

Reviewing the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct



Discussion paper
September 2019

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Definitions | 2 |
| Purpose of the Code | 3 |
| Reviewing the Code | 4 |
| Engaging with the discussion paper..... | 5 |
| Section 1: Professional conduct | 6 |
| Section 2: Personal conduct | 10 |
| Section 3: Professional competence | 13 |
| Submissions | 15 |
| Appendix 1: The Victorian Teaching Profession’s Code of Conduct and Ethics | 16 |
| Appendix 2: The Victorian Institute of Teaching’s Strategic Plan | 22 |

Definitions

| Term | Definition |
|----------|---|
| AEU | Australian Education Union |
| AITSL | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership |
| ATRA | Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities |
| CCYP | Commission for Children and Young People |
| Council | Victorian Institute of Teaching's Council |
| DET | Department of Education and Training |
| ECA | Early Childhood Australia |
| ELAA | Early Learning Association Australia |
| IEU | Independent Education Union |
| IFTRA | International Forum of Teacher Regulatory Authorities |
| ISV | Independent Schools Victoria |
| The Code | The Victorian Teacher Profession's Code of Conduct |
| VAEAI | Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. |
| VIT | Victorian Institute of Teaching |
| VRQA | Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority |

Purpose of the Code

A Code of Conduct enhances a profession's core values and beliefs. It is vital in establishing the desired culture within a profession and provides vision and purpose. Teachers, along with other professionals who command responsibility and trust, such as psychologists, medical practitioners and lawyers have Codes of Conduct that guide their professional practice. These codes provide the community with an assurance that members of that profession are governed by standards which promote trust and confidence.

Victoria is unique among Australia's teacher regulatory bodies in having a distinct Code of Conduct that applies to all registered teachers. While each of the other regulatory authorities have a Code of Ethics similar to Victoria, no other authority has a comparative Code of Conduct. Codes of Conduct for teachers in other Australian States and Territories tend to originate with employers, sectors or other professional bodies.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) first published the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct and Ethics in 2008 (Appendix 1). It was developed in consultation with the profession and key stakeholders for the purpose of providing guidance to the public and the profession on what is considered acceptable conduct by registered teachers.

Today, the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct (the Code) is well embedded in VIT's regulatory framework, and is widely accepted by teachers and the community as identifying what

is considered acceptable professional and personal conduct by registered teachers. The Code plays an integral part in supporting VIT's vision for all Victorian children and young people to have the best teachers.

The Code brings together what is recognised best practice within the teaching profession. Its purpose is to

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of principles to guide teachers 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 is not designed to address specific situations, but provides a set of guiding principles to help teachers navigate and resolve difficult professional and ethical dilemmas. Teachers are encouraged to use the Code, along with any other codes and / or policies developed by their employer / school or other regulatory authority, to guide their professional practice and personal conduct. It may also be used to challenge the ethical and professional behaviour of a teacher, and could provide grounds for disciplinary action if a teacher's practice falls short of the expected standard.

The Code of Conduct is underpinned by the values of the Code of Ethics - integrity, respect and responsibility. The Code of Ethics remains current and therefore this review focuses only on the Code of Conduct.

“If we want to improve our Code of Conduct as a profession, I think that it needs to deal with some of the new complexities of our social context and the expectations that the community has around how teachers will be when they work within the profession.”

Audrey Brown – Director, Catholic Education Ballarat

Reviewing the Code

Why is the Code being reviewed?

It has now been over a decade since the Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct was established. Since that time, much has changed in the education landscape, including the welcome addition of Early Childhood Teachers into the registered teaching profession in 2015. The growth of social media and the impact of the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry and Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has changed the public expectation of teacher conduct and behaviour. This has prompted a review of the Code.

The intention of the review is not to rewrite the Code but rather to revise the Code in light of the changing educational landscape. The review will help support VIT's vision of ensuring all Victorian children and young people have the best teachers.

