

Coiste Gairmoideachais Chontae na Mí
COUNTY MEATH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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**Co. Meath VEC
Code of Ethics**

Intent and scope

The purpose of the Code is to provide guidance to the Chairperson, members and staff of Co. Meath VEC in performing their duties.

Objectives

The objectives of the Code are:

- *To set out an agreed set of ethical principles*
- *To promote and maintain confidence and trust in the Committee and staff of Co. Meath VEC*
- *To promote the development and acceptance of ethical practices*
- *To promote the highest legal, management and ethical standards in all the activities of Co. Meath VEC*
- *To promote compliance with best current management practice in all the activities of Co. Meath VEC*

General Principles

It is the policy of Co. Meath VEC to maintain its high reputation for ethical behaviour and fair dealing in the conduct of its business. In many cases, decisions as to what is ethical or fair are clear cut and will be obvious to any reasonable person. In some situations, however, there may be circumstances where an element of doubt or ambiguity arises. To help in those circumstances and to protect and guide individual Committee members and staff of Co. Meath VEC, it is appropriate to have a written Code of Ethics for the conduct of VEC business.

It is not possible to provide for every situation in the Code of Ethics. If there is doubt about the probity of any particular situation, the CEO/Personnel Officer/Chairperson of the Committee must be consulted about that situation by the individual concerned.

All members of the Committee and all staff are required to observe the following fundamental principles, as set out under the following headings:

1. Integrity
2. Access to Information
3. Confidentiality
4. Freedom of Information Act
5. Disclosure of Interest
6. Obligations
7. Loyalty
8. Fairness
9. Work/External Environment.

1. INTEGRITY

Each Committee and Staff member is expected to observe the highest standards of honesty and integrity in all his/her dealings as a member/employee of Committee. Therefore the Committee/staff must:

Disclosure of Interest

Members of the Committee and staff are required to disclose outside employment/business interests which may be in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of Co. Meath VEC;

External Employment

Members of the Committee and staff will not be involved in outside employment/business interests in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of Co. Meath VEC;

Gifts

Members and staff of the Committee will refrain from giving and receiving corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment or benefits which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make an independent judgement on business transactions and report any such approaches in writing to the CEO/Personnel Officer/Chairperson;

Ethical Collaboration

Members and staff of the Committee shall collaborate vigorously, energetically, ethically and honestly with other educational institutions, commercial and other providers of research and advisory services;

Purchasing

Members and staff of the Committee are committed to conducting their purchasing activities of goods/services in accordance with public policy and best business practice and its purchasing regulations reflect this;

Consultancy

Co. Meath VEC is committed to ensuring that its engagement of consultancy and other services is in compliance with public policy guidelines;

Accuracy of Account Reporting

Co. Meath VEC is committed to ensuring that the accounts/reports accurately reflect their business performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading;

Use of VEC resources

Members and staff of the Committee are required to avoid the use of VEC resources or time for personal gain, for the benefit of persons/organisations unconnected with the institutions or its activities;

Acquisition of Information

- Co. Meath VEC is committed to acquiring information or business secrets by proper means only.
- Members and staff of the Committee will avoid misrepresentation or providing misleading information

2. Access to Information

- Members and staff of the Committee are committed to providing access to general information relating to its activities in an open and transparent manner.
- Members and staff of the Committee will observe appropriate prior consultation procedures with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest.
- Members and staff of the Committee will ensure to the extent that is in their power and remit that Co. Meath VEC will comply with all relevant statutory provisions (e.g. Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003, and the Freedom of Information Act, 1997)
- Members and staff of the Committee will observe the strictest confidentiality in relation to all discussions and decisions taken at meetings of the Committee.

3. Confidentiality

- Members and staff of the Committee are required to respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by Co. Meath VEC. This would constitute material such as:
 - personal information;
 - information received in confidence by Co. Meath VEC;
 - any commercially sensitive information or other information sensitive to the reputation of Co. Meath VEC;
 - any other material, release of which might constitute an unlawful or unethical act.

4. Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act 1997 applies to Co. Meath VEC with the exception of:

- Performance by a recognised school or centre for education established or maintained by a VEC of any duty or function in relation to the provision of education and support services to students
- Co. Meath VEC is committed to full compliance with the provision of the Freedom of Information Act and any subsequent amendments.

