

Guidelines for the Public Appointments Service on the Civil Service Code of Standards & Behaviour

Policy Owner:	Corporate Services
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Reviewed by:	Catherine Dobbins
Approved by:	Management Board
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Summary

This policy sets out guidance for staff specific to our work to ensure compliance with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, including ensuring high standards are maintained in terms of probity, service delivery and customer service. It includes the reporting requirements when someone you know has applied for one of our competitions, the material you can access and who you can share it with, highlighting the need to only access material which is required as part of your role. It reinforces the requirement that staff cannot accept payment or look for gifts/hospitality for carrying out services and that there is a requirement to achieve value for money in all transactions; it puts limits on the types of gifts and hospitality which can be accepted. It emphasises the need to protect the reputation of the organisation at all times, including on social media, and to refer any media queries to the Press Officer. It highlights the restrictions put on outside engagements/employment after your role in the organisation finishes. Staff must also read the full Code which sets out the requirements on all civil servants in terms of expected behaviour and the standards to be maintained.

Purpose

The 'Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour' indicates that each Department/Office would provide additional guidance for their own staff relevant to the work of their organisation. The following are additional guidelines for staff in the Public Appointments Service.

As our main role involves recruitment and selection for the Public Service it is essential that our business is based on the principles of integrity, impartiality, effectiveness, equity and accountability.

Staff are required to maintain high standards in service delivery and the highest standards of probity. Staff must also behave appropriately at work. All staff should also ensure that their standard of dress is appropriate to the business of this organisation, and that they show consideration and respect to the public, customers and colleagues.

The Business of the Office

All of the requirements of the Code apply to staff in this organisation. There are also particular issues which apply to our office, including ensuring that proper standards are maintained in relation to our access to recruitment and selection material and processes for all the posts for which we recruit. It is essential that this access is not abused in any way. Therefore, the following specific requirements apply to all staff in this office.

- You must comply with the Code of Practice for the Protection of Personal Data.
- You must inform HR (in writing or by e-mail) when you, or a member of your family, or close friends, have applied (or intend to apply) for a competition run by this Office.
- No information can be supplied to your personal contacts (friends, family, etc.) in relation to our processes, procedures, or documentation that would not normally be supplied to members of the public/applicants for competitions. Standard procedures must be followed in the assignment process of all applicants, including the assignment of any contacts of staff involved in the assignment process.
- If you have access to any of the assessment/selection processes, or the material involved, you must not use this access to benefit yourself should you apply for any of these posts in the future. Therefore, only material that is required in order for you to carry out your duties must be read. If you intend to apply for a competition you should not access any material related to that competition.
- You must only access information which is required in the course of your work. You should not therefore access information in relation to colleagues, other contacts, or the general public unless required to do so as part of the work of your section. You should also be aware that you have signed the Official Secrets Act and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour and must therefore not discuss any of the information you have access to with anyone other than staff members which are directly involved in a particular campaign.

- If you are an applicant for a competition run by this Office you can contact the section involved if requested to do so, or if you have a general query in relation to your application (similar to queries candidates might normally be expected to contact sections with). Staff should not have greater access to information (e.g. in relation to what vacancies may exist or advance notice of results) than external candidates for the same competition. If you do have queries (other than general queries) these should be directed to the nominated intermediary (*Sandra Cairns*), who will then contact the relevant section in respect of your query and let you know the response in due course, if appropriate.
- You may not have any involvement with outside work in the area of recruitment and selection which would in any way conflict with the interests of this organisation, or which would in any way be inconsistent with your position/duties in this organisation. Voluntary work (e.g. providing assistance to schools or other groups) as set out in the External Relations Policy is acceptable.
- If you are a budget holder you must ensure that value for money is obtained in all the areas for which you have responsibility and no unnecessary expense is incurred.
- Any payments received by any staff member (other than subsistence payments) while the staff member is also paid by this office (e.g. payments from the Department of Social Protection in respect of sick leave/maternity leave or payments in respect of attendance in Court) must be handed over to the organisation immediately on receipt.
- If a staff member uses any social networking sites (or other websites) no references should be made to publicjobs and the sites may not be used for any purposes which could jeopardise the reputation of this organisation.

Gifts & Hospitality

The Code also sets out the rules regarding the acceptance of Gifts and Hospitality. These general rules apply to all staff in this Office. In this area the following specific requirements apply to all staff in this Office.

- Only gifts of modest value (e.g. diary, pen – approx. value 40 euro) can be accepted/retained. Anything more valuable must be refused or handed over to the organisation.
- No cash, cheques (or equivalent) can be accepted.

- Gifts cannot be solicited.
- No discounts, special facilities can be accepted on private purchases from suppliers you deal with in the course of your work.
- .Only hospitality that is a normal business courtesy can be accepted (e.g. occasional business lunch) and care must be taken that this does not influence any decisions you take. If staff have any doubts about the acceptance of hospitality they must consult with a Principal Officer or the Chief Executive Officer.
- Any hospitality offered in excess of the above can only be accepted after consulting a Principal Officer or the Chief Executive Officer for direction.
- No payment may be accepted by any individual for work carried out on behalf of this organisation. All payments for services provided by Public Appointments Service staff must be processed through the official channels.

Media Relations

Before you engage in any form of communication with any channel of the media regarding office business you should obtain approval from Aine Gallagher, Head of Marketing or the Chief Executive Officer.

Excepting Outside Employment or Engagements

Any civil servant intending to be engaged in or connected with any outside business with which he or she had official dealings or any outside business that might gain an unfair advantage over its competitors by employing him or her must inform the CEO of this intention. Additionally, staff members at Assistant Principal level or above may not within twelve months of resigning or retiring from the service accept an offer of appointment from an employer outside the Civil Service or accept an engagement in a particular consultancy project, where the nature and terms of such appointment or engagement could lead to a conflict of interest, without first obtaining approval from the CEO. The CEO must apply to the Outside Appointments Board should he/she wish to take on such a role or engagement. Applications will be considered on the basis of determining whether or not a clear conflict of interest exists. Approval to take up an appointment or accept an engagement may either be unconditional or conditions may be attached.

Reporting Violations of the Code

You should report any suspected violations of the Code to your Manager or any member of the People & Culture team. These reports will be kept confidential to the extent possible and consistent with the conduct of an appropriate investigation.

If it is deemed that a staff member has violated any aspect of the overall Code, or the Guidelines for this office, disciplinary action may be taken (up to and including dismissal). Please refer to the Disciplinary Code for the range of possible disciplinary actions which can be taken.

General

This policy is accessible on the E-Hub (intranet), and wider Civil Service circulars, policies, codes of practice, procedures, and guidelines are accessible on circulars.gov.ie. A PDF or alternative accessibility version of this policy is available upon request from People & Culture, by emailing people&culture&publicjobs.ie. Below is a link to the Civil Service Codes of Standards and Behaviour document. <https://hr.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Civil-Service-Code-of-Standards-and-Behaviour.pdf>

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains operationally fit for purpose and reflects appropriate changes in regulations, the working environment etc. Elements of this policy may also be subject to further development.