



Employee Handbook 2023/24

Ver1.3004

DISCLAIMER

The employee handbook of **Open Learning College** serves as a guide for the employees to understand more about the College and their terms and conditions of employment. The handbook is not contractual but acts as a general guide, and any violation of policies or guidelines could lead to disciplinary action. The College is committed to ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion in its employment practices and aims to provide equal opportunities for all employees.

The handbook is subject to updates, and the latest version will be available on the College website. The College also reserves the right to modify or discontinue benefits, policies, and terms and conditions. Any part of the handbook that conflicts with existing law or regulations will be invalid. The College expects its employees to support its policies on equality, diversity, and inclusion and encourages them to report any concerns or queries to their line manager or HR manager.

Introduction

Welcome to Open Learning College!

We believe that the success of our organization depends largely on our employees. Therefore, we are committed to providing a work environment that values and takes care of our staff. We ask that you respond with loyalty and dedication in your work, and we hope that you will find your employment with us fulfilling and rewarding.

This employee handbook has been created to help you better understand the College and provide you with a point of reference for any questions you may have about working for us or the terms and conditions of your employment. The handbook primarily applies to non-academic employees, but it may be used as a guide for other employees as needed.

Please note that this handbook is not a contract of employment, but rather a general guide. However, you should be aware that a breach of any of the policies, procedures, or guidelines contained within it could lead to disciplinary action. Therefore, please read it carefully, and if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask the HR Manager. Your Head of Department or line manager would also be happy to answer any questions you have about your employment with the College.

From time to time, changes to the handbook may be necessary. You will be notified of any updates, and the latest version will be available from your Head of Department and the College website. We reserve the right to modify or discontinue the benefits, policies, and terms and conditions described in this handbook. Any changes to your contractual terms will be communicated to you individually.

In the event of any conflict between the handbook and existing law, regulations, or other statutory requirements, only the part that is in direct conflict will be invalid.

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all our employment practices. We aim to ensure that no employee receives less favourable treatment based on their race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, or gender reassignment, or is disadvantaged by any unjustifiable conditions or requirements.

Discrimination or harassment of any kind towards our employees, academic staff, student body, visitors, guests, clients/customers, suppliers, or anyone with whom we deal will not be tolerated. We look to you to support us in implementing these policies.

We hope that you settle quickly into your new role, and we wish you a long, successful, and happy career with Open Learning College.

Kind Regards

Graham Kelly
Academic Director

Contents

Introduction	2
Contents	3
On joining us	5
4.1 .. Application or CV	5
4.2 .. References	5
4.3 .. Right to work in the UK and tax declaration	5
4.4 .. Induction.....	5
4.5 .. Probationary period.....	6
4.6 .. Job description.....	6
General terms and conditions	7
5.1 .. Hours of work	7
5.1.1 Normal hours of work	7
5.1.2 Additional hours	7
5.1.3 Working Time Regulations	7
5.2 .. Flexible working	8
5.3 .. Homeworking	8
5.4 .. Pay	8
5.4.1 Basic pay	9
5.4.2 Pay reviews	9
5.4.3 Pay slips and queries	9
5.5 .. Holidays	9
5.5.1 Entitlement	9
5.5.2 Booking and taking annual leave	9
5.5.3 Taking leave	9
5.5.4 Sickness whilst on holiday	10
5.6 .. Absence notification and payments	10
5.7 .. Maternity, adoption, paternity, and shared parental leave	10
5.8 .. Parental leave	10
5.9 .. Emergency time off to care for dependents	10
5.10 Medical/dental appointments	11
5.11 Compassionate leave	11
5.12 Time off for religious observance	11
5.13 Time off for other reasons	12
5.13.1 Public duties	12
5.13.2 Jury service	12
5.13.3 Acting as a witness in court	12
5.13.4 Court summons	13
5.13.5 Time off in redundancy situations	13
5.13.6 Unauthorised absence	13
5.13.7 Expenses and business travel	13
5.14 Benefits and facilities.....	14
5.14.1 Contractual sick pay	14
5.14.2 Employee referral scheme	14
Training and development	15
6.1 .. Tuition support.....	15
6.2 .. Job changes/capability issues	15
6.3 .. Membership of professional bodies	16

Your working environment.....	17
7.1 .. Health and safety policy	17
7.2 .. Staff room.....	17
7.3 .. Housekeeping and use of resources	17
7.4 .. Smoking	18
7.5 .. Alcohol, drug, and substance abuse	18
7.5.1 General	18
7.5.2 Drug driving	19
7.6 .. Security.....	19
7.7 .. Right of search	19
7.8 .. Accidental damage to, or loss of, your property.....	19
7.9 .. Lost property	20
7.10 Removal of waste or scrap products.....	20
7.11 Parking.....	20
7.12 Accidents, first aid provision and medical conditions.....	20
7.13 Clothing and equipment	21
7.14 Use of personal music systems	21
Other rules and general information	22
8.1 .. Professional conduct	22
8.2 .. Dress code	22
8.3 .. Personal relationships at work	22
8.4 .. Gifts and hospitality.....	23
8.5 .. Fraud, theft, and suspicious acts	23
8.6 .. Dealing with the media.....	23
8.7 .. Internal communications	24
8.8 .. HR information and records	24
8.9 .. Changes to personal details.....	24
8.10 Use of business facilities for private purposes.....	25
8.11 Personal telephone calls.....	25
8.12 Buying or selling goods	25
8.13 Collections	25
8.14 Conflicts of interest	25
8.15 Other employment	25
8.16 Ideas and inventions.....	26
8.17 Purchases on behalf of Open Learning College	26
8.18 Whistleblower Policy.....	26
On leaving us.....	27
9.1 .. Notice periods	27
9.2 .. Garden leave	27
9.3 .. Return of property and final payments	27
9.4 .. References	28
9.5 .. Retirement.....	28
9.6 .. Restrictive covenants.....	28
Our policies and procedures.....	29
10.1 Equality & Diversity policy	29
10.2 Grievance procedure	29
10.3 Disciplinary procedure.....	29
10.4 IT policies	29
10.5 Other policies	30

On joining us

4.1 Application or CV

Your application form and/or CV must be completed accurately and truthfully. Failure to do so may result in the termination of your employment and may be classed as gross misconduct. If you become aware of any inaccuracy or omission you should advise your line manager immediately.

4.2 References

All offers of employment are made subject to satisfactory references, and we normally take up a reference from a previous employer, or other relevant sources (where employer references are not available). In the event of an unsatisfactory reference being received during or before employment starting, this could result in the withdrawal of our offer, or dismissal (if you have already started work for us).

4.3 Right to work in the UK and tax declaration

By law, we are required to check that all new employees have the right to work in the UK. Unless you have already provided this information to us, it is essential that you provide an original copy of a suitable document before you are due to start work at the College, as failure to do so may result in us delaying your joining date. Alternatively, the offer of employment may be withdrawn. More information about suitable documents is available from the HR Manager.

A copy of the document will be taken and retained on your personal file and the original returned to you. Should you cease to be entitled to work in the UK at any time during your employment with us, you must inform us as soon as possible; failure to notify your line manager may trigger disciplinary proceedings and amount to gross misconduct warranting summary dismissal.