How the review will benefit the community

In reviewing the Code, VIT will work in consultation with the education community to ensure the teaching profession, the public and VIT's key stakeholders

- have an improved understanding of the purpose, currency and relevance of the Code
- have an improved understanding of how to apply the Code to all teaching contexts
- have a code that is contemporary and reflects community expectations
- can actively use and engage with the Code and supporting material to understand professional conduct in day-day teaching practice.

How the review will benefit VIT

The Code review has been identified as a key element of VIT's 2019-2020 strategic plan and will allow VIT to

- ensure we are providing for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- enable quality teaching and the best educational outcomes
- engage actively with and learn from stakeholders
- reflect community expectations
- be a capable, high performing and respected regulator.

Who will be consulted?

The review will consult representatives from

- the teaching profession
- the principal class
- the community of learners
- the community of parents
- child protection agencies
- employer groups
- the early childhood sector
- education unions
- initial teacher education providers and the community of pre-service teachers
- the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- other professional regulators
- other education stakeholders.

Launch of the Review – Professional Boundaries Workshop

The review of the Code was initiated with a Professional Boundaries Workshop held on 15 March 2019, which saw over 100 education stakeholders, including teachers from all sectors and a range of settings, come together to explore the Code and share their feedback.

The Professional Boundaries Workshop was the introduction to the review of the Code. In reviewing the Code, VIT has a comprehensive consultation framework to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, across sectors and the state.

Submissions

VIT is seeking submissions from key education stakeholders and the wider community about the issues put forward in this discussion paper.

To facilitate submissions this paper includes a summary of the feedback provided from the Professional Boundaries workshop on the Principles of the Code as they currently stand, with prompting questions and dilemmas.

More information about how to make a submission can be found on page 15.

Engaging with the discussion paper



PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT



PERSONAL CONDUCT



PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

There are three overarching principles of the Code relating to professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence. When engaging with this discussion paper, it is suggested that respondents follow these steps

1. read the relevant section of the Code and the underlying principles provided;
2. read the feedback provided from the Professional Boundaries Workshop about the relevant section of the Code;
3. consider the teacher conduct dilemmas and determine if the relevant section of the Code provides appropriate guidance – if it does not, consider any changes that may be required;
4. use the ‘Food for thought’ questions to guide your thinking about the relevance of the Code for the current educational context; and
5. share your submissions on the issues, questions and dilemmas posed in this discussion paper (details of how you can make submissions are detailed on page 15).

Support and guidance material

The intent of the Code review is to ensure it reflects contemporary teaching practice as well as accepted professional and personal conduct. To assist in making it more visible and relevant to the teaching profession, it is important for teachers to engage with the Code within the context of their work and be given the opportunity to develop a deep understanding of its relevance to them.

Guidance and support material to assist teachers in engaging with the Code may include

- definitions of key words / phrases available via hyperlinks within the Code
- examples of practice
- guidance around the use of social media
- case studies.

This discussion paper is seeking submissions on the overarching principles in the Code. The development of guidance material and supporting resources will form a parallel project with the review of the Code.

SECTION 1

Professional conduct



Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their learners, the parents / carers of their learners, families, communities and their colleagues.

Section 1: Professional conduct identifies 8 specific principles

1. Teachers provide opportunities for all learners to learn
2. Teachers treat their learners with courtesy and dignity
3. Teachers work within the limits of their professional expertise
4. Teachers maintain objectivity in their relationships with learners
5. Teachers are always in a professional relationship with their learners, whether at the education setting where they teach or not
6. Teachers maintain a professional relationship with parents / carers
7. Teachers work in collaborative relationships with learners families and communities
8. Collegiality is an integral part of the work of teachers.

Thoughts from the profession

Feedback from stakeholders at the Professional Boundaries Workshop identified that the principles in Section 1 of the Code resonated with teachers and illustrated the range of behaviours expected under the principles. The principles underpinned the skills, qualifications, expertise, experience, context and related pedagogy of teachers.

