

**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

To principal, chief executive and head of human resources

22 March 2011

Dear colleague

**IfL Code of Professional Practice – and Action for Employers when Recruiting**

I am writing to update you on the activities of the Institute for Learning (IfL), in particular those which relate to the Code of Professional Practice (the Code) which gives a service to the sector and the public. I also want to inform you about a recent case hearing relating to a serious matter (see below at point 2).

**1 What is the Code of Professional Practice?**

Like other professional bodies, IfL, as the professional body for teachers, trainers, tutors and trainee teachers across the further education and skills sector, has developed a Code of Professional Practice (the Code). The Code outlines the professional behaviours expected of our members – for the benefit of learners, employers, the profession and the public. IfL members agree to abide by the Code when they join and throughout their membership.

Membership of IfL and adherence to the Code provides public assurance that a member is committed to ensuring the highest standards of practice and recognises their obligations as a professional teacher, trainer, tutor or trainee teacher. Most IfL members have no difficulties abiding by the code, but as in other professions, there is a small number who sometimes act in a way which threatens public confidence and poses a risk.

**2 What hearings have been held to consider allegations of breaches of the Code?**

Since the introduction of the Code in 2008, IfL has investigated over 120 concerns relating to our members. The majority of these have been dealt with through a formal letter of advice to the member concerned, a proportionate response to the allegation and findings. More serious matters have progressed to full hearings of a professional practice committee with several more hearings listed for the near future.

Professional practice committees sit in public and are made up of a mixture of IfL members and lay people who are drawn from a variety of backgrounds and are trained for this important role. As is the case with many other professional bodies, the committee can impose a range of sanctions upon IfL members with the primary concern being the maintenance of public confidence in our members, the teaching and training profession, and the public interest. All decisions are made by the committee with the assistance of an independent legal adviser.

Decisions taken by professional practice committees take into account the nature of the breach of the Code, with the purpose of any sanction being threefold - to support and promote expected standards and thereby protect the reputation of the profession; returning the teacher to safe and competent practice wherever possible; and crucially the protection of learners and the public.

The protection of the public interest sometimes means that IfL has to move quickly to achieve that aim. The professional practice committee has the power to make an interim suspension order when it is established there is an immediate risk either to members of the public or the member themselves. The effect of such an order is **to suspend a member from membership of the IfL, which means that person cannot legally teach in the further education sector**. By their very nature, such measures are likely to be rare but they are unfortunately necessary, particularly in a sector where some members have more than one employer and some may move between different employers fairly often.

**The professional practice committee has recently made an interim suspension order.** An IfL member has been charged with a very serious criminal offence, relating to an alleged abuse of trust. A professional practice committee made an interim suspension order which means that, pending the full hearing of the case, the teacher is suspended from IfL membership. The decision of the committee can be found on our website, along with all previous professional practice committee decisions.

### **3 What is the relationship between the IfL Code and the college or provider's disciplinary process?**

Most employers have robust procedures in place locally to deal with concerns about employees. Furthermore, IfL is committed to openness, fairness and transparency in relation to its disciplinary functions and therefore employers of any member about whom we receive a complaint are engaged as soon as possible and kept updated throughout the process. IfL's role complements, rather than duplicates the role of the employer and its disciplinary procedures.

### **4 What should I do to refer possible breaches of the Code to IfL, and to check people I employ as teachers or trainers?**

We each have a part to play in maintaining public confidence in the teaching and training profession. It is vital that if you become aware of potential breaches of the Code that a referral is made to the IfL. If referrals are not made then there is a risk that the reputation of the profession and the sector as a whole can be damaged, and possibly learners and the public interest put at risk.

In the best interests of your learners and your organisation, when you are employing a teacher or trainer we advise you to arrange to check the outcomes of IfL's hearings on the website, as part of your routine screening processes. This information can be found at <http://www.ifl.ac.uk/membership/professional-standards>, along with further details about how the disciplinary process works. We also recommend that you check the outcomes of the General Teaching Council (GTC) hearings which can be found at [http://www.gtce.org.uk/regulation/disciplinary\\_orders/](http://www.gtce.org.uk/regulation/disciplinary_orders/).

I have discussed this letter in advance with a number of partner bodies at chief executive level, including 157, Skills Funding Agency, YPLA, ALP, AoC, NATSPEC, NIACE, Hoxex, Landex, the SFCF and the mixed economy group of colleges. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about how IfL and employers in the sector could further work together in these matters please contact the IfL Registrar, Dr Elizabeth Brookfield, or email [practice@ifl.ac.uk](mailto:practice@ifl.ac.uk).

Yours sincerely

Toni Fazaeli  
**Chief Executive**