5. Disclosure of Interest

Co. Meath VEC will comply with the disclosure provisions of the Ethics Acts to ensure that designated directors and employees who have annual disclosure obligations in accordance with the Ethics Acts, as per S.I. 672 of 2005 are adhered to. (c.f. 1.1 Integrity)

Statutory Instrument No. 672 of 2005 – Ethics in Public Office (Prescribed Public Bodies, Designated Directorships of Public Bodies and Designated Positions in Public Bodies) Regulations 2005.

Effective from 1 January 2006

Public Body	Designated Directorships	<i>provide statements to:</i>	Designated Positions of Employment	<i>provide statements to:</i>
<u>Vocational Education Committees</u>	<u>All Vocational Education Committees</u> Members of the Committee	Chief Executive Officer	<u>All Vocational Education Committees</u> Chief Executive Officer Adult Education Officers Personnel Officers Building Officer School Principals Education & Training Centre Managers All posts the maximum salary of which is not less than the maximum salary of a Grade VII officer involved in procurement, grants and scholarships All other positions designated under paragraph 5 of S.I. No. 699 of 2004	Chairperson, VEC Chief Executive Officer

6. Obligations

- Committee Members will make every reasonable effort to attend all Committee meetings.
- Members and staff of Committee will comply with regulatory and statutory obligations imposed by the Vocational Education Acts, 1930 to 2001 and other relevant legislation;
- Members and staff of Committee will comply with detailed tendering and purchasing procedures, as well as complying with prescribed levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure;

- Members and staff of Committee will adhere to controls introduced by Co. Meath VEC to prevent fraud and to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure including expenses for business travel;
- Members and staff of Committee acknowledge that the acceptance of positions following employment and/or engagement by a VEC can give rise to the potential for conflicts of interest and to confidentiality concerns. The Committee will also ensure that any procedures that it may put in place in this regard are monitored and enforced.
- Members and staff of Committee should conduct the VEC's business with honesty and integrity and in a professional manner that protects the company's good public image and reputation.
- Management and Staff will promptly report any violations of law or ethical principals or company policies that come to the employee's attention, and co-operate fully in any audit, enquiry, review or investigation.

7. Loyalty

- The Committee members and staff of Co. Meath VEC acknowledge the responsibility to be loyal to Co. Meath VEC and to be fully committed to all its activities while mindful that Co. Meath VEC itself must at all times take into account the interests of its students and funders including tax payers.
- The Committee and staff of Co. Meath VEC acknowledge the duty of all to conform to the highest standards of business ethics.

8. Fairness

- Co. Meath VEC:
 - complies with employment equality and equal status legislation;
 - is committed to fairness in all business dealings; and
 - values its students, staff, suppliers, and customers and treats all its students, staff, suppliers and customers equally

9. Work/External Environment

- The Committee and staff of Co. Meath VEC will place the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of its staff and students;
- Members and staff of Committee will ensure that community concerns are fully considered in its activities and operations;
- Members and staff of Committee will ensure that Co. Meath VEC will minimise any detrimental impact of its operations on the environment.

External Employment

- Management or staff will not be involved in outside employment/business interests in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of Co. Meath VEC;

Responsibility

- ❖ Co. Meath VEC will circulate this Code of Ethics (and a Policy Document on Disclosure of Interests) to all members of the Committee and staff for their retention;
- ❖ Co. Meath VEC will ensure that all members of the Committee and staff receive a copy of the Code and understand its contents;
- ❖ Co. Meath VEC will provide practical guidance and direction as required on such areas as gifts and entertainment and on other ethical considerations, which arise routinely.

Review

- ❖ Co. Meath VEC will review this Code of Ethics as appropriate.
- ❖ Any proposed revisions to this Code must be considered and approved at a meeting of the Committee and submitted to the Minister for approval.

Notes:

Breaches of the Code of Ethics by staff will be regarded as a breach of discipline and will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary code, by the Chief Executive Officer or by the delegated officer as appropriate.

Breaches of the Code of Ethics by Committee Members will be regarded as a breach of discipline and will be notified to the Audit Committee and to the Comptroller and Auditor General and may be notified to the Minister for Education and Science with the annual accounts and report.