



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

**THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS  
FOR UGANDA PUBLIC SERVICE**

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## **PREFACE**

This Code of conduct and Ethics for Uganda Public Service, sets out standards of behaviour for Public Officers in the Uganda Public Service.

It is designed to ensure the impartiality, objectivity, transparency, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of Public Officers when performing their duties. It is intended to guide Public Officers in their behaviour and how they relate to each other and the public.

While there are ethical obligations and Codes of Conduct specific to each profession within the Public Service like, Education, Medical, Judicial, Engineering, Accounting and so on, the Public Service Code of conduct and Ethics is based on ethical standards or guiding principles which apply to the entire Public Service.

This Code has been reviewed to improve accessibility and response to the new demands placed on the Public Service arising from the Constitution, democratisation, decentralisation, liberalisation and reform of Public Service. It also addresses the global trends in Public Administration that emphasise customer care, value for money and professionalism.

In essence, the Code of conduct and Ethics shall be imbued to promote good governance, transparency and accountability among Public Officers and improve the image of the Public Service.

Public Officers are enjoined to conform to the Code of conduct and Ethics and promote its observance. Likewise, customers of the Public Service and the general public are encouraged to access the Code of conduct and Ethics and report any behaviour by Public Officers that breach this Code.

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# **CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS FOR THE UGANDA PUBLIC SERVICE**

## **1.0 PREAMBLE**

The Public Service as the implementing arm of Government policies and programmes is charged with the responsibility of providing timely, high quality and cost effective services to the nation. To achieve this, it must have public officers who are loyal, committed, results-oriented, customer-centred and observe a high standard of conduct in both official and private life. The existence of a Code of Conduct and Ethics for public officers to enhance performance and reflect a good image of the Public Service and promote good governance is of paramount importance.

The aim of this Code of conduct and Ethics is to provide general guidance to Public Officers in their relationships and dealings with their clients and the general public. It compliments existing laws, regulations, guidelines and professional Codes of Conduct issued over the years for the purpose of prescribing acceptable standard of behaviour and conduct in the Public Service. Provision has also been made for appropriate sanctions to be applied where a Public Officer's conduct is found to be inconsistent with the Code.

## **2.0 APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

### **2.1 Application of the Code**

- (i) This Code of conduct and Ethics is applicable to persons holding or acting in any public office in the Public Service of Uganda.
- (ii) The Code shall be reinforced by professional Codes of Conduct and Ethics.

- (iii) Information on the Code shall be made available to all Public Officers.
- (iv) All Public Officers shall consciously subscribe to the Code of conduct and Ethics by swearing the Official Oath and the Oath of Secrecy prescribed in the Uganda Government Standing Orders.

## 2.2 Interpretation

In this Code, unless the context otherwise requires:-

- Bribe** Means any gratification as an inducement to or a reward for or otherwise on account of any public officer for doing or forbidding to do anything in respect of any matter or transaction whatsoever, actual or proposed in which the public body is concerned. It is anything offered or given to or given out by a public officer to gain favour and influence in a particular case.
- Code** Means the Code of conduct and Ethics for the Uganda Public Service.
- Conduct** Means behaviour, attitude and character exhibited by a public officer within and outside the working environment
- Conflict of interest** Refers to a situation where a public Officer has got to make a decision between his or her personal interest and public interest.
- Currency-Point** Is equivalent to twenty thousand shillings.
- Customer** Means a person, whether external or internal, whom a public officer serves or interacts with in the course of his or her official duties.

<b>Employer</b>	Means the Central Government or a Local Government.
<b>Ethics</b>	Means a Code of morals applicable in the Public Service.
<b>Family Member</b>	Means a Public Officer's Spouse, biological children or legally adopted children.
<b>Gift</b>	Means any present, donation, grant or favour whether monetary or in kind or any other gain of a personal nature given as an appreciation after a service has been rendered.
<b>Interdiction</b>	Means Temporary stoppage of a public officer from exercising the powers and functions of his or her office to pave way for investigation of a case.
<b>Professional Code</b>	Means the Code that applies to a specific profession in the Public Service.
<b>Public Service</b>	Means Service in a civil capacity of the central Government or of a Local Government.
<b>Public Officer</b>	Means any person holding or acting in an office in the Public Service.

