

Faculty of Education Expectations of Professional Conduct

The University of Tasmania is committed to high standards of professional conduct in all activities, and holds its commitment and responsibilities to its students of paramount importance. Consequently, the University has developed a Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning¹ which encompasses the professional and conduct of both staff and students.

All teaching jurisdictions throughout Australia also provide documents relating to Codes of Conduct for teachers. In 2006, the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board published their Code of Professional Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania², outlining the commitments, practices and aspirations that underpin the teaching profession in the state.

The Faculty of Education also holds high expectations of students, in terms of professional conduct, as they pursue their studies within the special environment the University offers. The behavioural expectations of students detailed here build upon both of the documents referred to above. Students and staff are encouraged to conduct themselves in a manner which is based upon the principles espoused in these documents.

It is an expectation of the University of Tasmania that staff and students also make themselves aware of all University ordinances, by-laws and policies³ pertaining to their rights and responsibilities as students and to abide by the rules and regulations in the ordinances and by-laws.

Professional conduct: Learning and teaching environments

The Faculty will endeavour to provide learning and teaching environments that are secure and supportive of teaching and learning and research supervision, and which aligns with the university's 'Responsibilities to Students' outlined in the Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning (pp. 1-4). We commit to ensuring that the learning partnership between staff and students is free from harassment and discrimination⁴. Where alleged harassment or discrimination occurs, procedures are available to facilitate expedient and just resolution of problems.

What this means in practice:

- Staff and students are expected to act at all times in a way that demonstrates respect for the rights and privileges of all Faculty members, and all interactions are to show honesty, ethical behaviour, and professionalism.
- If a staff member acts unprofessionally towards their students, the Faculty and University is committed to dealing with concerns and complaints impartially, ensuring that a student might lodge a complaint without fear of disadvantage⁵.

¹ UTAS Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning:

http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/214661/code_conduct-teaching-and-learning1.pdf

² Code of Professional Ethics for the Teaching Profession in Tasmania:

<https://www.trb.tas.gov.au/Shared%20Documents/Code%20of%20Professional%20Ethics.pdf>

³ See University policies: <http://www.utas.edu.au/policy>

⁴ See relevant Federal Anti-discrimination legislation – Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and Sex Discrimination Act 1985

⁵ How to resolve a student complaint: <http://www.utas.edu.au/registrar/student-complaints/how-to-resolve-a-student-complaint>

- If a student disrupts, or causes unreasonable interruptions of a lecture, tutorial, or any other form of learning, teaching or research activity, it may be considered an act of general misconduct⁶ and penalties may be applied.

Professional conduct: Communication^{7,8}

The Faculty will endeavour to ensure that communication between students and between students and staff is undertaken with integrity, in a balanced, respectful and reciprocal manner. Such behavior is expected when you study and communicate online (MyLO, Facebook, etc.) and communicate using the email facilities.

1. In MyLO

Unlike learning in a face-to-face environment (campus based lectures and tutorials) where you and your tutors have the advantage of seeing the person who is communicating (talking) and hearing their thinking in real time (synchronously), learning in the online environment (MyLO) means you are usually communicating in the written form and receiving a response sometimes hours or days later (asynchronously). This provides added challenges for both staff and students and has the potential to create miscommunication.

What this means in practice:

Do:

- Be impartial and professional
- Be positive, polite and give constructive feedback to other contributors
- Keep comments relevant to the issues currently being discussed
- Save contributions and edits in format and/or location before posting, in case of technical glitches
- Use inclusive language

Do not:

- Delete or change other contributions
- Infringe copyright or intellectual property rights
- Post confidential or proprietary information
- Use insulting, provocative, threatening or libellous comments
- Post multiple versions of the same view
- Pretend to be someone else when posting comments and content (tracking tools can track anonymous authors)

⁶ See University of Tasmania Ordinance 9: http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23991/Ordinance-9-Student-Discipline.pdf

⁷ See MyLO Netiquette for online communications:

https://mylo.utas.edu.au/d2l/lor/viewer/viewFile.d2lfile/6607/122500/Netiquette%20for%20MyLO_120712.pdf

⁸ The School of Geography and Environmental Studies: The core rules of netiquette:

<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

2. In Social Media

Remember that if you take part in social networking (e.g. Facebook; Instagram; Twitter) you are acting as a digital citizen of the world. Through your digital citizenship, you demonstrate your professional practice, for your potential employers and for all stakeholders in your chosen profession.

What this means in practice:

- Be aware that if you name people on social media in a derogatory and negative way, you risk defamation. You may personally be legally liable for such material.
- Be professional in relation to sharing your perceptions about units on social media sites⁹.

3. Emails and other forms of written communication

All staff and students are expected to use professional language in all forms of written communication, including emails, online message postings and other formal and informal documentation; which means each person maintains a courteous and considerate demeanor which avoids highly emotive language. Emails in particular serve as an official record of your communication with the Faculty, and so they should be constructed in a professional manner.

What this means in practice:

- Always use your official UTAS email account.
- Do not use Gmail, Hotmail, Facebook, or your home internet provider email accounts. Emails from unofficial addresses might be ignored, deleted, or spammed without being read.
- In the 'Subject Line' or somewhere in the contents of the email include your first and last name, ID number, course name and unit code and identify yourself as a student in your Unit Coordinator's or tutor's class. **Example:** Joe Bloggs, ID 694325 - BEd. ESH102.
- You should use correct punctuation and check your email for spelling and grammar. Please do not use the shortened and ungrammatical language of SMS or social networking.