Key themes identified in relation to Section 1 were

- a stronger focus on the wellbeing of children and young people is needed
- the language of the Code needs to be flexible enough to accommodate for the wide range of teaching contexts
- the use of social media as a form of communication between teachers and learners needs to be expressly addressed in the Code
- explicit professional boundaries may be needed in relation to sexual relationships between teachers and learners (current and former).

Child safety and wellbeing

The feedback identified that the principles were practical and easily understood by teachers, however, some refinement is needed. This included a stronger focus on the wellbeing of children and young people. The recent legislative changes that followed from the Betrayal of Trust Inquiry in Victoria and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse featured strongly in the discussions with participants. The need to cater for the intent of these changes was strongly expressed on the day. It was also raised that in addressing a stronger focus on child safety and wellbeing, Section 1 could be expanded to encompass a teacher's responsibility to be able to understand and respond appropriately to the specific vulnerabilities of each child.

Stakeholders recognised that teacher guidance needs to account for the shared responsibility for learning and children's wellbeing and the responsibility should not be solely on the teacher practitioners. However, as the Code is designed to guide teacher practice,

it is outside the scope of this document to explore external factors.

Language of the Code

Feedback indicated the language of the Code was open enough to encompass the different levels of teaching and varied contexts registered teachers work within. This is a vital element of having an effective and relatable Code.

The Code appeared to be developed for teaching practice and human interaction. This is a particularly significant observation and a recognition that teaching is a profession requiring a considerable level of human connection. Teachers expressed a concern that this element should not be lost through a narrow interpretation of the principles.

Discussions indicated there should be enough flexibility in the language of the Code to ensure that it can be applied to the wide variety of teaching contexts, including early childhood settings, rural and remote settings, non-school settings, home-schooling and other wide ranging teaching contexts. The definition of the education setting and context needs to consider the diversity of learners including their age, race, socio-economic background, sexuality, gender identity, religious affiliations and any disability or special needs.

Participants encouraged the continued use of strengths-based and positive language in the Code, rather than a list of prohibited behaviours.

In Principle 1.4, reference was made to the ambiguity of the statement that teachers 'do not seek recognition at the expense of professional objectivity and goals'. It was suggested some of the words that may be ambiguous, such as 'recognition' and 'professional objectivity', could be clearly defined and accessed via hyperlinks in the Code.

Professional boundaries

One of the most concerning areas for participants was the growing use of social media and the potential negative impact these platforms may have on professional boundaries between teachers, parents / carers and learners.

Personal relationships between teachers, parents / carers, former learners and their families was raised as an area requiring further clarification. These professional boundaries could be heightened depending on the education context. For instance in rural and remote schools, teachers may be close friends or related to the learners and their families.

Whilst it is clear that professional boundaries always apply, the degree to which they apply in these situations was of practical concern; further guidance was identified as required.

In discussing teacher / learner relationships, it was established that there may need to be a more explicit boundary in the Code about the relationships between teachers and learners. The Betrayal of Trust Inquiry in Victoria and the Royal Commission into

Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse both note the dangers of grooming, including the high risk that learners could be groomed in a teacher / learner relationship and then exploited immediately following the end of their professional relationship. The Australian Psychological Society's Code of Ethics is explicit in the prohibition of a sexual relationship between psychologists and patients within two years of terminating their professional relationship. In addition, the Australian Psychological Society's Code of Ethics indicates that professional guidance from senior psychologists should be sought if the psychologist intends to engage in a sexual relationship with a former patient after these two years.

It was suggested learners can be classed as vulnerable people due to their age; personal and family circumstances; the power imbalance between teachers and learners; and the potential risk of being victims of grooming. As they are vulnerable people, it was proposed that similar explicit restrictions on sexual relationships between teachers and learners (current and former) be made explicit.

TEACHER CONDUCT DILEMMA 1



Jack was a secondary school teacher and seen hugging and talking privately with a learner during lunch time.

What contextual information would you require to clarify whether this is an appropriate interaction according to the Code?