**Public Office** Means an office in the Public Service.

**Responsible Officer** Means a Permanent Secretary or Head of Department under which the Officer is serving or the Chief Administrative Officer or Town Clerk of a local Government.

**Sexual Harassment** Means conduct of a sexual nature that affect the dignity of women and men, which is unwelcome, irritating, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient. Such a conduct may be explicit, verbal or non-verbal or implicit and creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for the recipient.

### 3.0 **GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS**

The Code of conduct and Ethics is based on the following principles: -

**Accountability** A Public Officer shall hold office in public trust and shall be personally responsible for his or her actions or inactions.

**Decency** A Public Officer shall present himself or herself in a respectable manner that generally conforms to morally accepted standards and values of society.

**Diligence** A public Officer shall be careful and assiduous in carrying out his or her official duties.

**Discipline** A Public Officer shall behave in a manner as to conform

with the rules, regulations and the Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Public Service generally and codes of professional conduct for the specific professions.

**Effectiveness** A Public Officer shall strive to achieve the intended results in terms of quality and quantity in accordance with set targets and performance standards set for service delivery.

**Efficiency** A Public Officer shall endeavour to optimally use resources including time in the attainment of organisational objectives, targets or tasks.

**Impartiality** In carrying out public business, a Public Officer shall give fair and unbiased treatment to all customers irrespective of gender, race, religion, disability or ethnic background. A Public Officer shall make choices based solely on merit.

**Integrity** A Public Officer shall be honest and open in conducting public affairs.

**Loyalty** A Public Officer shall be committed to the Policies and programmes of the Government both at national and local levels.

**Professionalism** A Public Officer shall adhere to the professional codes of conduct, exhibit high degree of competence and best practices as prescribed for in a given profession in the Public Service.

**Selflessness** A Public Officer shall not put his or her own interest before the public interest. He or she should not take decisions in order to gain financial and other benefits.



**Transparency** A Public Officer shall be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions taken. He or she must always be prepared when called upon to give reasons for the decisions he or she has taken.

## **4.0 WORK ETHICS**

### **4.1 Attendance to duty**

- (i) A Public Officer shall observe the official working days in accordance with the regulations and shall always be available for official duty when called upon.
- (ii) A Public Officer shall without exception perform his or her duty in a manner that conveys professionalism, respect and conforms to morally accepted standards.
- (iii) A Public Officer shall commit working hours to official duties.
- (iv) A Public Officer in position of authority shall exercise such authority with due diligence and trust and shall demonstrate a high standard of Performance of duty and conduct.
- (v) A Public Officer shall not hold two jobs at any point in time (moonlighting), and shall not draw two salaries from government payrolls.
- (vi) A Public Officer shall be results-oriented and committed to the performance of his or her duties.
- (vii) A Public Officer shall set clear standards of performance that customers can reasonably expect.

## 4.2 Time management

- (i) A Public Officer shall have strict regard to the working hours. He or She shall not come late to office meetings and Official functions without reasonable cause.
- (ii) A Public Officer shall endeavour to accomplish planned activities on time. He or she shall desist from engaging in behaviour or conduct that disrupts or interferes with the work of other officers, such as, but not limited to: -
  - (a) Being lazy and idle at work.
  - (b) Full time reading newspapers, keeping the radio loud as to disrupt concentration, playing computer games or surfing the Internet irresponsibly. The only exceptions are training-related Television and video programmes, Video Conferencing, Open and Distance Learning.
  - (c) Transacting private business in office and during office hours.
  - (d) Engaging in private conversation and gossip during working hours
- (iii) Unless otherwise stated, the official working hours are:-
  - Monday – Friday: 8.00a.m – 12.45p.m
  - 2.00p.m – 5.00 p.m

### **4.3 Absence from duty**

- i) A Public Officer shall seek and obtain permission from his or her supervisor to be absent from duty. Permission shall not be unreasonably denied or granted.
- ii) A Public Officer shall, during official working hours, report his or her absence from office to his or her immediate supervisor or relevant persons.