Any restrictions on your working hours should be fully complied with.

Upon joining us, you should also provide a P45; if you cannot do this within your first week, you will be asked to sign a declaration about your employment situation so that we know which tax rate to apply, and whether any student loan repayments should be deducted from your pay.

4.4 Induction

On your first day, you will receive a virtual introduction to our campus, where you will explore our campus in the metaverse. Your virtual tour will cover all key departments and employees with whom you will interact, giving you a better understanding of our processes and procedures.

We understand that starting a new job can be overwhelming, which is why we provide you with time to familiarise yourself with your new role and surroundings. If you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to raise them with your manager, so we can resolve them promptly. We want to make sure that your transition into our virtual campus is as smooth as possible, so you can focus on achieving your goals and contributing to the success of our college.

Please do raise any queries or concerns that you may have as soon as possible in order that we may resolve these.

4.5 Probationary period

All new employees are normally appointed based on an initial probationary period. This will be set out in your offer letter and your contract of employment. The purpose of this period is to provide formal monitoring of your performance and progress during the early stages of your career with us. It will ensure that any training needs are identified and met quickly and will provide you with a defined opportunity to raise any concerns that you have while settling into your job.

At the start of this period, specific work-related objectives may be discussed and agreed with you. Your manager/supervisor will normally give you feedback on a regular basis. If there are any issues that need addressing, these will normally be raised with you, and clear objectives with timescales set. This will provide you with the opportunity to improve, and/ or to receive more training, prior to the end of the probationary period. Notes detailing agreed action points should normally be made by your manager and kept on your personal file.

If we are satisfied that you have reached the required standards, and your appointment is therefore made permanent, this will be confirmed in writing. If, however, you have not reached and maintained the required standards, and we have concerns about your performance or your suitability for the post, your probationary period may be extended, and a performance improvement plan may be put into place. A further review will take place shortly before the end of this period and upon reaching the required standards of competence this will be confirmed in writing.

At any point during the probationary period, if we feel that you are unlikely to meet the requirements of the role, your employment may be terminated with contractual notice. We reserve the right not to apply our full disciplinary procedure during your probationary period.

4.6 Job description

You will normally be provided with a job description which details the main duties of the position into which you have been appointed. We may make amendments to your job description from time to time, in relation to changing business needs and your own abilities.

Please note that we do expect employees to be flexible and you may be asked to take on tasks usually conducted by colleagues (but like your own) during times of holiday and/or sickness, or in order to help meet deadlines if the need arises.

General terms and conditions

5.1 Hours of work

5.1.1 Normal hours of work

Your normal days and hours of work are set out in your contract of employment, or other correspondence relevant to your employment.

We place a high emphasis on good timekeeping, as lateness or early departure affects productivity and puts extra burden on your colleagues. You are asked to make every effort to ensure that you comply with our attendance requirements and to ensure that, during working hours, you can be always contacted. You should comply strictly with any time recording procedures relating to your area of work.

If you expect to be late on any occasion you should inform your Head of Department or line manager in person by phone to explain the circumstances of the delay and advise them of your anticipated time of arrival. This must be done as early as possible before the start of your shift.

You are expected to make every possible attempt to attend work when you experience difficulties and disruptions to your normal means of transport (e.g., due to strike action, the failure of public or private transport, or adverse weather conditions). If you are late, you will normally be expected to make up the time on that day or a subsequent day.

Absences due to severe travelling difficulties may be authorised as unpaid leave, or taken as annual leave, provided that your Head of Department or line manager is satisfied that you have made all reasonable attempts to get to work.

If you are working at a location away from the college during normal business hours, please make sure your Head of Department or line manager is aware of your travel arrangements, destination, and contact details.

If for any reason you need to leave work due to a personal emergency or illness, you must inform your manager and await permission to leave site. Leaving site without permission may result in disciplinary action. In addition, flexibility is important to us in meeting the needs of the College. For this reason, you may be required to vary your hours of work and/or to work additional hours, should the need arise.

5.1.2 Additional hours

Staff on graded annual salaries will not normally receive overtime payments for any additional hours worked; however, in circumstances where an employee is asked by their Head of Department or line manager to work extra hours for a specific task, they may be granted time off in lieu (TOIL) to be taken at a mutually agreed time. Any TOIL must normally be taken within the same holiday year that it is accrued, and should be requested using the Annual Leave form, indicating the lieu date(s) worked.

Hourly paid staff may be entitled to receive overtime payments at the agreed rates in force at the time. More information is available from your Head of Department or line manager.

5.1.3 Working Time Regulations

The Working Time Regulations limit the hours an employee may work to 48 hours each week averaged over a rolling 17-week period and employees may not exceed this limit unless they have “opted out”. Opting out will require your written consent.

You should ensure that your normal working hours are documented accurately using Time station, you must clock in/out of this system. Employee time and attendance records are retained by the College and will be reviewed on an individual basis.

If you are concerned about the number of hours you are working, or if you wish to undertake any other paid work in addition to your employment with us, please discuss this with your Head of Department or line manager.

5.2 Flexible working

Provided that you have at least 26 weeks' service at the date of making the request, you are entitled to make a written application for flexible working. This may involve a change to your hours, breaks, or location of work.

For more information, please refer to our Flexible Working policy.

We will give all requests serious consideration but cannot guarantee that your request will be granted. All requests will be treated individually, and in the context of the College's business and operational needs at that specific time.

5.3 Homeworking

We are committed to supporting flexible working, where appropriate, and recognise that working remotely can bring benefits in certain circumstances.

With the above in mind, for a variety of reasons (and with varying degrees of frequency), some employees may be permitted to undertake some of their duties away from their normal place of work at the College on a regular or semi-regular basis. However, we anticipate that on-site working will remain the norm for all staff groups, and that employees will usually still spend most of their time working on-site at the College even under any homeworking agreement.

Homeworking may be on an occasional basis, or it may be a more regular arrangement.

5.4 Pay

5.4.1 Basic pay

Your pay is as shown in your contract of employment, or as subsequently notified to you. Your monthly salary is calculated as 1/12th of your annual basic salary and is currently payable on or around the 17th of the month, although the College reserves the right to change this if necessary. Your salary accrues daily, so if you join or leave the College's employment after the first working day of a calendar month, you will be paid for each working day employed in that month.

5.4.2 Pay reviews

Your pay will be reviewed annually; however, it should be noted that a pay increase is not guaranteed.

5.4.3 Payslips and queries

You will receive a payslip showing how the total amount of your pay has been calculated. It will also show the deductions made, and the reasons for them (e.g., Tax, National Insurance Contributions, etc.). Any queries regarding your payslip should be addressed to the Accounts Department. If you are querying hours paid for casual work or overtime for monthly paid work, you should contact your Head of Department in the first instance.

If you are overpaid for any reason you are required to notify the Accounts Department immediately. The amount of overpayment will normally be deducted from the following payment, but if this would cause hardship, alternative arrangements to repay may be made. Failure to report an overpayment may result in disciplinary action.

