

UCU Wales briefing for branch officers on the aims and purpose of the Education Workforce Council Wales

The Education Workforce Council came into force on 1 April 2015 and all FE lecturers were automatically enrolled.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF THE EWC?

- To contribute to improving standards of teaching and quality of learning in Wales.
- To maintain and improve standards of professional conduct amongst teachers and others who support teaching and learning in Wales.
- To maintain public trust, confidence and to safeguard the interests of learners, parents and general public.

WHAT WILL THE EWC DO?

- Deduct registration fees annually.
- Maintain a register of persons deemed suitable to practice within the education workforce.
- Investigate and hear cases against registered persons involving professional misconduct, incompetence or criminal offences.
- Code of Professional Conduct and Practice (Currently being revised).
- Currently carrying out a consultation on the use of Interim Suspension Order Powers.
- Give advice to Welsh Government on teaching & learning issues.
- Provide information about the education workforce.
- Carry out specific work as requested by Welsh Government, e.g on CPD
- Promotion of careers within the education workforce (If requested by Welsh Government).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FE COLLEGES AND FE LECTURERS

New legal requirements on FE colleges and supply agencies:

- only employ registered staff. (Pre-employment checks)
- refer cases to EWC where a member of (registered) staff is dismissed / resigns in certain circumstances, i.e. involving professional misconduct, incompetence or criminal offences

- report serious case to the DBS - The Council shall assess whether or not a referral should be made to the DBS at all times, based on the evidence and information received by it, and whether there is a suggestion of harm, or a risk of harm to children or vulnerable adults.

Requirements on FE lecturers

- FE staff should remain professional at all times.

The EWC are currently consulting on their Code of Professional Conduct and Practice – one of the proposed changes in the code is the statement 'Recognise your position as a role model and public figure, both in and out of the workplace'.

UCU's response:

UCU are concerned about the latitude the Fitness to Practice hearing panel appear to take in relation to the phrase 'both in and out of the workplace.' We believe that the way this is written in the code suggests an equal consideration, whether inside or outside the workplace.

We do not accept that 'all' registrants in FE are public figures. They are certainly role models within the context of the workplace, but to suggest that they are public figures, we believe, is stretching that definition beyond its limits. They certainly become public figures within the definition of the Concise Oxford Dictionary, if they are subject to a Fitness to Practice hearing in Wales.

- *FE staff should be mindful that their actions may impact on their professionalism - i.e. tapping a student on the shoulder with a piece of paper is not professional, shouting at a student is not professional, social media use can impact on your employment (please see attached advice for members)*
- *FE staff who agree a settlement with their former employer should take advice on a clause to be included allowing the disclosure of evidence should the EWC hold their own investigation*
- *FE staff should be aware that if a referral is made to the EWC they should act in a timely manner to ensure they are fully represented. This includes maintaining their membership with UCU.*

Social media tips

Social networking sites are an increasingly used tool for maintaining contact with family and friends, job searching and the general sharing of information. However, your online behaviour is very rarely private and can impact on your employment and lead to disciplinary action.

If you are using social networking sites the following tips should help to keeping your information safe

- **DO** read your organisation's social media policy
- **DO** use a disclaimer if that is what your organisation's policy recommends
- **DO** keep your privacy settings at the highest level
- **DO** delete inappropriate pictures, even from your memory lists as once an old post comes back onto your timeline it makes it current.
- **DO** check the authenticity of posts that you share
- **DO** be aware that when posting to other's pages this will change the privacy settings of the post making it more viewable
- **DO** ask friends to be mindful when 'tagging' you in posts

- **DO NOT** run a subject page from your personal account – speak to your IT department, they can set one up for you
- **DO NOT** affiliate yourself with the organisation you work for
- **DO NOT** use social media as a way of communicating with students
- **DO NOT** post anything that might be considered controversial and/ or offensive or illegal. (Teachers should represent impartiality and be of guidance to all young people, independently from their background)
- **DO NOT** discuss students, colleagues or your organisation in your posts

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