### **4.4 Sexual Harassment**

- (i) A Public Officer shall avoid unethical and unbecoming behaviour such as use of rude, abusive and obscene language, indecent dressing, hard supervision and sexual suggestive gestures which constitute sexual harassment and hence a violation of human rights.
- (ii) A Public Officer shall not subject others or be subjected to conduct of a sexual nature affecting his or her dignity, which is unwelcome, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient.
- (iii) A sexually suggestive and offensive behaviour may manifest itself in such forms:
  - (a) An employee being forced to choose between acceding to sexual demands or losing job benefits (sexual blackmail).
  - (b) Verbal and non-verbal sexually offensive behaviour exhibited by colleagues (or even customers).
- (iv) A Public Officer who is subjected to sexual harassment overtures shall report such a case with the adduced evidence, where applicable, to the department of Government that is responsible for investigating civil and criminal offences with a view to obtaining redress.

- (v) A Public Officer who has lodged any complaint regarding sexual harassment using the established complaints procedure shall not be unduly victimised.
- (vi) Remedies for sexual harassment shall be those prescribed under the civil or criminal laws.

#### **4.5 Customer Care**

A Public Officer shall serve customers with fairness, transparency, promptness, clarity, respect and courtesy with a view to ensuring customer satisfaction and enhancing the image of the public service. Therefore, a Public Officer shall:-

- i) Serve every customer in a professional manner in accordance with the set standards.
- ii) Not discriminate or harass any customer and ensure that the services are available and applied equally to all.
- iii) Accord courtesy, empathy and fairness to all customers with special attention to persons with disabilities, the aged, sick and expectant mothers.
- iv) Respond to all customers' requests with promptness and clarity.
- v) Uphold teamwork and advance the public good for efficient service delivery.

#### **4.6 Conflict of interest**

- (i) In the execution of official government business, a public officer shall not put himself or herself in a position where his or her personal interest conflicts with his or her duties and responsibilities as a public officer. The Public Officer is required to inform his or her supervisor of the nature and extent of his or her interest.

- (ii) A Public Officer shall not either directly or indirectly enter into any contracts with Government. This is unethical since it affects the impartiality of a Public Officer and mars his or her reasonable judgement.
- (iii) Any Public Officer infringing this regulation shall be liable to disciplinary action.

## **4.7 Financial Credibility**

A Public Officer shall not engage in any arrangement that would cause him or her financial embarrassment, e.g. bankruptcy.

## **4.8 Communication of Information**

### ***4.8.1 Secrecy and Confidentiality***

- (i) A Public Officer is a custodian of official information that comes into his or her possession in the course of his or her duty in the Public Service. The release of such information must be guided by the laws relating to rights of access to information as prescribed in the Official Secrets Act and other relevant laws that may be enacted from time to time.
- (ii) A Public Officer shall continue to maintain secrecy and confidentiality of official information even after he or she has left the Public Service. Such information shall not at any point in time be used against the government.
- (iii) A Public Officer shall not at any time engage himself or herself in loose talk and make unguarded statements.

#### ***4.8.2 Publishing of official information***

- (i) A Public Officer shall not publish any official information in any document, article, book, play, film or otherwise without **explicit permission** from the Responsible Officer.
- (ii) For Royalties, Patents and Copyrights, a Public Officer shall notify his or her Responsible Officer if he or she creates what is believed to be an invention.

#### ***4.8.3 Communication to the Press***

- i) A Public Officer shall not communicate with the media on issues related to work or official policy without due permission from the authorizing officer.
- ii) Official information will be released to the media by officials who have been authorised to do so according to the laid down procedures.