At the end of each tax year, you will be given a form P60 showing the total pay you have received from us during that year, and the amount of deductions for Income Tax and National Insurance. You may also be given a form P11D showing non-salary benefits. You should keep these documents in a safe place as copies will not be supplied, and you may need to produce them if making enquiries with the HMRC or if completing a self-assessment form.

5.5 Holidays

5.5.1 Entitlement

Your basic annual leave entitlement can be found in your contract of employment. Our holiday year begins on 1 January and ends on 31 December each year.

Entitlement to paid holiday accrues throughout the year on a weekly basis. For part years of service, your entitlement will be calculated as 1/52nd of the annual entitlement for each completed week of service during that holiday year and rounded up to the nearest half-day. If you work part-time, your holiday entitlement will be calculated on a pro-rata basis, based on your contractual hours. If you change your contracted hours on a permanent basis during the year, your new holiday entitlement will be effective from the date of that change.

5.5.2 Booking and taking annual leave

Holiday should be taken at times agreed in advance with your Head of Department and will be authorised subject to the needs of the College and on a 'first come, first served' basis. Please do not make travel arrangements or accommodation bookings prior to your holiday request being authorised.

You should give at least four weeks' notice of your intention to take holidays of one week or more, and one week's notice for odd single days. We will not normally agree to a request for a holiday that involves more than two consecutive weeks. Therefore, please ensure the timely completion of your Annual Leave form, which will be given to you by your Head of Department at the start of each holiday year.

All employees are required to reserve up to five days of their annual entitlement to take during any shutdown periods. These are normally, but not necessarily, the five days over the Christmas period when the College is closed. If you have insufficient holiday entitlement to cover these periods, you will normally be required to take these days as unpaid leave.

Holiday closure arrangements for public/bank holidays for different departments are approved by the Governing Body annually, and each Head of Department is responsible for arranging with employees the schedules for cover where needed. The College reserves the right to require all staff to work on public/bank holidays that fall within term time and will grant one day of paid leave in lieu of each such day worked. If you are required to work on a public/bank holiday, you should agree the compensatory day off in lieu with your Head of Department.

5.5.3 Taking leave

We strongly encourage you to take your full holiday entitlement within the holiday year to which it relates, and you should plan to use your annual leave accordingly. However, up to 5 days of your holiday entitlement (pro-rata for part-time staff, as appropriate) may be carried forward to the following holiday year with the prior written agreement of your Head of Department or line manager. Where such carry-over is authorised, the days must normally be used within the first three months of the new holiday year.

Any unused annual leave over and above the permitted 5 days to be carried forward will normally be lost. Special rules may apply if you have been absent due to long-term sickness, or if you have been on family leave. Please ask the HR Manager for more information.

5.5.4 Sickness whilst on holiday

If you are ill whilst on authorised holiday, you may be entitled to request that the period of illness during the previously booked holiday be converted to sick leave, and to take the holiday later; however, this will only be the case where you have followed the correct reporting procedures, and where you have provided any relevant documentation. Please refer to our absence notification and sick pay policy for further details (see below). A certified medical certificate must be supplied for consideration.

On leaving our employment, any holiday entitlement accrued and not taken may be paid. Any holiday taken more than your entitlement will be deducted from your final salary.

5.6 Absence notification and payments

If you are unable to attend work for any reason, you should follow the notification procedure set out in our Sickness Absence policy. The policy also outlines what to do if you fall ill whilst at work.

We are sympathetic to genuine cases of illness or other problems that might make absence unavoidable. However, excessive, or unauthorised absence causes disruption, lowers the morale of other employees, and makes us less able to accommodate genuine cases of long-term illness. Therefore, all absences are taken seriously, and high levels of absence or unauthorised absence may lead to disciplinary action.

For further information on absence and sick pay, please see our Sickness Absence policy. A copy may be obtained from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

5.7 Maternity, adoption, paternity, and shared parental leave

Eligible employees will normally be entitled to enhanced pay under the terms of the discretionary schemes for College Pay whilst on family leave.

For further details, please refer to our Maternity, Adoption, Paternity and Shared Parental Leave policy. A copy may be obtained from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

If you or your partner become pregnant or seek to adopt a child, you should notify your Head of Department at an early stage so that your entitlements and obligations can be explained to you.

5.8 Parental leave

Employees who meet the statutory conditions will be eligible to request to take parental leave. For further details, please refer to our Parental Leave policy. A copy may be obtained from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

Requests for parental leave (which is unpaid) should be discussed with your Head of Department, who will consider your request according to your entitlement, you and your child's/children's particular circumstances, and the needs of the College.

5.9 Emergency time off to care for dependents

All employees are entitled to reasonable unpaid time off to attend to an emergency relating to a dependent. This right applies to all employees, irrespective of their length of service or hours worked. The time off is limited to that which is necessary to make alternative care arrangements for the dependent (not to provide ongoing care for them) and is normally limited to one day.

For more information, please refer to our policy on Time Off for Dependents.

In addition to the right to time off for dependents, which covers unforeseen emergencies only, Heads of Department may authorise up to two days' unpaid leave to deal with other short-term domestic crises according to the circumstances. A 'crisis' should be regarded as something that occurs suddenly, which cannot be predicted or planned and requires prompt attention. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the employee to work from home; this is dependent upon the nature of the illness or emergency and the type of work the employee does for us.

Planned hospital admissions, school closure days, child-minder holidays, etc. should normally be covered by annual holiday entitlement. In exceptional circumstances, if the request is compatible with the needs of the College and the Head of Department agrees to it, such time off may be taken as unpaid leave or made up outside of normal working hours.

5.10 Medical/dental appointments

Subject to prior agreement with your Head of Department or line manager, reasonable time off to attend doctor, dentist or hospital appointments will be authorised. Ideally, appointments should be made on non-working days or outside working hours; however, if this is not possible, they should be made at the beginning or end of a working day, or on a day of the week when your workload tends to be quieter to minimise disruption. Any time off required will normally be with pay, but you may be expected to make the time up.

We request that you give us as much notice as possible of such appointments, particularly when these are routine checks. Failure to give reasonable notice when this is possible may result in disciplinary action, or the absence being regarded as unauthorised (and therefore unpaid) leave. Different rules apply to ante-natal appointments - see our Maternity, Paternity, Adoption & Shared Parental Leave policy.

5.11 Compassionate leave

If you suffer bereavement within your immediate family, we will do our utmost to support you. Normally up to 5 days of paid compassionate leave will be granted to help you deal with the immediate issues or to attend the funeral. Additional time off may be granted if extensive travel is required.

"Immediate family" is here defined as your spouse, civil partner or partner, child or stepchild, parent, and/or brother or sister.

Up to 2 days of paid compassionate leave may be granted for a bereavement within your wider family (e.g., grandparent or grandchild, uncle or aunt, parent-in-law, brother or sister-in-law, or son or daughter-in-law).

Up to one day's unpaid leave may be granted to attend the funeral of a work colleague or close friend.

All compassionate leave must be agreed at Director level. Your Head of Department must also be informed of your circumstances.

In all cases, additional time off may be granted at the discretion of your line manager, but any such leave must be taken as holiday or will be unpaid.

