



Education Workforce Council

Guide to good practice: Professionalism in action

May 2021

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Introduction

Professionalism is the conduct that characterises or marks a profession or professional person. It describes the qualities, skills, competence and behaviours you are expected to demonstrate not just within teaching and learning but society as a whole.

When you became a practitioner you committed to being professional in all that you do and by doing so, contributing to upholding public trust and confidence in your profession.

This guide aims to help raise your awareness and understanding of key areas related to professionalism in both your professional and personal life. It cannot address all possible circumstances and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of behaviours, but is rather provided to highlight the importance of your professionalism as an EWC registered professional.

The Code

All Education Workforce Council (EWC) registrants are subject to the Code of Professional Conduct and Practice (the Code), which sets out the key principles of good conduct and practice for registrants. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Code, which you can download from www.ewc.wales.

The principles and expectations in the Code are all relevant to professionalism in practice. In this guide however, we particularly highlight:

Personal and Professional Responsibility

Registrants:

- 1.1** recognise their personal responsibility as a role model and public figure, to uphold public trust and confidence in the education professions, both in and out of the workplace;
- 1.2** conduct relationships with learners professionally;
- 1.3** engage with learners;
- 1.4** have a duty of care for learners' safety, physical, social, moral and educational well-being;
- 1.5** are mindful of their professional responsibility for the health, safety and well-being of colleagues and themselves;
- 1.6** demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity.

Professional Integrity

Registrants:

- 2.1** are accountable for their conduct and professional competence;
- 2.2** behave honestly, and with integrity.

Collaborative Working

Registrants:

- 3.1** respect, support and collaborate with colleagues, learners and others to achieve the best learning outcomes;
- 3.2** share experience and knowledge to help themselves and other practitioners develop and maintain best practice;
- 3.4** communicate appropriately and effectively with all involved in the education of learners.

Professional Knowledge and Understanding

Registrants:

- 4.1** know, use and take responsibility for the relevant professional standards for their particular profession throughout their career;
- 4.4** where necessary, seek support, advice and guidance and are open to feedback, responding to it positively and constructively.

Professional Learning

Registrants:

- 5.1** demonstrate a shared commitment to their continuing professional learning by reflecting upon and evaluating their practice, keeping their professional knowledge and skills up to date and taking steps to improve their practice where necessary.

What is professionalism in practice?

Professionalism is about having sound judgement, confidence in making informed decisions and actions as a professional. Sometimes in challenging circumstances.

You are responsible for upholding your own professional conduct and practice and ongoing self-reflection is central to maintaining your professionalism in practice.

There are many important characteristics that contribute to professionalism in practice. These include the following, which are not mutually exclusive.

Honesty and integrity means:

- Keeping your word as a professional, you are trusted implicitly.
- Not compromising your values.
- Doing the right thing, even if it means taking a more difficult road; being accountable.
- Being humble – admitting when you might have made a mistake, or need help and being willing to learn from others.
- Representing yourself honestly and accurately when you are doing things like applying for jobs or interacting with your regulator.
- Understanding that the Public place a lot of trust in you as an educational professional and knowing that in return they expect you to act with high levels of integrity both in and out of work.

Being a good role model means:

- Living up to expectations by demonstrating clearly what professionalism looks like in practice; leading by example.
- Having a clear moral and ethical code.
- Understanding that what you say and do in your private life shapes the way that people think about you and your profession.
- Demonstrating positive behaviours and attitudes towards equality and diversity.
- Supporting colleagues and learners.
- Celebrating personal success and that of others; treating others with a respect.
- Providing meaningful and constructive feedback to others.
- Having humility and a willingness to admit mistakes.
- Developing others and supporting those in senior roles.
- Reporting concerns in a professional manner if you think that things are not right.
- Being understanding and patient with those who are new to your profession or those who are learning new skills.

Learning and developing continuously means:

- Having a personal commitment to develop and improve your skills as a practitioner and the specialised knowledge needed to succeed in your role.
- Keeping your knowledge up-to-date, so that you can continue to deliver the best possible learning experiences.
- Sharing and disseminating evidence-informed practice.
- Your professionalism is your personal responsibility and you should:
 - » never stop learning;
 - » never stop reflecting;
 - » never stop trying to improve.

Being confident and competent in your professionalism means:

- There are tough times in all professions and times when your confidence might waver. In those moments remember that you're part of a trusted profession that supports you.
- Being reliable and delivering what is expected of you.
- Managing expectations, not making excuses and focusing on finding solutions if things go wrong.

Consequences

The examples below are illustrative of cases where registrants have significantly failed to demonstrate professionalism in practice when required, and were subject to EWC disciplinary proceedings as a result.

In all cases, there has been a clear breach of the Code and the registrants received a range of disciplinary sanctions including, in some cases, being prohibited from practising in the education workforce in the future.

A registrant:

- bullied and harassed a colleague by making sexualised comments in front of other colleagues and learners justified as “only banter”;
- behaved in an unprofessional way towards colleagues which included losing their temper, shouting and swearing at staff, making derogatory and sexist remarks;
- bullied and intimidated staff in relation to the school’s performance against the national literacy and numeracy tests;
- committed fraudulent acts with learners’ work and sought to blame and implicate other colleagues;
- failed to follow management instructions, sought to mislead colleagues, provided inaccurate information about learners. They also failed to participate in planning,

record keeping, learner progress and acted dishonestly with regards to learners' work;

- bombarded a learner with personal texts, calls and picture messages which included sexualised and inappropriate comments;
- acted as a 'confidant' to a learner aged under 16 and, once emotional dependency was established, they began a sexual relationship;
- shared personal information with a learner and discussed other learners as well as colleagues whilst conducting a sexual relationship, often in the registrant's own home;
- purchased alcohol for learners and exchanged a large number of inappropriate messages with them via a range of social media applications, telling them always to delete them;
- visited a learner and their parents at their home on a number of occasions without any legitimate reason or authority. This was in order to gain their trust and a way of being able to develop a relationship with the learner;
- socialised with learners (in a learner's bedroom) and drank alcohol with them during an educational trip.

How we can support you further

The EWC offer presentations which focus on fitness to practise. If you or your employer would like to arrange one in the workplace, please contact information@ewc.wales.

The EWC's Code of Professional Conduct and Practice for Registrants with the Education Workforce Council, and information about the EWC's fitness to practise work can be found on our website at www.ewc.wales/EWCcode

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