

PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff engaged to work with Patrick School of the Arts (PSA) students are expected to commit to the following professional standards, which are designed to ensure a safe, respectful, and professional learning environment for all students and staff.

These guidelines exist to protect students and to support staff in maintaining clear professional boundaries while working at PSA.

OBLIGATIONS

Teachers and staff are required to adhere to the following principles:

- Acting in a manner that promotes confidence in the integrity and professionalism of PSA
 - Exercising reasonable care, skill, and judgement at all times
 - Treating students, parents, and colleagues with courtesy, sensitivity, and respect
 - Protecting students from physical, emotional, and psychological harm
 - Maintaining appropriate professional boundaries at all times
 - Ensuring learning environments are safe, inclusive, and age-appropriate
 - Acting against any form of harassment or unlawful discrimination.
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PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT IN THE CLASSROOM

Teachers demonstrate professional conduct by:

1. Clearly explaining materials, themes, content, and exercises prior to their use in class, including but not limited to:
 - Scripts and characters
 - Partner work and choreography
 - Fight choreography or simulated violence
 - Potentially challenging or triggering content
 2. Establishing clear boundaries, expectations, and processes before engaging students in any such material
 3. Addressing moments of intimacy or physical contact with specific students prior to rehearsing, planning, or undertaking the action or exercise. Note that when referring to the MEAA Intimacy guidelines often used in Performing Arts practices, that these are appropriate for adult students only. Children should not be engaged in scenes or content of a sexually explicit nature under any circumstances.
 4. Ensuring all physical contact is appropriate, necessary, and directly related to the educational content being delivered
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PHYSICAL CONTACT AND CONSENT

Teachers and staff must:

- Never touch a student without prior, informed consent
 - Never instruct one student to touch another without clearly outlining the action and receiving consent from all parties involved
 - Always provide students with the opportunity to decline participation in any activity, exercise, or content without explanation
 - Allow students who opt out to suggest alternative materials or actions where appropriate
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APPROPRIATE MATERIALS

Teachers are responsible for:

- Assessing whether all materials, themes, language, and actions are appropriate for the age and cohort of students
 - Modifying or replacing content where necessary to ensure student safety and wellbeing
 - Never engage children in scenes of a sexually explicit nature
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PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES AND COMMUNICATION

Teachers maintain professional boundaries by:

- Never engaging in discussions of a personal nature with students
 - Ensuring that if a student raises a personal matter, another person is present and the matter is immediately referred to a PSA full-time staff member
 - Understanding that it is not the role of teaching staff to counsel or manage personal issues under any circumstances
 - Ensuring all communication with students remains professional at all times
 - Not responding to private messages from students or parents regarding matters other than approved lessons or payments
 - Immediately reporting any inappropriate or private communications to PSA staff as per complaint handling procedures
 - Never giving gifts to students for any reason
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SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

Teachers and staff must:

- Maintain professional boundaries on all social media platforms
- Avoid private or informal communication with students via social media
- Report any concerning or inappropriate online contact to PSA staff as soon as possible

PROHIBITED CONDUCT

Under no circumstances may teachers or staff:

- Engage in a sexual or romantic relationship with a student
 - Engage in any behaviour that could be perceived as exploitative, inappropriate, or unsafe
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DISCIPLINARY POLICIES

Where a staff member or contractor is alleged to have breached the Code of Conduct, PSA will respond in a fair, timely, and proportionate manner, in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

1. Initial Breach - Verbal Warning

If a staff member or contractor is found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct, the matter will be addressed by the HR Manager. The individual will be issued a **formal verbal warning**, clearly outlining:

- The nature of the breach
- The expected standard of conduct
- Any corrective actions required
- The consequences of further breaches

A record of the verbal warning will be documented and placed on file.

2. Subsequent Breach - Written Warning

If a further breach of the Code of Conduct occurs following a verbal warning:

The individual will receive a **formal written warning** issued by the HR Manager. The written warning will detail:

- The breach or breaches that have occurred
- Reference to previous warnings
- Required actions or improvements
- A timeframe for review, where applicable
- Notice that continued non-compliance may result in termination of employment or contract
- A copy of the written warning will be retained on the individual's personnel file.

3. Ongoing Non-Compliance - Termination

If a third breach of the Code of Conduct occurs:

- The individual's employment or contract with PSA will be **terminated**

- Termination will be carried out in accordance with relevant employment legislation and contractual obligations

Serious or Significant Misconduct

Notwithstanding the above process, PSA reserves the right to take immediate action in cases of **serious or significant misconduct**.

Where conduct is deemed to pose a risk to student safety, wellbeing, or the reputation of PSA, or constitutes a serious breach of trust, policy, or law, **employment or contractual engagement may be terminated immediately**, without prior warning.

Examples of serious misconduct may include, but are not limited to:

- Breaches involving student safety or welfare
- Inappropriate conduct towards a student
- Serious professional boundary violations
- Harassment, discrimination, or abuse
- Illegal or unethical behaviour
- Failure to comply with child safety obligations

Procedural Fairness

PSA is committed to procedural fairness. Where appropriate:

- Individuals will be informed of the alleged breach
- Individuals may be given an opportunity to respond before a final decision is made
- All matters will be handled confidentially and respectfully

Record Keeping

- All warnings, investigations, and disciplinary actions will be formally documented by the HR manager
- Records will be maintained securely in accordance with privacy and record-keeping requirements