5.12 Time off for religious observance

If you wish to be absent from work to observe your faith on days other than public/bank holidays, such time off should be taken, where possible, from your normal holiday entitlement and by prior agreement with your Head of Department. There is no automatic right to time off for religious holidays; however, we will try to ensure that religious groups are not disadvantaged when requesting holiday at a time which is important to them. As with any other form of time off, please give as much notice of your request as you can.

If you require a period of extended unpaid leave for religious reasons, (e.g., to undertake a pilgrimage) please discuss this with your Head of Department, giving as much notice as possible. Such requests will be given full consideration but are subject to the needs of the College at the time.

5.13 Time off for other reasons

5.13.1 Public duties

Employees have the right to take a reasonable amount of time off work (unpaid) to perform public duties.

The public offices which qualify in respect of this provision are as follows: magistrate (also known as Justice of the Peace); local councilors; school governor; members of a statutory tribunal (e.g. employment tribunal); member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment; member of health authority; member of a school council or board in Scotland; member of the Environment Agency or the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency; member of the prison independent monitoring boards (England or Wales) or a member of the prison visiting committees (Scotland); a member of Scottish Water or a Water Customer Consultation Panel; or a trade union member (for trade union activities).

We will authorise all reasonable requests for unpaid time off work to perform these duties, provided you have notified your Head of Department in advance of your commitments, and that adequate notice has been given.

Unless otherwise agreed with your Head of Department, a maximum of 5 days unpaid leave (pro-rata for part-time employees), will normally be allowed per calendar year to perform any one or several of these duties.

In the event of military call-up, your employment will be protected, but you will be paid for this period by the MOD. You are entitled to remain a member of our occupational pension scheme, and if you agree to continue to pay your own contributions, the MOD will pay the employer contributions that we would have made.

5.13.2 Jury service

Should you receive a request to serve on jury service, you should inform your Head of Department as soon as possible and show them the summons so that arrangements can be made to cover your absence. The court questionnaire should be submitted to your Head of Department for completion.

In some circumstances, it is possible to request that jury service be deferred: if for business reasons your manager asks you to make such an application please do so as quickly as possible, forwarding the letter that we will give you.

We will maintain your income up to your normal basic pay for a period of up to two weeks by supplementing your juror's allowance, which you should claim from the court. The court will issue you with a loss of earnings form, which you should pass on to your Head of Department for completion.

Any subsistence, travel allowance and other expenses can only be claimed from the court.

You are expected to attend work on any days or half days on which you are not actually required to serve.

5.13.3 Acting as a witness in court

If you are called to appear as a witness in court for a case that is not connected to your employment, (other than as an expert witness for which you may be paid a fee) your absence will be classed as authorised and, in addition, we will normally maintain your income up to your basic pay for a maximum of three days by supplementing the court's daily allowance.

The court will issue you with a loss of earnings form, which you should complete and pass on to your Head of Department for signature for you to claim this allowance.

Like jury service, there is a half day and full day flat rate payment. You should log your hours and after you have attended court you will know how many hours/how much pay you may claim from the court and what you have lost by not being able to work. You are, however, required to return to work at such times when you are not needed by the court.

5.13.4 Court summons

Paid time off work will not be authorised for time off to answer civil or criminal charges against you.

All days required to attend court and/or meet solicitors, etc., must be taken as annual leave, as unpaid absence, or alternatively the time made up by agreement in advance with your Head of Department or line manager.

5.13.5 Time off in redundancy situations

Employees with two or more years' continuous employment and who are under notice of dismissal for redundancy are entitled to a reasonable amount of time off to look for other work.

5.13.6 Unauthorised absence

If you are absent from work, other than on approved holiday or other leave with the agreement of your manager, or because of sickness that has been notified and certified in accordance with our normal procedures, we reserve the right both to treat the absence as unauthorised and to not pay you for the absence.

Since your presence at work is a requirement of your contract, such absence may result in an investigation under our disciplinary procedure, which in turn could result in disciplinary action including the termination of your employment.

If you need to leave work due to a personal emergency or illness, you must still seek authorisation from your manager before leaving work premises.

5.13.7 Expenses and business travel

The expenses procedure is primarily for payments relating to mileage, parking fees, occasional travel and accommodation costs, and the occasional purchase of equipment, supplies or other sundry items required for work purposes. Travel expenses to and from your place of work are not paid. Employees should seek prior approval from their Head of Department or line manager before committing themselves to any expenditure for which they intend to claim expense payment. Please complete claims on the correct form (available from your manager) on a regular monthly basis.

All claims must be authorised by your Head of Department or line manager.

We reserve the right not to pay expenses where supporting vouchers or invoices are not provided, where the date of the expense incurred is more than three months old, or where the expense claim has not been approved and authorised by your Head of Department or line manager.

Employees are expected to seek the most economical means of transport, accommodation, equipment, etc. within reason to ensure the least cost is incurred by the College.

If you use your vehicle for travel on college business, you must ensure you take out an appropriate and adequate level of insurance cover (i.e., to include business use). Reimbursement for mileage costs should be made through the expense's procedure outlined above. The College follows HMRC's approved mileage rates for reimbursing the use of your vehicle for travel on college business, excluding travel to and from your place of work.

The College does not provide parking for employees driving to work. You must, therefore, make your own private arrangements to park. Exceptional permission to park may be given to those using their car for college business or to those with reduced mobility (e.g., due to disability, pregnancy, etc.), but this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.14 Benefits and facilities

5.14.1 Contractual sick pay

The college has its own contractual sick pay scheme, under which, if you are absent from work through sickness or injury, you will normally be entitled to payment at your standard rate of pay for a period after the SSP period. Full details are available in the Sickness Absence policy, which is available on the College website, or from your line manager, or the HR Manager on request.

5.14.2 Employee referral scheme

The College always seeks to employ high-quality people. Accordingly, we are very open to current members of staff recommending people who they know for employment, and who they feel would be strong additions to the College's workforce.

As an incentive, the College offers an employee referral payment to any member of staff who recommends someone who is then successfully appointed to a vacancy within the College (subject to certain criteria). Full details of the scheme are available from the HR Manager.

The College reserves the right to change the terms of the scheme at any time, or to withdraw the scheme altogether.

Training and development

6.1 Tuition support

We believe in the development of our employees through work experience, training, and further education.

On a discretionary basis, the College will consider partially or fully funding the fees for tuition, provided that:

- The course is relevant to your work at the College.
- The course is provided by a recognised professional body or other reputable educational organisation.
- The proposal is supported by your Head of Department, and (as appropriate) is recommended by Staff Committee to Director level for final approval.
- You remain in our employment for 12 months after the completion of the course.

We will pay up to the full cost of the relevant course. Where applicable, we will only fund the agreed proportion of the fees for the first taking of exams; the College will not pay for exam re-sits. If you fail your exams and choose not to re-take them, you will be required to repay 100% of the monies paid for that year.

If you leave our employment for any reason (other than redundancy or sickness) within 12 months of completing the course or fail to maintain a minimum of 80% attendance level at the course, then you will normally be required to repay the full amount of the monies paid.

All half/full day release is to be agreed with your manager.

