

Community Colleges Australia Code of Ethics

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Colleges Australia (CCA) Code of Ethics is to affirm the professional and ethical standards that apply as a condition of membership with CCA.

Objectives

The objectives of this Code of Ethics are to:

- Define standards of conduct that apply as a condition of membership with CCA;
- Provide those who deal with or use the services of CCA members, including students, clients, funding organisations and regulators, with a clear statement of the standards which they can expect member organisations to adopt in their dealings with them;
- Reflect the Code of Conduct requirements of Commonwealth and state and territory governments and independent agencies for accrediting and registering organisations, qualifications and courses under legislation which fund, subsidise training for and/or regulate the provision of educational and training services for local and overseas students; and
- Promote confidence and community trust in community education services provided by members of CCA.

Scope

This Code of Ethics is binding on all CCA members as a condition for admission and continuing membership.

Definitions and Interpretation

Client: Refers to individuals and/or organisations, other than students, who receive services from CCA members but are not in themselves a student. This may include client organisations that enlist the professional services of a CCA member.

Community education: Also known as adult and community education (ACE), community-based education or community learning and development, refers to the education and training services of not-for-profit community owned organisations who form the membership of CCA. Community education serves to enhance learning, development and/or social inclusion for individuals and groups in their communities using a range of formal and informal methods. A common defining feature is that education and training programs and activities are developed in dialogue with communities and participants. The purpose of community education is to develop the capacity of individuals and groups of all ages through their actions and to develop the capacity of communities to improve their quality of life. Central to this is the ability of participants to take part in democratic processes.

Social inclusion: Refers to the process of improving the terms of participation within society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities to access learning, employment, connection with family, friends and the local community, capacity to deal with personal crises, such as ill health, and having a voice. In this, maximum participation in economic, social and community life is a defining characteristic of an inclusive society.

Student: Refers to learners receiving education and/or training and/or assessment services from a CCA member.

Words defined in the CCA Constitution or By-laws shall have the same meaning in this Code of Ethics unless expressly stated to the contrary.

Shared Values

As providers of community education, members of CCA share the core values of:

- **Respect of persons:** Delivering community education with the recognition that each student has a unique and inherent equal worth and right to wellbeing, self-fulfilment and self-determination, consistent with the rights and culture of others and a sustainable environment.
- **Commitment to social inclusion:** Promoting opportunities and social fairness in community education with the aim of reducing barriers and expanding choice and potential for all persons, with special regard for those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable, oppressed or have exceptional needs.
- **Professional conduct:** Delivering high standards of service that embrace the ethical framework, principles and responsibilities prescribed by this Code of Ethics.

Ethical Framework

Members of CCA adhere to the underlying ethical framework of:

- **Integrity:** being straightforward, honest and sincere in all professional and business dealings.
- **Objectivity:** not allowing professional judgment to be compromised by bias or conflict of interest.
- **Professional competence and due care:** maintaining professional knowledge, professional service and acting diligently.
- **Transparency:** maintaining honest and open communications and declaring conflicts of interest to relevant parties as applicable.
- **Confidentiality:** respecting and preserving the confidentiality of personal information acquired and not releasing such information to third parties without proper authority.
- **Professional behaviour:** acting in accordance with relevant laws and regulations, complying with regulatory bodies and dealing with students, clients and stakeholders justly, competently, diligently and fairly.
- **Professionalism and purpose:** acting in a manner that serves the interests of students, clients and the general community even at the expense of self-interest, recognising that such dedication is the means by which the sector can earn the trust and confidence of its community, including individuals, organisations and government.

Principles and Responsibilities

Members of CCA adhere to the principles and responsibilities of:

1. Ethical Student Recruitment and Marketing

Members will:

- Market their services with integrity and accuracy and avoid false or misleading comparisons with other organisations including education and training providers;
- Ensure advertising and promotional materials meet legal requirements and any funding or student loan conditions where applicable;
- Provide appropriate pre-enrolment information to enable an informed decision for enrolment by potential students, including any pre-requisites, course/program completion and assessment requirements, relevant policies, all costs including tuition fees, textbook fees or other charges, as well as the conditions and requirements of any student loans program;
- Appropriately assess a potential student's desire and capacity to participate in and complete a course/program and only enrol a student when there is reasonable likelihood of successful completion;
- Ensure any overseas marketing:
 - Accords with all legal requirements and the educational, cultural and regulatory systems of the relevant country;
 - Provides accurate information about cost of living, health and welfare, opportunities for further study and language prerequisites for undertaking relevant courses; and

- Does not under any circumstances give any guarantee or misleading information regarding the results or outcome a student may achieve; and
- Avoid actions that may damage the reputation of community education and Australia's education and training system.