What guidance do the principles of the Code provide to navigate this scenario?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

TEACHER CONDUCT DILEMMA 2

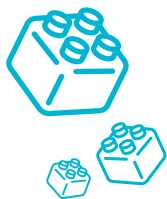


Emma is a Year 12 Psychology teacher. James was one of her students. After James had completed his Year 12 exams, he and Emma began a sexual relationship.

What guidance do the principles of the Code provide to navigate this scenario?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

TEACHER CONDUCT DILEMMA 3

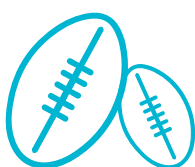


Antony was an early childhood teacher who playfully tickled a learner on two occasions. The learner refused to go to kindergarten after both incidents because she was scared of being tickled again.

Even if the conduct may not be intended to be threatening and may reasonably be perceived to be playful by the teacher, would it be considered appropriate behaviour according to the Code?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

TEACHER CONDUCT DILEMMA 4



Lewis is a secondary school teacher in rural Victoria, and plays on a local football team which has several of his Year 11 and Year 12 learners.

What are the potential issues that may arise from this situation for Lewis?

What guidance do the principles of the Code provide to navigate this scenario?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

Food for thought

1. What contextual considerations should be mentioned in the Code for each of the specific principles? (e.g. age of learners, socio-economic background, education setting)
2. The following words have already been identified as needing further definition or explanation. Do you agree? Are there any other words you would add to this list?
 - dignity
 - teacher
 - learner
 - recognition
 - timely
 - understandable
 - parental concern
 - sensitive manner
 - cultural context
 - community
3. Should the Code explicitly address the use of social media as a communication tool between teachers, parents / carers and learners (separate from other online communications) under this section?
4. To what extent should the Code explicitly restrict sexual relationships between teachers and learners (current and former)? Is there a specific length of time that a teacher should not engage in a sexual relationship with a former learner?
5. Are there any other safeguards that could be included in the Code to protect former learners, noting that the power imbalance may continue after the professional relationship ends?

SECTION 2

Personal conduct



The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole.

Section 2: Personal conduct identifies 1 specific principle

1. The personal conduct of a teacher will have an impact on the professional standing of that teacher and on the profession as a whole.

Thoughts from the profession

There was general consensus from participants at the Professional Boundaries workshop that Section 2 of the Code was fairly unambiguous, but an understanding of the teaching context is still necessary to determine if a teacher's conduct is in line with the expectations under the Code.

Key themes identified in relation to Section 2 were

- teachers should be positive role models for children and young people
- there is concern about balancing a teacher's profession and private life, particularly in the use of social media.

Role models

It was thought that teachers should be positive role models because they are very influential people to children, young people and the community. Learners look to their teachers to guide their own behaviour. The broad nature of the principle was recognised as suitable, given its purpose.

Teachers, similar to police officers, are often lauded as role models in the community, and consequently their personal conduct can have an impact on their professional standing at a local level. The extent to which personal behaviour can, and should, be regulated was of particular interest to participants at the workshop.

Professional vs. private life

There was concern about the balance of teachers' professional and private lives, particularly with the advent of social media. Much of the discussion related to the extent to which teacher's private lives should be scrutinised, particularly in relation to actions that are not education-related or illegal. It was noted that further guidance about what is and is not acceptable could be addressed further, either in the Code or in guidance material.

In other regulated professions, personal conduct can also have an impact on professional standing. For instance, Victoria Police expect a police officer's conduct, both during and outside working hours, will protect their personal reputation and the reputation of the organisation.¹ The boundaries in place for police officers explicitly reference behaviours when an officer is 'off duty' - including their use of alcohol and drugs, and participation in political matters such as signing petitions. A similar approach is seen in the Australian Psychological Society's Code of Ethics. Psychologists are expected to 'avoid engaging in disreputable conduct that reflects negatively on the profession or discipline of psychology'.²

Other regulated professions, such as lawyers³ and nurses,⁴ have codes of conduct and rules related to professional duties, however they do not go so far as to reference the impact of personal behaviour on their professional standing. While there have been conduct cases for lawyers relating to personal behaviour, these have been in reference to criminal matters rather than more general community expectations and moral codes.⁵

1 "The Victoria Police Code Of Conduct", 2016, https://content.police.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-01/VPMP_ProfStand.pdf?_ga=2.59061796.825365753.1555544201-394934634.1555 (accessed 23 April 2019).