#### ***4.8.4 Anonymous communication***

A Public Officer is prohibited from writing or disseminating anonymous and malicious letters and printing of graffiti intended to demean the image of Government or public institution, public officer or any other person.

#### ***4.8.5 Use of official information for personal gain***

A Public Officer shall not use official information acquired in the course of official duties to advance personal gain.

#### **4.8.6 Chain of Command**

A public officer aggrieved by the decisions or actions of his or her immediate supervisor shall follow the established disputes and settlement procedure in seeking redress.

#### **4.9 Removal, destruction or altering of records**

A Public Officer shall not, without the permission of the person immediately in charge, wilfully remove, destroy or alter public records from the office or section to which they belong or from any other office premises.

#### **4.10 Accountability**

A Public Officer shall hold office in public trust and shall be accountable to the public. He or She shall be accountable for all resources under him or her as follows:-

##### **4.10.1 Financial**

- i) A Public Officer shall ensure proper and frugal utilisation of public funds and value for money.
- ii) A Public Officer shall at all times promptly account for any financial resources entrusted to him or her in accordance with the Financial Regulations, Treasury Accounting Instructions (Part I Finance and Part II Stores) and Procurement Regulations.

##### **4.10.2 Public Property/Assets**

A Public Officer shall safeguard public property/assets entrusted to him or her and shall ensure that no damage, loss or misappropriation occurs in the process of procurement, storage, utilisation and disposal.

### **4.10.3 *Human Resource***

- (i) A Public Officer shall ensure that staff under his or her supervision have clear job descriptions and understand the scope of their work.
- (ii) A Public Officer shall, without favour, support staff under his or her supervision to enhance their competencies and self-development.
- (iii) A Public Officer shall ensure respect for subordinates, colleagues and supervisors.

### **4.10.4 *Administrative***

- (i) A Public Officer shall be accountable both for actions and inactions through normal tiers of authority and will adhere to meritocratic principles in decision making.
- (ii) Where a Public Officer believes that he or she is being required to act in any way which is inconsistent with this Code he or she shall refrain and report the matter to the next line manager.

## **4.11 Handling of Gifts, Bribes, Favours and Presents by Public Officers**

### **4.11.1 *Gifts***

- (i) A Public Officer or any member of his or her family shall not solicit or accept valuable gifts, presents, hospitality gratuity or favour or other benefits, if he or she has reason to believe that the acceptance of such gifts, presents and other benefits is bound to influence his or her judgement or action in a matter he or she is dealing with or will handle in future.



- (ii) A Public Officer shall not give such gifts to influence the judgement or action of another person in his or her favours.
- (iii) A Public Officer who, in the course of discharging his or her duties, receives any gifts or other benefits of a value of five currency points or above from any one source shall disclose that gift or benefit to government and shall be treated as a gift or donation or commission to Government.
- (iv) A Public Officer may accept or give a gift if the gift is in the nature of a souvenir or ornament and does not exceed five currency points in value.
- (v) A Public officer may accept personal gift or donation from a relative or personal friend for such an extent and on such occasion as is recognised by custom.

#### **4.11.2 Bribes**

- (i) A Public Officer who in his or her personal or official capacity, demands, accepts or gives any bribe or is an agent of any person who intends to influence him or her or another officer is in breach of this Code.
- (ii) A member of the public who corruptly gives promises or offers any gift or present or reward or gratuity (tips) to any Public Officer as an inducement is guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be dealt with in accordance with the laws of Uganda.

#### **4.12 Dress and Appearance**

For the promotion and projection of a good image of the Public Service, a Public Officer shall at all times dress appropriately and appear decent and respectable in a way that is generally acceptable.

#### ***4.12.1 Uniformed and non-uniformed.***

A Public Officer on duty shall dress in a way which is compatible with the generally accepted standards of propriety in the Uganda community. Where an officer is in part of the Service which is uniformed, such a uniform shall be provided at public expense. The officer shall wear the uniform during working hours, maintain and keep it clean.