2. Quality Education and Support

Members will:

- Take all reasonable measures to comply with the registration standards and reporting requirements of their regulatory bodies;
- Notify CCA within two (2) business days of any regulatory sanctions or conditions being placed on their organisation's registration by a regulatory body;
- Maintain a safe and legally compliant learning environment conducive to student success;
- Ensure ethical standards in the educational and social relations between staff and students;
- Provide students with relevant orientation and up-to-date guidance and appropriately adapt and respond to individual, cultural and special needs;
- Provide suitable equipment, training resources and facilities and use methods and materials appropriate to the requirements and levels at which courses are provided;
- Maintain ongoing student support, including individualised support, contextualisation and/or differentiation as appropriate;
- Actively monitor student attendance, academic progress and levels of completion with the view on maintaining appropriate assistance to maximise capacity for successful completion;
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of information in accordance with privacy legislation
- Maintain appropriate student complaint resolution and grievance handling processes, including ensuring students are not penalised or victimised for pursuing a complaint in good faith; and
- Implement a continuous improvement process of self-assessment for excellence in quality that involves managers, educational staff, students, employers, subcontractors, industry and/or other relevant parties.

3. Sound Organisational Framework and Financial Standards

Members will:

- Apply this Code of Ethics, or equivalent internal code/s, which the member organisation has adopted to regulate dealings with its staff, students, clients and stakeholders;
- Demonstrate commitment to quality and maintain robust organisational effectiveness, including effective organisational governance, regulatory and contractual compliance, well-articulated plans, policies and procedures and financial integrity;
- Apply effective recruitment practices and standards and strive for honest, unbiased and unprejudiced work environments, incorporating professional development to support staff capability and effectiveness;
- Safeguard the funds paid by students and clients in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements;
- Properly document contractual and financial relationships with students, clients and/or stakeholders;
- Refund or recompensate for services not delivered in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements; and
- Have a publicly available policy for fees and refunds.

4. Sustainability and Social Responsibility

Members will:

- Strive to protect and minimise the impact of their services on the environment;
- Act to ensure the efficient, effective and sustainable use of resources;
- Strive to embrace environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability in their communities;

- Strive to contribute to the cultural and social well-being of communities, which may include targeted courses and programs to enhance opportunities for students in necessitous circumstances;
- Promote socially-inclusive learning and employment practices; and
- Treat the natural environment and wildlife with consideration and sensitivity.

5. Protecting the Reputation of the Sector

Members will:

- Conduct their affairs in a manner which promotes the reputation and best interests of CCA and the Australian not-for-profit community education sector in general;
- Not engage in misleading or deceptive conduct, including but not limited to:
 - Making false statements of fact
 - Making statements that are factually true but are capable of inducing students, clients, stakeholders, CCA or other members into error
 - Conduct which misleads or deceives, including conduct that is negligent or reckless and results in misleading or deceiving others;
- Not fail to disclose facts where there is a reasonable expectation that a member should do so;
- Not deliberately criticise the services or quality of education or training provided by other members, entice students from other member organisations or encourage students enrolled at another organisation to change providers;
- Provide accurate and timely information to CCA when requested, in accordance with the CCA By-laws and/or Constitution;
- Co-operate with fellow members in upholding and enforcing this Code of Ethics;
- Have the option to publish:
 - The CCA logo on their website and/or appropriate marketing material and/or a link to the CCA website to emphasise they are a CCA-endorsed quality member
 - They adhere to this Code of Ethics or equivalent internal code/s; and
- On relinquishing CCA membership, or having their membership terminated, will refrain from claiming CCA membership or the grant of any licence from, or accreditation or recognition by, CCA.

Noncompliance with this Code of Ethics

Complaints relating to an alleged breach of a provision of this Code of Ethics may be made to CCA or its designated officer via the Chief Executive Officer of CCA.

Complaints to CCA about a breach of the Code of Ethics will be dealt with in accordance with the CCA Constitution, policies and procedures. Members recognise that it is their responsibility to be informed about the impact that a failure to uphold the requirements of this Code of Ethics may affect them and their business.

Where a breach of this Code of Ethics is determined to be sustained, sanctions may range from warnings through to termination of membership according to the nature and circumstances of the breach. CCA may also refer serious breaches of the law uncovered in the course of any investigation to regulatory authorities.

Monitoring and Review

This Code of Ethics will be subject to a process of periodic review and may be amended or updated if required.

Version History

Version	Approved By	Approval Date	Date of Effect	Sections Modified
Version 1.0	Board of Directors	20 February 2017	20 February 2017	Policy Released
Version 2.0	Board of Directors	20 May 2019	20 May 2019	Major Amendments

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Community Colleges Australia, PO Box 1839, QVB Post Office, Sydney NSW 1230
Tel (02) 9233-3634; email admin@cca.edu.au; web www.cca.edu.au
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