2 "Australian Psychology Society's Code Of Ethics", 2007, <https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/d873e0db-7490-46de-bb57-c31bb1553025/APS-Code-of-Ethics.pdf> (accessed 23 April 2019).

3 Legal Profession Uniform Law Australian Solicitors' Conduct Rules 2015.

4 "Australian Psychology Society's Code Of Ethics", 2007, <https://www.psychology.org.au/getmedia/d873e0db-7490-46de-bb57-c31bb1553025/APS-Code-of-Ethics.pdf> (accessed 23 April 2019).

5 "Legal Services Board, Register of Disciplinary Action" <http://lsbc.vic.gov.au> (accessed 23 April 2019).

**TEACHER CONDUCT
DILEMMA 5**



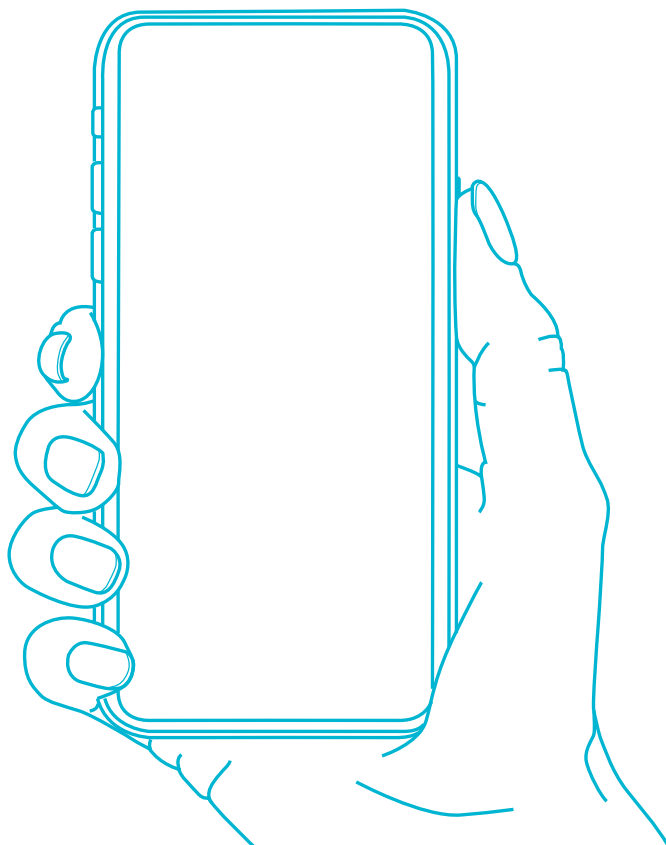
Li is an early childhood teacher. She has a public social media page which depicts her drinking, partying and wearing revealing clothing.

What guidance do the principles of the Code provide to navigate this scenario?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

Food for thought

1. What guidance could be provided to teachers about their personal and professional use of social media to ensure their conduct remains within the spirit of the Code?
2. The following words have already been identified as needing further definition or explanation. Do you agree and are there any other words that you would add to this list?
 - boundary
 - civil obligations
 - positive role models.
3. What further clarification is required to define appropriate personal conduct of a teacher?
4. To what (if any) extent should we regulate the personal conduct of a teacher? How does VIT assess whether personal conduct offends the Code?



SECTION 3

Professional competence



Teachers are cognisant of their legal and professional requirements and value their professionalism. They set and maintain high standards of professional competence.

Section 3: Professional Competence identifies 2 specific principles

1. Teachers value their professionalism, and set and maintain high standards of competence
2. Teachers are aware of their legal requirements that pertain to their profession. In particular, they are cognisant of their legal responsibilities.

