



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



**UNESCO**  
**Introducing the**  
**Ethics Office**

## **What is the role of the Ethics Office?**

The Ethics Office was established to assist all staff members, at Headquarters and in the Field Offices around the world, in upholding ethical standards. As UNESCO personnel, we are subject to the highest standards of conduct and integrity which are reflected in the Constitution of UNESCO, in the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules of UNESCO and in relevant guidelines and policies.

One of the key roles of the Ethics Office is to help you, as UNESCO personnel, identify any potential ethical dilemmas so that appropriate steps can be taken to prevent problems before they arise. The Ethics Office provides confidential advice and support on ethics, standards of conduct, and managing real or potential conflicts of interest.

The Ethics Office believes that by establishing a strong ethical working environment here in the Organization, it helps safeguard public trust, and motivates us, as UNESCO personnel, to perform to our highest standards, and potentially, increases our job satisfaction.

We would like to remind you that the Ethics Office is independent from all other Central Services and the Ethics Advisor reports directly to the Director General.

## **What does the Ethics Office do?**

As international civil servants, we need to preserve independence and impartiality in carrying our work. The Ethics Office advises you on how to manage ethically challenging situations that arise in the workplace, such as “conflicts of interest”. A “conflict of interest” is when your private interests (e.g. outside relationships or personal assets, etc.) interfere with your professional obligations to UNESCO, or doing your job.

To safeguard the Organization, the rules and regulations of UNESCO restrict certain activities by its staff. We can call your attention to those restrictions and advise you before you consider taking on any restricted activities.

## **The main responsibilities of the Ethics Office are to:**

- Provide confidential advice and guidance to all UNESCO employees on ethics, standards of conduct and real or potential conflicts of interests
- Promote a culture of integrity in the Organization, and raise awareness on issues related to ethics through training workshops and promotional material
- Elaborate policies on
  - conflicts of interests
  - receiving and accepting gifts
  - the Financial Disclosure Programme
  - whistle blowing and anti-retaliation
  - anti-discrimination
- Ensure the protection of UNESCO personnel who have reported misconduct or cooperated with a duly authorized audit or investigation
- Implement the Anti-Harassment Policy

## **What does the Ethics Office not do?**

The Ethics Office is not responsible for:

- investigations at UNESCO
- taking administrative decisions regarding employment

## **Examples of questions addressed to the Ethics Office**

1. One of my colleagues is being sexually harassed by her chief but, as she is afraid, she does not want to submit a complaint. Is there anything I can do for her?
2. I am buying some stationery for our local office. One of my cousins owns a bookstore. Can I buy the material from him?
3. I notice that my colleague is often asking me to do personal tasks for him. Do I have to do these tasks?
4. A colleague is watching sexually explicit websites in the office. I reported it to my boss, and since then, my boss has cast me aside and is not giving me any tasks. Is he allowed to do that?
5. A colleague is always on my back, telling me that I am not performing and that I am useless. Is she allowed to harass me like that?
6. I am invited by a university to speak at a series of conferences on UNESCO. Am I allowed to accept?
7. My daughter needs some photocopies to be done for a school project. May I use the photocopier at the office?
8. The Minister of Education of the country where I am working gave me a painting in appreciation of my work. What do I do with it?

## **Confidentiality**

The Ethics Office appreciates that ethical issues are a sensitive issue and will do its utmost to provide a secure and confidential environment for staff to seek advice and support. The Ethics Office will also ensure that staff receives protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct or cooperating with an official authority.

## **Who should I contact?**

All UNESCO employees are invited to approach the Ethics Office to discuss any concerns related to ethics in a secure and confidential environment. The Ethics Advisor, Ms. Rebecca Trott, will receive your calls, emails or letters.

### **Contact Information**

UNESCO Ethics Advisor: Rebecca Trott

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### **Additional Information**

Please visit the website of the Ethics Office for more information:

<https://teams.unesco.org/ORG/eth/SitePages/Home.aspx>