**University of the People**

**Sustainability-Integrated Code of Conduct for UoPeople**

**BUS 5115-01 Business Law, Ethics and Social Responsibility AY2025-T2**

**Group Project 0012B**

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# Abstract

The Code of Ethics for the University of the People (UoPeople) Faculty and Staff has been created by Group Project 0012B consultants as a foundational document that aims to foster ethical behavior, integrity, and professionalism within the institution. It is a framework that should guide faculty and staff toward following principles and standards. The consultants identified the key components in this paper and included them as part of the Code of Ethics to uphold the values and principles of the UoPeople.

# Section 1: One Page Rationale

In developing our Code of Ethics, we engaged in numerous discussions. In the process, some items were adopted, and some were excluded. This section presents the results of those discussions.

The consultants decided to include discrimination and harassment because they are important for UoPeople. Because this institution promotes an inclusive and secure environment based on respect. Employees are encouraged to report wrongdoing to keep the institutional environment healthy and safe. UoPeople must support ethical conduct and accountability by adhering to compliance and legal standards, safeguarding its reputation, and mitigating potential legal consequences.

Furthermore, another important section was confidentiality and privacy of information, as it is important always to protect sensitive information to safeguard not only the rights of students but also faculty and staff. Conflict of interest should also be included in all codes of ethics. It is beneficial and important to all industries as it promotes transparency in the decision-making processes and discourages bias or unethical conduct. Hence, an environment of fairness encourages a culture of openness and accountability that protects individuals who raise concerns. For that reason, non-retaliation is also a section that the consultants agreed to include. Lastly, the section on consequences of violation was also included to encourage everyone to stay within the boundaries of ethics and the established code.

Although we referred to the code of ethics established by the Academy of International Business (2018), it is specifically designed for academic publishing. It may not directly correspond with the needs and objectives of the UoPeople community. The consultants acknowledged the significance of elements like discrimination, harassment, and enforcement procedures but decided to exclude sections that were not directly relevant to UoPeople's faculty and staff. The consultants concentrated on elements that tackle the specific ethical challenges and considerations at UoPeople, ensuring that the code of ethics aligns with the institution's values, commitments, and operational context.

The components discussed are fundamental to the UoPeople Faculty and Staff Code of Ethics. The code establishes a framework for ethical behavior while fostering accountability, integrity, and a culture of trust. Therefore, it is essential to recognize UoPeople's dedication to maintaining values and fulfilling its mission with integrity and excellence.

# Section 2: Ethics for Organization

Types of Ethics

The Code of Conduct draws upon several key ethical frameworks, as shown below.

1. **Professional Ethics:** These emphasize the responsibilities and obligations of individuals in their professional roles. For educators and staff at UoPeople, this includes:
   1. **Academic Integrity:** Upholding honesty in teaching and research, ensuring fair evaluation, and preventing plagiarism.
   2. **Student-Centeredness:** Prioritizing student needs, providing high-quality education, and fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment.
   3. **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Protect student and staff data using relevant regulations like FERPA.
2. **Organizational Ethics:** This focuses on the ethical conduct of the organization itself. Key aspects include:
   1. **Transparency and Accountability:** Maintaining open and honest communication with stakeholders and being accountable for all actions.
   2. **Conflict of Interest:** Identifying and managing potential conflicts of interest to ensure fair and impartial decision-making.
   3. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Fostering a workplace environment that values and respects diversity among all employees and students.
   4. **Environmental Sustainability:** Considering the environmental impact of university operations and promoting sustainable practices where possible.

## UoPeople: Mission & Values

UoPeople's mission is to "make education accessible to everyone, everywhere." (UoPeople, n/d) This Code of Conduct must uphold this core value by the following.

**Accessibility:** Ensuring equal access to education for all students, regardless of their background, location, or financial situation. This includes providing accommodations for students with disabilities (Temmyguru, 2024).

**Inclusivity:** Fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment that respects and values all students and staff, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other protected characteristic.

**Innovation:** Encouraging innovative teaching methods and technologies that enhance the learning experience and improve accessibility.

**Integrity:** Upholding the highest honesty, transparency, and ethical conduct standards in all university operations.

**Student-Centeredness:** Prioritizing student success and well-being in all decisions and actions.

# Section 3: Sustainability

## Introduction to Sustainability in the Context of UoPeople

Sustainability is critical for any organization committed to ethical practices and long-term impact. At the University of the People (UoPeople), sustainability transcends environmental concerns to encompass economic, social, and institutional responsibilities. By incorporating sustainability into the Code of Conduct, UoPeople reinforces its commitment to building an equitable, resilient, and resource-efficient organization that supports its objective of providing accessible and high-quality education (University of the People, 2024).

Sustainability at UoPeople is recognized as the responsible use of resources—whether environmental, human, or institutional—to ensure the continuity of its operations and services without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Epstein & Buhovac, 2014), a concept that was influenced by the Brundtland Report.

This section outlines the expectations, commitments, and actions related to sustainability for all UoPeople faculty and staff.

## Guiding Principles of Sustainability in the Code of Conduct

1. Environmental Responsibility

Faculty and staff must consider and practice resource conservation in our daily operations, as acts of minimizing waste, reducing energy usage, and adopting environmentally friendly technologies are responsible and feasible (Knupp, 2023). At UoPeople, we are encouraged to utilize digital platforms for documentation, communication, and education to reduce the institution's carbon footprint.

These adaptations significantly decrease environmental impacts by reducing reliance on paper and energy-intensive physical infrastructure (Sheth et al., 2010). Sustainable procurement practices are encouraged whenever possible, prioritizing vendors who align with eco-friendly and ethical practices.