Thoughts from the profession

Stakeholder feedback highlighted that the broad nature of Principle 3.1 allowed autonomy for teachers to be responsible for identifying their professional learning needs and maintaining required standards. Principle 3.2, however, was specific enough to give clarity on legal and professional responsibilities.

Key themes identified in relation to Section 3 were

- the Code should reflect the legal obligations of teachers in relation to child safety and wellbeing
- more clarity is needed on legal responsibilities
- the Code should reflect that teachers are not only aware of legal responsibilities but must comply with these responsibilities.

Child safety and wellbeing

It was also identified that in light of new requirements for organisations to implement Child Safe Standards, Principle 3.2 should reflect that teachers are not only aware of their legal obligations in relation to child

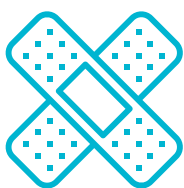
safety and wellbeing, but they must comply with all relevant personal and organisational legal obligations that exist in relation to ensuring the safety of children.

Awareness and compliance with legal responsibilities

Principle 3.2 outlines legal responsibilities such as negligence, discrimination, vilification and harassment. It was unclear whether these terms should carry only their specific legal definition or the broader meaning they have in the context of teaching and community expectations.

It was suggested that this Principle has scope to be more explicit in the types of legal requirements that teachers should be aware of and comply with. This would include explicit reference to mandatory reporting, Child Safe Standards established within the organisations where they work and any other relevant criminal offences such as the failure to protect (s490 and failure to disclose (s327) under the Crimes Act 1958.

TEACHER CONDUCT DILEMMA 6



Nic is aware of the requirement to undertake at least 20 hours of professional development to meet his renewal of registration requirements. Nic has been a primary teacher for 30 years and finds this an unnecessary burden. Each year he completes all 20 hours by undertaking first aid training. He has not sought out any professional development to improve his teaching knowledge or practice.

What guidance do the principles of the Code provide to navigate this scenario?

Are additional principles required within the Code to navigate this scenario?

Food for thought

1. How would you expect teachers to demonstrate their commitment to professionalism?
2. Given the purpose of the Code as a guiding document for teachers, is it appropriate to recognise the shared responsibility of teachers, employers and education sectors in maintaining standards and competence?
3. Should the Code be explicit that teachers must be aware of and comply with legal obligations in relation to ensuring the safety of children? Give reasons for your response.

Submissions

How to submit your feedback

Written submissions responding to the issues, questions and dilemmas set out in this paper are invited. Respondents are welcome to address all questions or only those of particular relevance or interest. Respondents are also invited to share any additional feedback that is not encompassed in their responses to these questions.

Respondents can share their feedback on the Code of Conduct and any of the questions raised in this discussion paper by

- submitting responses [online](#)
- e-mailing the following [form](#) to codereview@vit.vic.edu.au

Submissions will be accepted until **5.00pm Friday 20 December 2019**.

For any questions about the review of this discussion paper, please contact VIT at codereview@vit.vic.edu.au

“The Code was written a long time ago in comparison to where technology and society is today. We’re just like every other profession – we need to update, we need to remain current, and if we don’t, then we fall behind and we let children down.”

Rowland Richardson – Leading Teacher, McClelland College

Next steps

In reviewing the Code, VIT will be seeking feedback from a wide variety of stakeholder groups through workshops, surveys, forums and submissions. The submissions in response to this discussion paper will inform any suggested amendments to the Code and the development of guidance material.

It is expected that once consultation with the wider education community has taken place, a draft amended Code will be circulated for further feedback. The completion of this process is expected to take approximately 18 months.

The consultation VIT will undertake with stakeholders will ensure the Code is truly reflective of the whole of the education community. We value and appreciate your time and consideration in providing feedback on this discussion paper.

APPENDIX 1: The Victorian Teaching Profession's Code of Conduct and Ethics

The Victorian Teaching Profession Code of Conduct



The Code of Conduct has been developed for and by the Victorian teaching profession; it identifies a set of principles, which describe the professional conduct, personal conduct and professional competence expected of a teacher by their colleagues and the community.