Up to 2 days' paid study leave will be given for each examination subject on courses of study approved in advance by the College. These should normally be taken in the week immediately prior to taking the exam and will be paid at the individual's normal rate of pay.

In addition to these study days, you will be permitted to take up to 1 day of paid leave to sit each exam.

Approval of any requests for time off will be wholly subject to the needs of the College at the time, and all requests must be agreed in advance by your Head of Department, who may refer any request to Staff Committee and Director level for final approval.

Study leave will normally only be granted for exams relating to professional development courses, and not for exams taken to comply with legislative requirements (e.g., manual handling, food hygiene, etc.).

6.2 Job changes/capability issues

We recognise that during your employment with us your capability to carry out your duties may fluctuate. This can be for several reasons, including your job changing over a period causing ability, performance or training issues, or you personally changing (most commonly because of health or personal reasons) and this impacting on your ability to complete your work successfully.

If the nature of your job changes, or if we have general concerns about your ability to perform your job, we will try to ensure that you understand the level of performance we expect of you and that you receive adequate training, support, and supervision.

Concerns regarding your capability will normally first be discussed in an informal manner and you will be given time to improve.

If the standard of your performance remains unsatisfactory, a performance improvement plan will normally be put in place. A failure to improve and to maintain the level of performance required will normally result in disciplinary action.

6.3 Membership of professional bodies

On gaining membership of a relevant professional body appropriate to your role, excluding trade unions or social/private members clubs, we will consider partially or fully funding your annual membership fees. For those in support functions we may pay the annual membership of a professional institute appropriate to your role (this would apply, for example, to those working in a managerial, financial, or HR capacity).

Only one membership will be reimbursed per employee per year. Should you leave our employment part way through the membership year, you may be required to repay a pro-rata proportion of the annual fee.

Your working environment

7.1 Health and safety policy

We attach great importance to your health, safety, and welfare. We will provide and maintain working conditions and equipment for all employees, contractors and visitors that are (as far as is reasonably practicable) safe, healthy and comply with statutory requirements and codes of practice.

However, you also have a personal responsibility for ensuring adherence to our health and safety policy. You are required to take reasonable care of your own well-being and that of all other employees. Details of our health and safety policy are available from the Health, Safety & Maintenance Administrator, or online via the College website.

It is our policy to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety, and welfare of all our employees, and to ensure that persons not in the College's employment are protected from risks that may arise from the College's activities. We are committed to effectively managing health and safety risks arising from our work activities and complying with our legal obligations. We will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that:

- Adequate financial and operational resources are made available for managing health and safety risks.
- Plant and systems of work are provided and maintained that are safe and without risks to health.
- Arrangements are in place for safety and absence of risks to health in connection with the use, handling, storage and transport of articles and substances.
- Such information, instruction, training, and supervision as is necessary are provided for the health and safety at work of employees and workers.
- The place of work under our control is maintained in a safe condition and that the means of access to and egress from it are provided and maintained in a safe condition without risks to health.
- The working environment is provided and maintained so that it is safe, without risk to health and adequate with respect to facilities and arrangements for the welfare of employees.

We firmly believe that the success of our policy relies on the full co-operation of all employees; therefore, we will ensure that it is brought to their notice. We will regularly review our health and safety policy to take account of any significant changes in our operations.

The College stresses its commitment to health and safety to the extent that, where disregard of safe working practice by an employee puts seriously at risk the health and safety of themselves or any other person, this will be considered as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action including dismissal.

7.2 Staff room

We provide staff rooms for your use, which must be always kept clean and tidy. They may only be used during authorised breaks.

7.3 Housekeeping and use of resources

Both from the point of view of safety and of appearance, personal and general work areas, reception areas and rest areas must be always kept clean and tidy.

We also try wherever possible to ensure minimum waste of resources and equipment, to ensure the cost-effective and efficient running of our activities. Employees are asked to take care to avoid unnecessary or extravagant use of services, time, materials, and machinery.

The following are illustrations of the ways you can help:

- Handle machines, equipment, and stock with care.
- Turn off any unnecessary lighting and heating. Preserve heat whenever possible.
- Turn off computers and other electrical equipment at the end of the day; do not leave equipment on standby.
- Ask for other work if your job has come to a standstill.
- Start with the minimum of delay after arriving for work and after breaks.

Note that it is an express written term of your contract of employment that we may deduct from your salary the cost of repairs to, or replacement of, property belonging to the College which was damaged by you, or which you have not returned/ did not return to us.

Any other loss that is the result of your failure to observe rules, procedures, or instruction, or is as a result of your negligent behavior or your unsatisfactory standards of work, may result in disciplinary action.

7.4 Smoking

We operate a 'no smoking' policy throughout most of the College buildings and grounds, and smoking is only permitted in the immediate vicinity of a designated cigarette bin. These bins should be used appropriately for the disposal of cigarettes.

This policy also applies to the use of e-cigarettes, or similar.

Please note that failure to observe our no smoking rules, including smoking in designated 'no smoking' areas, may lead to disciplinary action.

7.5 Alcohol, drug, and substance abuse

7.5.1 General

The use of alcohol, unlawful drugs, and the misuse of substances such as glue or solvents, may impair the safe and efficient running of the College, and is forbidden both during working hours and in the time prior to this where it could affect your ability to work safely. To be unable to work properly because of alcohol, substance or drugs misuse, or to cause your fellow workers to have reason to object to your subsequent conduct, may lead to action being taken under our disciplinary procedure.

If we suspect that you are under the influence of alcohol, drugs or illegal substances, you may be suspended immediately, and we may ask for an appropriate test to be carried out by a nominated person on the day suspected or after suspension.

Action will also be taken if the misuse takes place on client's premises, at a conference or exhibition that you are attending as a representative of the College, or at a social event organised by the College.

For more information, see our separate policy on Drug, Alcohol and Substance Abuse.

If a prescription drug or any medication bought from a chemist to treat a medical condition affects your working capabilities, (e.g., makes you tired, drowsy, or dizzy) your manager should be informed as to any risks this may cause to you and those who work with you.

7.5.2 Drug driving

Employees driving on college business should be aware of the offence of 'drug driving'. Individuals will be guilty of this offence if they drive (or attempt to drive or oversee) a motor vehicle on a road or other public place **and** the levels of specified drugs in their blood exceed the levels set by legislation. It is important to note that the list of drugs includes a number of medications commonly prescribed by doctors (e.g. as treatment for depression) or which are otherwise available over the counter; it is therefore essential that you make yourself aware of which drugs are covered by the legislation, and that you take any medication strictly in line with the instructions issued by your doctor (or other healthcare professional).

7.6 Security

If you are issued with keys or access cards to our premises, you should never let another person have these unless that person is a manager. If you lose a key or access card you should report this immediately to your manager. You may be charged for the cost of replacement keys and/or cards.

Similarly, you should never inform a visitor or external person of any key code number(s) used to gain access to college premises or facilities. Key codes will be changed as necessary.

It is the responsibility of all our employees to ensure that on leaving work each day, windows are shut and secured, internal and external doors are locked, and all computers and electrical equipment shut down and locked away, where appropriate.