#### ***4.12.2 Mode of Dress***

A Public Officer shall dress in a manner that is acceptable and as prescribed under the Standing Orders.

### **5.0 ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC OFFICERS IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES**

A Public Officer may participate in politics within the provisions of the law, rules and regulations. He or she shall avoid in particular:

- (i) Engaging in active politics.
- (ii) Canvassing political support for candidates.
- (iii) Participating in public political debates.
- (iv) Displaying party symbols

Where the Public Officer's conduct is found to be inconsistent with the code, the relevant laws and regulations shall apply.

## 6.0 SANCTIONS

Unethical conduct by Public Officers shall not be accepted in the Public Service. Sanctions for any breach of this Code shall be those prescribed by the Service Commissions Regulations, the Uganda Government Standing Orders and Administrative Instructions issued from time to time.

Depending on the gravity of the offence or misconduct, the following penalties shall apply:

- i) Warning or reprimand.
- ii) Suspension of increment.
- iii) Withholding or deferment of increment.
- iv) Stoppage of increment.
- v) Surcharge or refund.
- vi) Making good of the loss or damage of public property/assets.
- vii) Interdiction from duty with half pay.
- viii) Reduction in rank.
- ix) Removal from the Public Service in public interest.
- x) Dismissal

## **7.0 REWARDS**

- (i) An appropriate reward and recognition shall be accorded to a Public Officer who exhibits good ethical conduct.
- (ii) A reward shall be accorded to the Public Officer by the Responsible Officer or appropriate authority.
- (iii) The rewards shall include; but not limited to;-
  - (a) Word of recognition of good performance
  - (b) Open praise
  - (c) Challenging work assignments normally done by seniors
  - (d) Letter of commendation
  - (e) Presents
  - (f) Mementoes
  - (g) Certificate of merit
  - (h) Concessionary trips
  - (i) Cash bonuses
  - (j) Salary increments
  - (k) Award of Medals

## **8.0 OBLIGATIONS OF GOVERNMENT**

While a Public Officer is expected to observe the code, Government as the employer has the following obligations as laid down in the Constitution and operationalised by the relevant laws:-

- (i) To provide satisfactory, safe and healthy working environment.
- (ii) To ensure reasonable pay for public officers.
- (iii) To ensure equal pay for work of equal value.

- (iv) To ensure that employees are accorded rest and reasonable working hours and periods of holidays with pay as well as remuneration for Public holidays.
- (v) To enable every employee to practice his or her profession consistent with the professional Code of conduct and Ethics, the Constitution and other laws of Uganda.
- (v) To accord every Public Officer the right to join a Trade Union of his or her choice for the promotion and protection of his or her economic and social interests in accordance with the law.
- (vi) To protect Public Officers' rights, including the right to withdraw labour in accordance with the law.
- (vii) To accord protection to female officers during pregnancy and after birth.
- (ix) To provide Public Officers with the necessary tools, equipment and gear for performance of their duties.

### **STANDING ORDERS, CIRCULAR STANDING INSTRUCTIONS AND ESTABLISHMENT NOTICES**

All Public Officers must be familiar with all the operational regulations contained in the Standing Orders, Circular Standing Instructions and Establishment Notices issued from time to time. Deficiencies arising out of ignorance of the regulations at the place of work shall not be condoned for their infringement.

## **10.0 CONCLUSION**

The conduct of a Public Officer is expected to be beyond reproach. Public Officers are regarded as custodians of the public trust and as such, they are required to adhere to the highest standard of morality. Ethical rules require a Public Officer to be impartial, objective and manifest the highest degree of integrity in the conduct of public affairs. Public Officers are expected to refrain from using their Government positions for personal, private pecuniary or partisan gains.

It must be recognised that an ethical Public Service is an important component of good governance. It contributes to an efficient and effective Public Service and promotes the good image of the country.

The next stage in implementing this Code of conduct and Ethics is for Ministries, Departments and Local Governments to examine the services they provide to their customer, and develop a service charter that would specify the standards to be provided to the customers and members of the Public.