It is based on the values set out in the accompanying Code of Ethics - **integrity, respect** and **responsibility** - and draws on the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers as well as codes of conduct for teachers and early childhood teachers developed by other registration and education authorities.

The Code of Conduct applies to all teachers and early childhood teachers registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

PURPOSE

The Code of Conduct codifies what is already common practice within the teaching profession.

Its purpose is to

- promote adherence to the values teachers see as underpinning their profession
- provide a set of principles to guide teachers 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, nor will it cover every situation. There may be policies or procedures set down by a sector or education setting in which a teacher works, or there may be specific issues covered by an industrial agreement or award.



Section 1

Professional conduct

Teachers' professional conduct is characterised by the quality of the relationships they have with their learners, the parents / carers of their learners, and families, communities and their colleagues.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS

PRINCIPLE 1.1 TEACHERS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL LEARNERS TO LEARN

The main focus of teaching is the learning of those being taught. Teachers demonstrate their commitment to learning by

- knowing their learners well, respecting individual differences and catering for individual abilities
- maintaining a safe and challenging learning environment
- accepting professional responsibility for the provision of quality teaching
- having high expectations of every learner, and recognising and developing individual's abilities, skills and talents
- considering all viewpoints fairly
- communicating well and appropriately with their learners.

PRINCIPLE 1.2 TEACHERS TREAT THEIR LEARNERS WITH COURTESY AND DIGNITY

Teachers

- work to create an environment which promotes mutual respect
- model and engage in respectful and impartial language
- protect learners from intimidation, embarrassment, humiliation or harm
- enhance learner autonomy and sense of self worth, and encourage learners to develop and reflect on their own values
- respect a learner's privacy in sensitive matters, such as health or family problems, and only reveal confidential matters when appropriate

That is

- if the learner 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 learner)
- 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 learners' personal problems in situations where the information will not be treated confidentially
- use consequences commensurate with the offence when disciplining learners.

PRINCIPLE 1.3 TEACHERS WORK WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

In fulfilling their role, teachers carry out a wide range of responsibilities. They support learners by knowing their strengths and the limits of their professional expertise.

Teachers

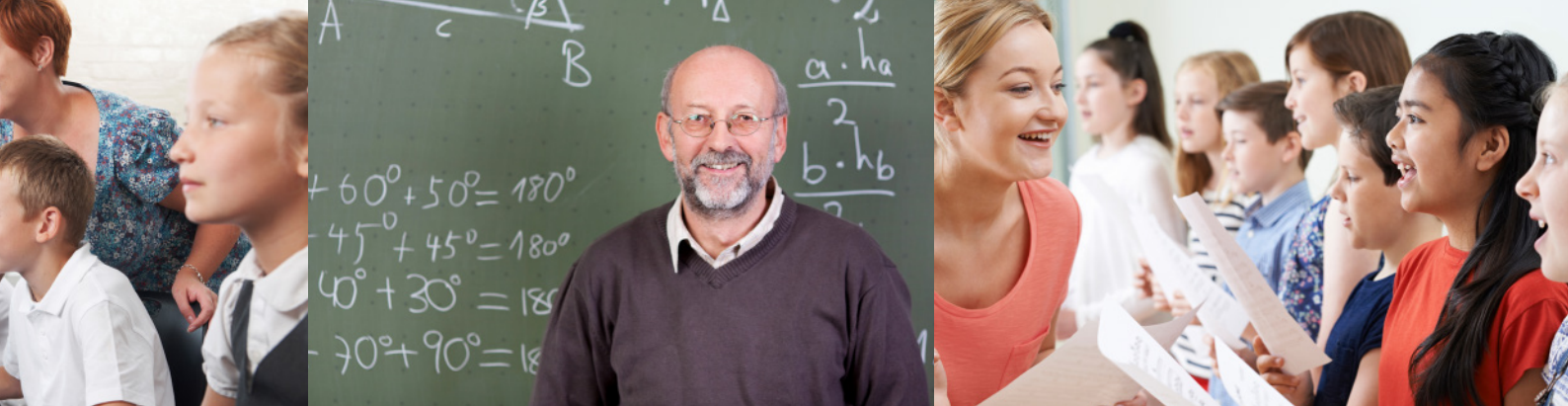
- seek to ensure they have the physical, mental and emotional capacity to carry out their professional responsibilities
- are aware of the role of other professionals and agencies as well as when learners should be referred to them for assistance
- are truthful when making statements about their qualifications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

PRINCIPLE 1.4 TEACHERS MAINTAIN OBJECTIVITY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS

In their professional role, teachers do not behave as a friend or parent / carer.