CCTV cameras are in operation within the College. These have been installed to: help protect the assets of the College; investigate and/or to detect crime; apprehend and/or prosecute offenders; and protect personal safety. CCTV footage may be used as evidence in criminal proceedings, in disciplinary investigations and hearings, and for safety monitoring. CCTV footage is stored securely with only authorised people having access. Any employee who has any concerns about such surveillance should raise these with their manager.

If you are the last to leave and are unable to secure your place of work adequately, please contact your head of department.

7.7 Right of search

We reserve the right of search to combat theft, or the use of drugs or any other illegal substances on our premises.

To this end, we may carry out random checks on visitors' and employees' identity, person, and property, including vehicles whilst on our premises, many of which are simple precautionary measures and do not imply suspicion.

Any employee who is searched will have the right to be accompanied by a colleague who is on the premises at the time of the search. We also reserve the right to call the police for assistance at any stage should we believe this to be necessary.

7.8 Accidental damage to, or loss of, your property

We do everything possible to keep our premises secure, but there is always the risk that petty crime will occur. We cannot and do not guarantee the security of your personal belongings; nor can we make insurance claims or offer financial compensation if thefts do occur without evidence of a physical break-in. You should not therefore leave your belongings unattended or unsecured. Any items of personal or financial value should be kept with you or locked away and should either be taken home with you at the end of the day or locked away in a drawer, cupboard or filing cabinet.

Similarly, we do not accept any liability for cars, other vehicles or bicycles brought onto our premises.

7.9 Lost property

Articles of lost property should be handed to reception, who will retain them whilst reasonable attempts are made to discover the identity of the owner and inform that person. Unclaimed articles of lost property will be disposed of if their owner cannot be traced.

7.10 Removal of waste or scrap products

All materials and equipment kept on our premises remain the property of the College and may not be removed without the prior approval of your Head of Department. We reserve the right to define 'materials' in specific instances but, generally, if it does not belong to you, do not remove it even if you consider it to be scrap or unwanted material. For the avoidance of doubt, any materials or equipment include those which may be deemed to be scrap, broken, obsolete or surplus to requirements and includes consumables such as food and beverages.

Unauthorised removal of any College property is regarded as theft. We operate a zero-tolerance policy on theft and regard this as gross misconduct. Theft is grounds for immediate termination and may cause us to bring criminal charges.

7.11 Parking

No parking is allowed on the college premises for cars, vans, and other vehicles without the express prior permission of Facilities. Bicycles may be parked in designated areas within the college, provided they have been registered with Facilities.

Under no circumstances should you park in areas designated for disabled people or visitors unless authorised to do so.

7.12 Accidents, first aid provision and medical conditions

You should report all accidents at work, no matter how minor, in the accident book, which can be found in reception. Any exposed cut or burn must be covered with a first-aid dressing.

First-aid boxes are kept in the various locations around the College. For more information, please contact the facilities team.

Please note that our First Aiders may be informed of any ongoing medical conditions that you declare to us, and of any medication that you are taking, so that in the event of an accident or injury, any treating paramedic or ambulance staff may be notified of these details. We will treat these records confidentially; update them as appropriate; and ensure that the information is available to the relevant people in an emergency.

This applies particularly if you are taking any medication that may affect your ability to work safely, or that may cause drowsiness or fatigue, and especially if your job involves working with machinery or driving. Medication should also be reported to us if there is likely to be any involvement needed in providing the treatment (e.g., diabetic employees requiring insulin injections which may need to be stored in a fridge; or those who have epilepsy). Obviously, it is also important that you update us of any changes to your medication information, or if you cease to take this.

We also request that employees attending any counselling or other course of treatment designed to reduce a form of dependency inform us of this.

The names of current First Aid-qualified staff are available from the Health, Safety & Maintenance Administrator.

7.13 Clothing and equipment

If you are issued with any protective clothing, uniforms, or other equipment, you should always wear this as instructed. Failure to do so could be a contravention of your health and safety responsibilities. Once issued, it is your responsibility to ensure that your uniform or protective clothing is looked after and kept clean and serviceable.

Uniforms, protective clothing and equipment will be replaced when necessary due to reasonable wear and tear; however, if you lose your uniform, protective clothing or equipment, or damage it to the extent that it cannot be used/ worn (or is not doing the job it was designed for), we will replace this for you, but you will be responsible for meeting the cost of the replacement articles, which will be deducted from your pay.

7.14 Use of personal music systems

Personal music systems and/or headphones or earpieces may only be used where we are satisfied that these will not:

- distract either the wearer or those who work near the wearer.
- adversely impact on job performance; or
- create a health and safety risk due to inattention or impaired hearing.

Such equipment may therefore only be used at work with the prior consent, and at the discretion of, your manager.

Other rules and general information

8.1 Professional conduct

We aim to encourage the highest professional and ethical standards and require all employees to maintain our good reputation by behaving with responsibility and integrity and acting in a courteous, honest, and fair manner towards anyone with whom they deal.

Our employees are our best ambassadors for the College, and they represent us whenever they meet with clients, customers, suppliers, students, old members, visitors and guests. We aim to create a sense of pride in the College, and to generate a feeling of loyalty and trust in those with whom we come into contact.

We therefore ask that the appearance, conduct and personal hygiene of all our employees always presents us in a professional light. This includes events outside of the workplace such as training courses, seminars and conferences, or social functions.

Both from the point of view of safety and appearance, work areas should be always kept clean and tidy.

If anyone makes a complaint or criticism of the College or its services, you are required to notify your Head of Department or line manager as soon as is reasonably possible, so that the matter may be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of all parties (as far as is practicable).

8.2 Dress code

Your personal appearance is an important contribution to the image and reputation of the College. It is essential for you to project a professional image, whether your work involves meetings with members of the public or not. Employees who are meeting with internal and external clients/customers should be dressed appropriately, and even if a meeting is not scheduled, always assume a client/customer may visit unannounced!

Please observe standards of dress and appearance (e.g., hair and body adornment) appropriate to working in a professional environment. In all cases we expect you to be both conventionally dressed and smart. This means that clothes should fit properly and be wrinkle free, with no tears, rips, or holes. Clothing that distracts other people is unacceptable, including T-shirts with offensive slogans, graphics or imprints, tank tops and tight clothing. These items never generate a professional image. Your dress should be wholly appropriate and should not distract or offend the people you are working with or prevent you or them from performing your/ their role responsibly.

We aim to be fair and reasonable and for our requirements to apply with equal formality to both sexes.

Depending on your role, you may be expected to wear a uniform to perform your duties, and some items may be provided by the College. Your Head of Department will be able to confirm which items are supplied, though the College reserves the right to change the current arrangements if necessary. Where uniforms are provided, these must be always worn as instructed, and laundered on a regular basis.

8.3 Personal relationships at work

We recognise that, from time to time, close personal relationships may develop between colleagues. We fully acknowledge the right of employees to privacy in their personal affairs; however, experience has shown that the effect of such relationships can sometimes have an adverse impact on business, especially where a conflict of interest or breach of confidentiality may arise.

Close personal relationships are of concern to us where there may be an actual or potential abuse of the employee's position of trust, a breach of our required standards of propriety, a compromise of professional standards, a conflict of interests, or a potential breach of confidentiality.