1. Economic Sustainability

Employees must support UoPeople's commitment to financial responsibility by guaranteeing cost-effective resource allocation, eliminating unnecessary expenses, and increasing operational efficiency. Faculty and staff should consider long-term institutional sustainability and support attempts to balance budgetary health and educational access. According to research, academic institutions' financial sustainability supports their ability to provide quality services over time (Clark, 2014).

1. Social Sustainability

UoPeople employees and instructors must provide an inclusive, supportive, collaborative work environment that embraces diversity and equity. Promoting open discourse, respect for opposing viewpoints, and ongoing professional growth is critical to ensuring a sustainable workforce. Faculty and staff must follow ethical principles when interacting with students, colleagues, and stakeholders, stressing respect, empathy, and accountability (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003).

1. Educational Sustainability

According to Tilbury (2011), incorporating sustainability principles into teaching and curriculum is essential for fostering a comprehensive understanding of global and local issues among students. This is why, at our institution, staff and students are taught to embrace innovations that enhance the quality and accessibility of education while ensuring the longevity of its delivery systems. Therefore, applying digital tools, for instance, supports educational access and sustainability goals (Sheth et al., 2010).

## Implementation and Accountability

1. Compliance and Continuous Improvement
   1. Teachers and staff must adhere to these sustainability principles while actively seeking ways to enhance their practices.
   2. Any activities or choices incompatible with UoPeople's sustainability goals should be reported immediately to the appropriate department or authority.
2. Monitoring and Reporting
   1. Scheduled and random reviews will be used to assess actionable adherence to sustainability standards, where updates and revisions are made to the Code of Conduct to address emerging challenges and opportunities. Our accountability stewards will be paramount in achieving this success.
3. Training and Awareness
   1. To align with UoPeople's sustainability goals, ongoing training will be provided to faculty and staff. This training will equip them with the knowledge and tools to implement best practices effectively.

## Exclusions and Limitations

The sustainability principle in this Code of Conduct is unique to UoPeople's activities and prohibits personal hobbies unrelated to work-related tasks. Furthermore, while UoPeople believes in social and environmental responsibility, the organization recognizes that not all recommended practices can be implemented immediately due to resource restrictions (Brown et al. 2005). Within these constraints, teachers and staff should prioritize realistic solutions.

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# Section 4: Specific Policies

Discrimination  
The University of the People (UoPeople) is committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment and working towards creating more diverse and equitable learning communities (Writers Of UoPeople, 2024). Under the National Apprenticeship Act of 1937, discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or any other protected characteristic is strictly prohibited (U.S. Department of Labor, n/d). All members of the university community must uphold the values of respect and equality in their interactions. Infractions may lead to disciplinary consequences, which can range from warnings to expulsion, depending on the severity of the misconduct.

Harassment  
Harassment, whether verbal, physical, or digital, undermines the core values of UoPeople. This includes any unwelcome behavior that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment for students, faculty, or staff (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018). Examples include but are not limited to bullying, sexual harassment, and cyber harassment. UoPeople enforces a zero-tolerance policy for such behaviors, with consequences that may include suspension, termination of enrollment, or legal action.

Confidentiality  
The confidentiality of academic records, communications, and sensitive information is a cornerstone of UoPeople's operations. Students and staff must ensure that all shared information, particularly within team projects and academic discussions, remains private unless explicitly authorized for disclosure (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, n/d). Breaches of confidentiality will be met with corrective actions, including possible suspension or removal from the program.

## Privacy of Information

Protecting the privacy of personal and academic data is a top priority. UoPeople complies with global privacy standards, such as GDPR, known as the General Data Protection Regulation, to ensure that all student, faculty, and staff information is stored and processed. Unauthorized access, sharing, or misuse of private information will be considered a grave offense, warranting immediate investigation and disciplinary measures (General Data Protection Regulation, 2018).

Conflict of Interest  
To maintain integrity and trust within the UoPeople community, all members must disclose any real or perceived conflicts of interest. This includes but is not limited to financial, professional, or personal relationships that may compromise impartiality (U.S. Office of Government Ethics, 2020). Members must promptly report conflicts of interest to the appropriate university authority. Failure to disclose conflicts may result in disciplinary actions, including removal from decision-making roles or dismissal from the university.

## Non-Retaliation

UoPeople upholds a strict non-retaliation policy to protect individuals who report misconduct or participate in investigations. Retaliatory actions, such as intimidation, threats, or discrimination, against individuals who report violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated. Retaliation will result in severe penalties, including possible expulsion or termination of employment (American Psychological Association, 2017).

Consequences of Violations  
Violations of the Code of Conduct undermine the mission and values of UoPeople. Disciplinary measures will depend on the nature and severity of the misconduct and may include:

1. Warnings: Issued for minor infractions as a corrective measure.
2. Probation: Temporary restrictions placed on privileges within the UoPeople community.
3. Suspension: Temporary removal from academic or professional roles at the university.
4. Expulsion: Permanent removal from the university community.
5. Legal Action: Pursued in cases involving criminal behavior or violations of applicable laws.

UoPeople ensures a sustainable, respectful, and productive academic environment by adhering to these policies.

# Conclusion

The Code of Ethics for the University of the People (UoPeople) Faculty and Staff is a comprehensive document that outlines the ethical standards, sustainability principles, and specific policies that guide the conduct of all employees and instructors. By integrating sustainability into the Code of Conduct, UoPeople demonstrates its commitment to responsible practices that support the institution's long-term success and impact. The Code of Ethics serves as a foundational framework for fostering a culture of integrity, respect, and accountability within the UoPeople community. It is essential for all faculty and staff to familiarize themselves with the Code of Ethics and uphold its principles in their daily interactions and decision-making processes. By adhering to these ethical standards, UoPeople can continue to provide accessible, high-quality education while promoting sustainability, diversity, and excellence in all its endeavors.

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