4. Contacting staff by phone

When contacting staff by phone, remember to communicate your name and contact details and the query or concern you have clearly so that these can be acted on in a timely manner. Staff work with a lot of students both in the face-to-face and online environment and it is not always easy to put a face to a name.

What this means in practice:

- When speaking to the staff member or leaving an answerphone message, please identify yourself clearly and give your **Student ID number**. This helps if the staff member does not know how to spell your name, or if there is more than one student with the same name or if they do not know which course you are in or where you live.
- Please speak your phone number slowly and repeat it, remembering the area code if you are from interstate or overseas.

⁹ University of Tasmania Guidelines for using social media currently under development.

Professional conduct: Assessment and appeals processes

The Faculty will endeavour to cohere with the expectations of assessment and appeals outlined in the Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning (p. 2). Faculty processes are in line with the University policy, Academic Assessment Rule 2¹⁰.

5. Individual assignments

Assignments will be returned within four weeks of the date of submission. All students have the right to seek clarification of their grade. It can be very stressful and disappointing to receive a mark which is unexpected or perceived to be undeserved, and therefore it is very important to conduct yourself professionally when requesting your grade be reviewed.

What this means in practice:

For all units in all courses, students have the opportunity to formally ask for clarification of the comments they have received on their assessment tasks. The recommended procedure to follow in order to do so is documented on the Faculty website¹¹.

It is important to wait 24 hours after your assignment is returned to ensure that you have synthesised the feedback you have been provided with and have moved beyond an initial emotional response. Lecturers and tutors will not respond to queries prior to the end of this 24 hour period. When making your request, ensure you are specific in your requests and/or the questions posed so that the marker can address your concerns.

6. Final unit result appeals

Students wishing to appeal against a **final grade** in a unit have the right to do so, but the process is a formal one which requires you to follow specific University-wide review procedures.

What this means in practice:

You must first download the Application for Review of Assessment¹² form which provides clear guidelines for the process of review. Be aware, you must initiate the process **within ten days** of your notification of your result for the result to be reviewed.

Please note that neither your tutor or unit coordinator are involved in the process of review, but that a third person with expertise in the discipline area will be the reviewer.

Professional conduct: Undertaking professional experience and working in schools

Professional Experience (PE) is a core requirement of our initial teacher education courses. It is an integral component of your studies what helps link theoretical studies to practice.

During your time on PE you will be expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner at all times.

What this means in practice

As a pre-service teacher you must arrive and depart from the school as if you are a full-time teacher and endeavour to participate fully in school activities (with staff and students). Punctuality and preparation are expected.

¹⁰ See University of Tasmania, Rule 2: <http://acserv.admin.utas.edu.au/rules/Rule2.doc>

¹¹ See Unit outlines: Information essential to all units: <http://www.utas.edu.au/education/learning-and-teaching/resources/unit-outline-information-essential-to-all-units>

¹² Application for Review of Assessment Form: http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/314622/Review-of-Assessment.pdf

On your first visit to your school look at the standard of dress of your teacher colleagues and if unsure ask your colleague teacher about the dress code of the school. If this means you need to remove piercings or cover up tattoos to conform to the school dress code, then it should be done.

You should speak to staff and students in a professional manner and not use offensive, disrespectful or hurtful language while on professional experience. Pre-service teachers are expected to maintain a safe and respectful relationship with students at all times.

For further clarification and detail please refer to the Pre-Service Conditions of Placement document that is located on the Professional Experience website¹³.

Professional conduct: Providing Unit Coordinators and Tutors with feedback via eVALUate

As a major stakeholder of the educational endeavor that the University and Faculty are engaged in, you have the responsibility and right to provide staff with constructive feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of your learning experience in each unit and the course overall.

What this means in practice

All students have the opportunity to provide feedback to staff via eVALUate, the University of Tasmania online system for gathering and reporting student feedback on learning experiences^{14,15}. This process requires you to reflect upon your learning experiences and to provide your lecturers and tutors with information that enables them to understand what it is that they do (teaching and unit design) that is useful for student learning and to continue this practice. It also enables them to know what is it that they do that is not useful, so that this practice can change.

To ensure that you provide this information in a way that is effective (e.g. enables reflection and change), you need to consider what feedback you will provide and how you will communicate it. It needs to be said in a manner that lecturers and tutors will listen and respond to, not in a way that is personally insulting or offensive. Comments of this latter kind are likely to be filtered out prior to the eVALUate Report (Teacher or Unit) being sent to staff, so your feedback will not even be received. It is your responsibility, and in your best interests, to communicate your feedback about negative aspects of unit design or teaching in a professional manner. Consider how you would like to receive feedback as a teacher yourself and construct yours accordingly.

As a teacher, you will also need to provide feedback to your own students about their learning, as well as to their parents or guardians, so that children continue to feel valued whilst embracing your suggestions for improvement. Use the eVALUate process to practice these skills.

¹³ See Professional experience in educational settings procedural guidelines:

http://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/431658/Professional-Experience-Guidelines.pdf pp. 3-4

¹⁴ See eVALUate website: <http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/evaluate>

¹⁵ See eVALUate website TUU eVALUate video: <http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/evaluate/tuu-evaluate-video>