Employees whose personal relationship may potentially affect their ability to fulfil their roles for us in any way are strongly recommended to advise their manager.

Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence if requested; the focus will be on determining whether there is a potential or actual conflict of interest and if so, to determine what, if any, steps may need to be taken to protect both the individuals and the College.

The College has a separate policy about Staff-Student relationships, which applies to its academic staff. A copy is available on the College website, or from the HR Manager upon request.

8.4 Gifts and hospitality

It is an offence under the Bribery Act 2010 to offer, promise or give a bribe, or to receive a bribe. (The latter includes requesting, agreeing to receive, or accepting a bribe.)

It is a strict rule, therefore, that nothing that could be viewed as an inducement (e.g. personal gifts or any hospitality or entertainment of any kind) may be accepted from a supplier, client/customer or prospective supplier or client/customer except with the prior agreement of the Rector, Finance & Estates Bursar or relevant College Officer, and the details of any offer of such a gift/hospitality must be declared immediately in the record kept by the Accountant.

From time to time, departing students may decide that it is appropriate to make a gift to an employee who has given particularly good service over a period. At times of special occasions such as Christmas, or significant birthdays, or on the departure of the student small gifts of nominal value (i.e., less than £100) may be accepted by prior agreement with your Head of Department or line manager. Gifts such as wine or consumables are normally pooled and then distributed amongst all our staff.

For further information, see the College's Anti-Bribery Policy, which may be obtained from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

8.5 Fraud, theft, and suspicious acts

If you have knowledge of, or reasonably suspect, any fraud, theft or other suspicious act taking place within the College you should report this to your manager, or use our Whistleblowing Policy, a copy of which is available on the College website.

Equally, if you have knowledge, or suspect, that financial proceeds from crime are being passed through the College to cleanse their identity and make them appear to be from legitimate sources, you are required by law to report this to a director as soon as reasonably practicable after the information comes to your attention. Failure to do so may constitute an offence.

8.6 Dealing with the media

You should refer all communications and enquiries from the media to the Head of Communications or to the Academic Director. You must not act as a spokesperson for the College without permission from Open Learning College.

Please do not discuss Open Learning College or any of our clients/customers or business partners, whether officially or 'off the record', or endorse any product or service or person without our specific permission. If approached by a member of the press, do not say 'no comment'. Take the contact details and ensure that the message is passed on immediately to the Head of Communications, or to the Rector's Office.

No publication of any material or opinion based on experience gained with us may be made without the written consent of the Rector.

8.7 Internal communications

Good communications are essential to the effective running of the College, and we welcome the contributions of all staff to improving communications.

It may not always be possible to communicate issues to all employees at the same time. We encourage face to face sharing of information but alternative forms of communication such as email, intranet and notice boards may also be utilised to keep you informed.

All notices, vacancies, and other information of general interest will be displayed on our intranet/noticeboards. Please do not display any information of your own without gaining the prior permission of your Head of Department or line manager.

8.8 HR information and records

For the purposes of administration, it is necessary that we hold and process personal data about our employees. Data relating to you will be held for the duration of your employment or for any longer period to enable us to answer any question relating to your employment with us.

Personal files are kept securely in our servers, and we will comply with legislative requirements in terms of allowing you access to the information held about you.

For more information, please read the Privacy Statement on the College website.

If during your employment you have access to, or reason to handle, personal information, you should make every effort to comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation. If you are unsure of the current legal requirements, please check first with the Data Privacy Officer.

In addition, all information that:

- is or has been acquired by you during, or in the course of your employment, or has otherwise been acquired by you in confidence.
- relates particularly to the College or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort; and
- has not been made public by, or with, our authority.

shall be confidential, and (save during our business or as required by law) you shall not at any time, whether before or after the termination of your employment, disclose such information to any person without our written consent.

You are to exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information and shall at the time of termination of your employment with us, or at any other time upon demand, return to us any such material in your possession.

For further details, please refer to our Data Privacy policy, which is available on the College website.

8.9 Changes to personal details

UK legislation requires that any personal information kept by us is up-to-date and accurate.

Please ensure that the HR Manager is informed immediately of any changes to your personal details. These include change of name, home address, home/mobile telephone number, email address, marital status, emergency contacts, gain, or loss of a dependent and attainment of a professional qualification or membership of a professional organisation and change of registration number (if you use your car for

business use or park it on our premises). Please also advise your Head of Department or line manager of any changes in your personal circumstances which could affect your employment, e.g., changes in health, endorsements on your driving licence (if you are required to drive on college business) etc.

8.10 Use of business facilities for private purposes

Our facilities such as computers, printers, photocopiers, fax machines and franking machines, are intended for business use only and may only be used for personal matters with the prior agreement of your Head of Department or line manager.

8.11 Personal telephone calls

Any telephone calls made from our premises are not regarded as private or confidential and logs of calls showing the numbers dialed may be monitored and checked at any time. Local private calls may be made from the offices without charge but should be kept brief and infrequent. Private long-distance calls within the UK must be avoided except in an emergency; private calls abroad are not permitted. If you work out on client sites, private calls may only be made from a client's office with the client's permission in an emergency.

Private incoming calls are permitted, but the frequency and duration of such calls should be kept to a minimum. Please discourage your friends and relatives from calling on you either in person or by telephone, except in an emergency. Reverse charge calls will not be accepted: should it be discovered that personal calls have been received on this basis disciplinary action may be taken and the employee will normally be required to refund the cost of such calls.

Intrusive or excessive use of personal mobile telephones will be challenged by your Head of Department or line manager.

8.12 Buying or selling goods

You are not allowed to buy or sell goods on your own behalf on our premises unless you have the prior authorisation of one of the Directors. This includes catalogue sales and sales of items to benefit charitable or other causes.

8.13 Collections

No collections of any kind are allowed on our premises, nor should suppliers, clients or customers be approached for any charitable donations, without the prior specific authorisation of one of the Directors.

8.14 Conflicts of interest

The College operates a Conflicts of Interest policy and may require you to complete an annual return. The College requires its employees to declare any potential conflict that may arise at any time and to be subject to the procedures for managing conflicts.

8.15 Other employment

Your main employment is with Open Learning College, and you may not normally hold any other paid or unpaid employment without our specific prior written approval. If you wish to take on any other employment, you must notify your Head of Department or line manager in advance, so that we can discuss any implications arising from the Working Time Regulations or any conflict of interest.

Our basic rules regarding additional work are that you will not:

- allow your outside activities to interfere with your work for the College or permit any conflict between your duties and your private interests to impair your ability to carry out those duties effectively.

- make use of or exploit our name or your connection with us to further your own private interests or those of any outside organisation to the prejudice of our interests.
- act in a manner likely to bring the College into disrepute or to affect our reputation for impartiality or integrity.

Any additional work must not involve the use of our time, equipment, property or any other resource or facilities.

8.16 Ideas and inventions

We encourage all our employees to develop new ideas and innovations to the benefit of the College. Any intellectual property rights subsisting in any idea, work or item created, modified, or held by you in the course of your employment will automatically become the property of Open Learning College, unless the idea or work falls outside the mainstream of our business interests. We ask that you discuss the existence of such intellectual property with the Academic Director.