They

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



PRINCIPLE 1.5 TEACHERS ARE ALWAYS IN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR LEARNERS, WHETHER AT THE EDUCATION SETTING WHERE THEY TEACH OR NOT

Teachers hold a unique position of influence and trust that should not be violated or compromised. They exercise their responsibilities in ways that recognise there are limits or boundaries to their relationships with learners. The following examples outline some of those limits.

A professional relationship **will** be violated if a teacher

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

A professional relationship **may** be compromised if a teacher

- attends parties or socialises with learners
- invites a learner or learners back to their home, particularly if no-one else is present.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS / CARERS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

PRINCIPLE 1.6 TEACHERS MAINTAIN A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS / CARERS

Teachers should be respectful of, and courteous to, parents and carers.

Teachers

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

PRINCIPLE 1.7 TEACHERS WORK IN COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH LEARNERS' FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Teachers recognise their learners come from a diverse range of cultural contexts, and seek to work collaboratively with learners' families and communities within those contexts.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

PRINCIPLE 1.8 COLLEGIABILITY IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE WORK OF TEACHERS

Teachers 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, particularly those new to the profession
- sharing information relating to the wellbeing of learners.



Section 2 Personal conduct

PRINCIPLE 2.1 THE PERSONAL CONDUCT OF A TEACHER WILL HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROFESSIONAL STANDING OF THAT TEACHER AND ON THE PROFESSION AS A WHOLE

Although there is no definitive boundary between the personal and professional conduct of a teacher, it is expected that teachers will

- be positive role models in education settings and in the community
- 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 their personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of their duties
- act with discretion and maintain confidentiality when discussing workplace issues.

Section 3 Professional competence

PRINCIPLE 3.1 TEACHERS VALUE THEIR PROFESSIONALISM, AND SET AND MAINTAIN HIGH STANDARDS OF COMPETENCE

Teachers

- are knowledgeable in their areas of expertise
- are committed to pursuing their own professional learning
- complete their duties in a responsible, thorough and timely way.

PRINCIPLE 3.2 TEACHERS 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
- privacy
- occupational health and safety
- teacher registration.



THE VICTORIAN TEACHING PROFESSION CODE OF ETHICS

As teachers, we use our expert knowledge to provide experiences that inspire and facilitate the learning of those we teach.

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 learners, parents / carers, colleagues and the community.

WE DEMONSTRATE OUR INTEGRITY BY

- acting in the best interest of learners
- maintaining a professional relationship with learners, parents / carers, colleagues and the community
- behaving in ways that respect and advance the profession.

WE DEMONSTRATE OUR RESPECT BY

- acting with care and compassion
- treating learners fairly and impartially
- holding our colleagues in high regard
- acknowledging parents and carers 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 learners.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CODE IS TO

- state the value that guides our practice and conduct
- enable us as a profession to affirm our public accountability
- promote public confidence in our profession.

The Code sets out the ideals to which we aspire.

APPENDIX 2: The Victorian Institute of Teaching's Strategic Plan



Transforming VIT: strategic direction 2018-2020

Our vision For all Victorian children and young people to have the best teachers

Our purpose

To regulate for a highly qualified, proficient and reputable teaching profession

Our functions

• Register and assist compliance • Accredite teacher education programs • Ensure all teachers maintain standards • Investigate breaches of conduct

Our principles

• Accountable and transparent • Efficient and timely • Intelligence led and expert • Risk-based and proportionate

Our strategic objectives

