

## **AGCAS Code of Practice**

### **Introduction**

Member services of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) are required to sign up to the AGCAS Code of Practice which outlines core principles and standards for member services and their staff.

The AGCAS Code of Practice sets out to assure that:

1. Member services are student-centred and positively contribute to the student experience in their institutions.
2. There is a clear commitment to quality and continuous improvement.
3. Professional competence and development are core principles and that the values of dignity and respect, impartiality, confidentiality and access for all are upheld.
4. There is support for the professional association AGCAS.

The AGCAS Code of Practice refers to 'students' in the broadest sense, as member services deliver a wide range of services to students throughout their higher education (HE) journey – from pre-entry, throughout their studies and post-graduation.

In addition, 'stakeholders' are both internal within higher education institutions, such as students' unions, senior management, academics and administrators, as well as external, including employers and business intermediaries, students' parents/carers and sponsors, city regions, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and other quality assurance bodies.

### **Core Principles and Standards**

#### **1. Student-centeredness**

All member services will aim to develop a genuinely student-centred experience, formulating strategies and focusing operations for all their students, as well as with a clear view of the needs of targeted student groups. Member services will seek to enhance students' self-awareness and employability skills as well as encourage them to take responsibility for developing their own career pathway and explore options including further study and enterprise.

Member services will ensure that operating models – organisation, processes, systems and people – are shaped to deliver the promised student experiences. This will be done through:

- **Collaboration and partnership** – member services will establish and evaluate partnerships and networks with all stakeholders to deliver services of the highest quality for students.
- **Confidentiality and impartiality** – member services will promote and deliver impartiality, confidentiality and professional integrity in all aspects of service design and performance.

- **Accessibility** – member services will design and deliver their services ensuring they are accessible to all students.
- **Equality and diversity** – member services will promote, design and deliver their services to meet the needs of a diverse range of students.

## 2. Quality and Continuous Improvement

The overarching principles of quality and continuous improvement will impact upon the service at differing levels and involve measurable benchmarks, including:

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- **Ongoing review** – member services will undertake the ongoing review of both strategic and operational priorities, based on micro and macro circumstances.
- **Impact measurement** – member services will gather evidence to support the effectiveness and impact of the services they provide.
- **Access to up-to-date information** – member services will ensure up-to-date information provision based on research and review.
- **Feedback and evaluation** – member services will actively seek student and stakeholder feedback and evaluate it to identify service strengths, areas for development and as an aid to implement change.

## 3. Professional Competence and Development

Member services will address the need for professional competence and development through:

- **Recruitment and selection** – member services will provide appropriate recruitment and selection procedures in order to recruit high-calibre professional staff.
- **Induction** – member services will provide a comprehensive induction for all staff who are new to the service or who have changed roles within the service.
- **Staff development** – member services will support and encourage staff to develop and maintain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to do their job effectively, establishing learning needs through ongoing review processes.

Staff employed by member services will ensure they meet the needs of professional competence through:

- **Qualifications** – staff will have, or be working towards, qualifications appropriate to their role and/or have relevant work experience.
- **Continuous professional development** – staff will commit to the continuous development of their own professional knowledge, skills and practices.
- **Professionalism** – staff will demonstrate the highest standards of professional behaviour and service delivery.

#### 4. Commitment to AGCAS

Member services will show their commitment to AGCAS through:

- **Supporting AGCAS** – member services will support the vision, objectives and aims of AGCAS.
- **Promoting AGCAS** – member services will promote the image and standing of AGCAS as the professional body for HE careers service professionals working in career development and employability by supporting staff to engage in active participation in the work and activities of the association.
- **Raising the profile of the HE careers profession** – member services will help raise awareness of the role of HE careers service professionals in their institution and the wider community.

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Staff employed by member services will show their commitment to AGCAS through:

- **Ensuring good practice** – staff will initiate and contribute in the sharing of knowledge and discussion of professional issues with members of the AGCAS community.
- **Getting involved** – staff will contribute to the delivery of AGCAS services and products, such as training and publications.
- **Sharing knowledge and expertise** – staff with areas of specialism will contribute to consultations on key issues. Some will also be encouraged to represent AGCAS in the media when appropriate.

#### Compliance with the AGCAS Code of Practice

Directors/Heads of Service are required to demonstrate commitment to upholding and applying the Code annually through self-certification when renewing their subscriptions. They are responsible for making sure that members of staff apply the Code's principles and standards to everyday professional practice.

All member services will engage in regular quality review and reflection and be cognisant of the changing needs of the diverse student body.

AGCAS intends to implement the AGCAS Code of Practice on the basis of trust and, as such, no formal quality audit or reviews are anticipated. AGCAS, however, reserves the right to consult on and review this position in the future.

The AGCAS Code of Practice will be reviewed biennially by the Board of Directors in consultation with members.