8.17 Purchases on behalf of Open Learning College

Specified individuals only are authorised to purchase goods and/or services on behalf of the College. If you are unsure whether you have the requisite authority, please speak to your Head of Department or line manager before committing us to any expenditure.

8.18 Whistleblowing Policy

The whistle-blower policy is an important aspect of our commitment to transparency and accountability at Open Learning College. The policy provides an avenue for employees to report any concerns or suspicions of wrongdoing, including unethical behaviour, financial irregularities, or violations of the law or company policies, without fear of retaliation.

Under the whistle-blower policy, employees are encouraged to report concerns to their immediate supervisor or a designated person in their department. If for any reason an employee is uncomfortable reporting their concerns to their supervisor, they can report their concerns to the HR Manager or a member of the senior management team.

All reports will be treated confidentially, and the College will take appropriate action to investigate any concerns raised. Any form of retaliation against a whistle-blower will not be tolerated, and the College will take action to protect the whistle-blower from any negative consequences.

We are committed to maintaining a culture of integrity and ethical behaviour, and the whistle-blower policy is an important tool to help us achieve this goal.

On leaving us

9.1 Notice periods

Should you wish to terminate your employment, please discuss your decision with your Head of Department or your line manager prior to submitting your formal notice of resignation. Your notice, which should be in writing, and be dated, should be handed to your Head of Department or line manager.

The period of notice to terminate your employment by either party is specified in your contract of employment.

At your request, we may agree to waive the requirement for you to work some or all the required period of notice. In such circumstances, salary will not be payable for the portion of the notice period which is not worked. If you do not provide the required period of notice, or leave before your notice period expires, you will only be paid up to the last day you worked. Holiday entitlement will only accrue up to this date.

We may require you to take some or all any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement during your notice period. Separately, if you have already booked to take annual leave which will now fall within your notice period, we may require that you do not take such annual leave (even though it had previously been authorised), but rather that you work out your complete notice period. Alternatively, if we agree that you take the authorised holiday, we may require you to extend your notice period by the same amount so that you work the full notice period.

If you commit any act of gross misconduct during your notice period, we have the right to terminate your employment summarily without notice.

You may be asked to attend an exit interview and we value your co-operation in this process.

9.2 Garden leave

We may decide that notice is taken as 'garden leave', during which time you will continue to receive your salary and benefits, but will not be required to attend our premises, nor will you be permitted to contact our customers, suppliers, or your fellow employees.

During a period of garden leave you may be required to undertake duties at home (although we do not guarantee that work will be provided or expected). We also reserve the right to change the nature of your work. We may also ask you to resign from any office(s) you hold.

Should you be put on garden leave, then any accrued but unused holiday entitlement shall be deemed to be taken during your period of garden leave (if this is of a long enough duration to cover the total amount of outstanding leave - any remaining balance will be paid in lieu).

Please also note that during a period of garden leave you must not work for any other employer or undertake paid work on your own behalf.

9.3 Return of property and final payments

When your employment with us ends, (or immediately on request) please ensure that all property and information (including your college card, keys, mobile telephone, laptop (and passwords), training manuals, office equipment, files, etc.) which belong to us are returned to your Head of Department or line manager. Final payments may be withheld until all items are received and accounted for. You are not entitled to refuse to return our property while waiting to receive your final wage/salary or other payment, as such payments will be made to you in the normal way.

Please note that we also ask that, on leaving our employment, you amend your online and social media profiles to indicate that you are no longer employed by the College.

Should you leave our employment before the salaries have been processed in the month, your P45 will be posted onto you when the salaries are processed. Please ensure that you supply the HR Manager with a forwarding address, if applicable.

9.4 References

We do not normally give open 'to whom it may concern' references to employees leaving our employment but will normally reply to written requests from prospective employers who should be advised to direct such requests to the HR Manager. References may only be given on behalf of Open Learning College by the HR Manager.

Whilst line managers may provide personal references for their colleagues, such references should be clearly marked as such, and our headed notepaper or email system must not normally be used to give personal references.

9.5 Retirement

We have no fixed retirement age. You may choose to retire at any time, and we encourage you to discuss any thoughts or queries you may have about retirement with us at any stage so that we can both plan for this more effectively.

Should you wish to prepare for retirement by gradually reducing your working hours, we will consider this, subject to the needs of the organisation. Working reduced hours will result in a pro-rata reduction in salary and benefits and may therefore impact on your pension; the implications will therefore be fully discussed with you prior to any decision being made.

Where reduced hours are requested, you should consider the impact on the College and how this could be accommodated.

9.6 Restrictive covenants

If any restrictive covenants apply either during, or on the termination of, your employment, these will be included in your contract of employment. Please ensure that you read these carefully and comply with them as failure to do so may result in legal action against you.

Our policies and procedures

10.1 Equality & Diversity policy

We are committed to the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion in our employment practices. It is our policy to ensure that no job applicant nor current employee receives less favorable treatment due to a "protected characteristic" (i.e. race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/ maternity or gender reassignment) or is disadvantaged by any conditions or requirements being placed on them which cannot be justified.

Our employees also have a personal responsibility to actively promote equality and diversity, and good relations within their areas of work, in addition to having a responsibility not to discriminate.

In addition, the College will not tolerate any form of bullying or harassment. Whilst we hope that you will never experience such behaviour, if it does occur, we would ask that you speak with your line manager or the HR Manager as soon as possible, so that the matter can be addressed.

For more information, please refer to our Equality & Diversity policy, and to our Bullying and Harassment policy. Copies may be obtained from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

10.2 Grievance procedure

Our grievance procedure is available to all employees and allows you to seek redress of an individual grievance relating to a work-related action affecting you personally. More information is available from your Head of Department, from the HR Officer, or from the College website.

10.3 Disciplinary procedure

In any organisation there is a need for rules and standards to guide its members. Many of our rules are detailed in this Handbook, but others are implicit in working for us (e.g., the overriding requirement for care, honesty, and confidentiality in handling our affairs and those with whom we have dealings).

It is important that any breaches of our rules are dealt with effectively from the point of view of the College, and fairly and consistently in the interests of both College and our employees.

All employees are responsible for familiarising themselves with their obligations and must therefore read our disciplinary procedure. Copies are available from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

10.4 IT policies

Our IT policies cover email and Internet usage, as well as social media. We endorse the College's guidelines on use of social media, (and strongly encourage our employees to always adhere to these guidelines).

Please note that failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Please read our IT policies carefully and ensure that you comply with them fully. Copies are available from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

10.5 Other policies

In addition to the above, we have the following policies and procedures, which are available from your Head of Department, from the HR Manager, or from the College website.

Please ensure that you read the ones appropriate to you and make yourself familiar with their contents.

- Anti-Bribery policy
- Bullying and harassment policy
- Data protection policy
- Drugs, alcohol, and substance abuse policy
- Flexible Working policy
- Maternity, adoption, paternity, and shared parental leave policy
- Parental leave
- Recruitment and selection policy
- Safeguarding
- Sickness absence policy
- Time off to Care for Dependents policy.
- Whistleblowing policy