states the school should get consent before taking and publishing photos of a student. This applies every time a photo is taken. The same policy applies for excursions and school activities.

## SECTION 1: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Staff professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their students, their students' parents (guardians and caregivers), families, communities and their colleagues.

### RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

Principle 1.1:

#### **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS TO LEARN**

The main focus of teaching is student learning. Staff demonstrate their commitment to student learning by:

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- knowing their students well, respecting their individual differences and catering for their individual abilities
- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- having high expectations of every student, recognising and developing each student's abilities, skills and talents
- approaching the teaching and understanding of each individual learner without judgement or prejudice
- demonstrating cultural sensitivity
- engaging with parents / carers / families and colleagues to consult about their learners' needs.
- considering all viewpoints fairly
- communicating well and appropriately with their students

Principle 1.2:

**ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF TREAT THEIR STUDENTS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY, AND PROMOTE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT**

Alamanda College Staff:

- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect students from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- enhance student autonomy and sense of self-worth and encourage students to develop and reflect on their own values
- respect a student's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate. That is:
  - if the student has consented to the information being used in a certain way
  - to prevent or lessen a serious threat to life, health, safety or welfare of a person (including the student)
  - as part of an investigation into unlawful activity
  - if the disclosure is required or mandated by law
  - to prevent a crime or enforce the law
- refrain from discussing students' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- use restorative practice, behaviour management strategies and consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining students that are aimed at supporting positive change.

Principle 1.3:

**ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

In fulfilling their role, staff carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support students by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise. Staff:

- seek to ensure that they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies and when students should be referred to them for assistance
- are truthful when making statements about their qualifications and competencies

Principle 1.4:

## **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

In their professional role, staff do not behave as a friend or a parent.

They:

- interact with students without displaying bias or preference
- make decisions in students' best interests
- do not draw students into their personal agendas
- do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals

Principle 1.5:

### **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOL, WHETHER AT SCHOOL OR NOT**

Staff hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise that there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with students.

The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship will be violated if a staff member:

- has a sexual relationship with a student
- uses sexual innuendo or inappropriate language and/or material with students
- touches a student without a valid reason
- holds conversations of a personal nature or has contact with a student via written or electronic means including email, letters, telephone, text messages or chat lines, without a valid context.
- accepts gifts, which could be reasonably perceived to influence them, from students or their parents.
- gives gifts to learners or their parents / carers / families that could be reasonably perceived as showing bias or favouritism.

A professional relationship may be compromised if a staff member:

- attends parties or socialises with students including online and via social media
- invites a student or students back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

Principle 1.6:

### **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS (GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS)**

Staff should be respectful of and courteous to parents. Staff:

- consider parents' perspectives when making decisions which have an impact on the education or wellbeing of a student.
- communicate and consult with parents in a timely, understandable and sensitive manner.
- use appropriate communication methods with parents / carers when discussing the education or wellbeing of a student
- take appropriate action when responding to parental concerns

Principle 1.7:

### **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES, STUDENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Alamanda College staff recognise that their colleagues, students and families come from a diverse range of cultural contexts and seek to work collaboratively with each other, students, families and communities within those contexts.

We are an equal opportunity work place. We endeavour to ensure no person is discriminated against by sex, gender, religious affiliations, race, cultural background and beliefs or disability.

Principle 1.8:

### **COLLEGIALITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF STAFF**

Staff members demonstrate collegiality by:

- treating each other with courtesy and respect
- valuing the input of their colleagues
- using appropriate forums for constructive debate on professional matters
- sharing expertise and knowledge in a variety of collaborative contexts
- respecting different approaches to teaching
- providing support for each other, particular those new to the profession
- sharing information relating to the wellbeing of students

## **SECTION 2:**

### **PERSONAL CONDUCT**

Principle 2.1:

### **THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF AN ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF MEMBER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT STAFF MEMBER AND ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION AS A WHOLE**

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a staff member, it is expected that all staff will:

- be positive role models at school and in the community and online
- respect the rule of law and provide a positive example in the performance of civil obligations
- not exploit their position for personal or financial gain
- ensure that their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues and being aware of the potentially serious impact that any demonstration of intolerance or prejudice could have on the safety and wellbeing of children, their standing as a teacher or the profession as a whole.

## **SECTION 3: PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE**

Principle 3.1:

### **ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF MEMBERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE**

Alamanda College Staff:

- are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- engage in reflective practice and identify professional learning needs
- complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way

Principle 3.2:

**ALAMANDA COLLEGE STAFF ARE AWARE OF THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS THAT PERTAIN TO THEIR PROFESSION, IN PARTICULAR, THEY ARE COGNISANT OF THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN RELATION TO:**

- Discrimination, harassment and vilification
- Negligence
- Mandatory reporting (see Mandatory Reporting Policy)
- Privacy
- Occupational health and safety
- Teacher registration

## VALUES

As educators and staff members we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate student learning. We are a significant force in developing a knowledgeable, creative, productive and democratic society. The values that underpin our profession are **integrity, respect and responsibility**.

We hold a unique position of trust and influence, which we recognise in our relationships with students, parents (caregivers and guardians), colleagues and the community.

We demonstrate our **integrity** by:

- Acting in the best interests of students
- Maintaining a professional relationship with students, parents and colleagues
- Behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession

We demonstrate our **respect** by:

- Acting with care and compassion
- Treating students fairly and impartially
- Holding our colleagues in high regard
- Acknowledging parents as partners in the education of their children.

We demonstrate our **responsibility** by:

- Providing quality teaching
- Maintaining and developing our professional practice
- Working cooperatively with colleagues in the best interest of our students.

The code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.

## REASONS FOR INVESTIGATION

We are responsible for investigating and if necessary, exercising disciplinary functions relating to:

- misconduct and serious misconduct
- serious incompetence
- lack of fitness to teach
- a medical impairment that adversely affects a staff members ability to teach.

### What is misconduct?

Misconduct is the conduct of a staff member occurring in connection with the practice of teaching that is of a lesser standard than a member of the public, or members of the teaching profession are entitled to expect from a reasonably proficient staff member.

### **What is serious misconduct?**

Serious misconduct generally involves a substantial departure from the accepted standards of the profession, including conduct that is found to be:

- infamous
- disgraceful
- dishonorable
- shameful.

### **What is serious incompetence?**

Registered teachers are required to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of competence in their practice. Serious incompetence refers to a situation where a teacher is failing to meet the Australian Professional Standards of Teaching (APST) to such a degree that their whole approach to teaching:

- is fundamentally flawed
- defeats the cause of imparting knowledge to students.

A momentary lapse in performance will not generally indicate serious incompetence.

### **What is a lack of fitness to teach?**

Fitness to teach is defined as whether the character, reputation and conduct of a person are such that the person should be allowed to teach or work in a school.

A teacher or staff members behaviour, whether in the practice of teaching or in their private lives, may demonstrate qualities of a kind that indicate that person is not fit to practice as a teacher or member of staff in a school.

### **What is an impairment?**

Impairment is defined as a:

- physical or mental impairment
- disability, condition or disorder (including substance abuse or dependence).

We are able to investigate if a teacher or staff member's ability to work with children or practice as a teacher is seriously, detrimentally affected, or likely to be affected, because of an impairment.

### **What criminal offences would require contacting the VIT?**

Alamanda College will investigate different types of criminal offences including:

- sexual offences
- indictable offences
- offences connected with the requirements of registration.

## **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

*This policy was endorsed and approved by the Alamanda College school council on March 2022*

*This policy is to be reviewed if legislative or other changes require in the interim, or no later than January 2024.*