NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND

CODE OF ETHICS AND BUSINESS CONDUCT
FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND
MAY 2007

Director's Introduction

The Department of Finance Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies makes provision for a Code of Business Conduct for Employees. Under the Code of Practice for State Bodies, the Chairman of the Board of the National Library of Ireland (NLI) is required each year to confirm to the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism that appropriate procedures and controls are in place in the NLI. This includes confirmation that a Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Employees is in place and is being adhered to.

The Board of the National Library has adopted its own Code of Conduct and Corporate Governance primarily to govern Board activities but also to provide clear guidance to Board members and to employees of the NLI in their dealings with the public, with other public agencies, with contractors and other service providers or traders.

The NLI Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Employees sets out in written form the agreed standards of principle and practice which inform the conduct of employees of NLI.

The Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Employees is complementary to other procedures, policies, rules and regulations, in particular HR policies including those relating to attendance, sick leave, annual leave etc, and each employee's conditions of employment, and it does not affect obligations under the legislation underpinning employment or other relevant legislation e.g. Equality Act, Ethics in Public Office Acts, Data Protection Acts etc. The Code applies to all employees of the NLI whether employed on a permanent, temporary, part-time basis or on work experience of any kind.

It is not feasible to have a code of practice which will specifically provide for all situations which may arise. Staff of the National Library should bear in mind, therefore, that it is primarily their responsibility to ensure that all of their activities, whether covered specifically or otherwise in this document, are governed by the ethical and other considerations implicit in it.

Noting of Code of Conduct by Employees

Each employee is requested to sign a Declaration of Understanding, set out on the final page of this document, that they have read and noted the Code of Ethics and Business Conduct. When signed, the Declaration of Understanding should be returned to:-

Denise Kennedy, Head of Human Resources, 4 Kildare Street, Dublin 2

Aongus Ó hAonghusa
Director
National Library of Ireland

Objectives

Consistent with the National Library Board's Code of Conduct and Corporate Governance, the objectives of this Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for employees are:

- To establish an agreed set of ethical principles guiding the National Library in its work, for the benefit of Library members and staff, reviewing them from time to time to ensure that they meet or exceed the standards of public service performance required by statute; and

- To promote and maintain public confidence and trust in the Library and its work.

Principles

The following principles and practices inform this Code of Conduct:

That the staff of the National Library will behave with integrity by ensuring:

- That they are not involved in any outside employment or business interests which are in conflict or in potential conflict with the business of the Library and that they inform the HR Department if they are or intend to be engaged in any such outside business or employment activity;

- That they attend at work as required and do not absent themselves from work without proper authorization;

- That they avoid the giving or receiving of corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment or benefits which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgement on business transactions;

- That purchasing goods or services is conducted in accordance with best business practice;

- That any financial reports and statements accurately reflect the Library's performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading;

- That the Library's resources or a staff member's association with the National Library are not used for personal gain.

That the staff of the National Library will promote transparency and accountability by:

- Complying with relevant statutory provisions (such as data protection legislation, Freedom of Information Acts);

- Ensuring that access is readily available to general non-confidential information relating to the Library's activities;

- Subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information legislation, ensuring that they maintain the confidentiality of information obtained by virtue of their position, respecting, in particular, the confidentiality of sensitive information such as commercially sensitive information, personal information, and information received in confidence (consistent with the requirement for transparency in the distribution of public funds);

- Undertaking appropriate prior consultation with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest.

That the staff of the National Library will promote loyalty, propriety, and fairness by acknowledging in their dealings with the public, private and voluntary sectors and in their dealings with each other:

- The duty to conform to highest standards of business ethics;

- The responsibility to be loyal to the Library and fully committed to promoting its purposes and interests;

- The need to comply with employment equality and equal status legislation;

- The need to ensure that members of the public have their business affairs dealt with sympathetically, efficiently and promptly and that members of the public are dealt with in a respectful manner;

- A commitment to fairness and equality of treatment in all of their dealings with the public including compliance with the public service principles of quality customer service, set out in Appendix 1;

- The need to ensure that their standard of dress is appropriate to their work environment;

- The need to show due respect for their colleagues at work. Staff should ensure that their behaviour towards other colleagues is appropriate to the work place. Staff have a legal duty not to discriminate against colleagues on the basis of their gender, race, sexual orientation, membership of the travelling community, disability, age, marital status, family status and religious belief. All staff are required to support a positive working environment by observing and supporting the National Library's anti-harassment, sexual harassment and bullying policy.

That the National Library and its staff will meet its statutory and regulatory obligations by:

- Complying with detailed tendering and procurement procedures as well as with prescribed levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure;

- Introducing controls to prevent fraud, including adequate controls to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to claiming of expenses for business travel.

That the National Library will behave responsibly as an employer and a public agency by:

- Placing the highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of employees;

- Circulating this Code of Ethics and Business Conduct and information on disclosure of interests to all relevant employees for their retention, ensuring that their implications are fully understood, and that any explanation of their current or potential impacts, or ethical considerations arising from their implementation, have been fully discussed;

- Reviewing this Code on a regular basis.

APPENDIX 1

Principles of Quality Customer Service for Customers and Clients of the Public Service contained in the Department of Finance Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

In its dealings with the public, the National Library will:

Quality Service Standards

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

Equality/Diversity

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

Physical Access

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with specific needs.

Information

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication. Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

Timeliness and Courtesy

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer.
Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

Complaints

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

Appeals

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Consultation and Evaluation

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

Choice

Provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

Official Languages Equality

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Better Co-ordination

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to the delivery of public services.

Internal Customer

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.