



**Australian Government**

**Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

# PSPETHC401A Uphold and support the values and principles of public service

Revision Number: 1

## PSPETHC401A Uphold and support the values and principles of public service

### Modification History

Not applicable.

### Unit Descriptor

#### Unit descriptor

This unit covers the ethical conduct required of those in public service and the responsibility to encourage ethical conduct in others - colleagues or supervised staff. It includes contributing to an ethical public sector workplace and participating in ethical decision making.

In practice, ethical conduct is demonstrated in the context of other generalist or specialist work activities such as applying government processes, delivering and monitoring services to clients, using resources, conducting interviews, giving evidence, awarding contracts etc.

This is a new unit of competency, added to the *Ethics & Accountability* Competency Field of the Training Package in 2004.

### Application of the Unit

#### Application of the unit

This unit supports the attainment of skills and knowledge required for applying ethical conduct and accountability required in those working in government employment.

### Licensing/Regulatory Information

Not applicable.

## Pre-Requisites

Not applicable.

## Employability Skills Information

Employability skills      This unit contains employability skills.

## Elements and Performance Criteria Pre-Content

Elements are the essential outcomes of the unit of competency. Together, performance criteria specify the requirements for competent performance. Text in *italics* is explained in the Range Statement following.

## Elements and Performance Criteria

ELEMENT	PERFORMANCE CRITERIA
1. Contribute to an ethical public sector workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1.1 Information on the <i>ethical values and principles</i> of the workplace is accessed, its interpretation confirmed with others and applied accordingly</li><li>1.2 Application of ethical values and principles is discussed with senior management and colleagues to ensure common understanding and application</li><li>1.3 <i>Others</i> are assisted to access and use public sector ethics <i>legislation and guidelines</i> to ensure their work practices comply with requirements</li><li>1.4 The differences between public sector ethics/values and personal beliefs/values are explained to others to encourage understanding and compliance</li><li>1.5 Hypothetical work practices that would constitute <i>unethical conduct</i> are identified and discussed with work colleagues, and strategies to avoid or deal with them are identified in accordance with organisational policy and procedures</li></ul>
2. Participate in ethical decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2.1 Real and potential <i>ethical problems</i> are identified, and decision making processes are used to resolve or <i>refer</i> them in accordance with organisational policy and procedures</li><li>2.2 Information is regularly accessed to ensure currency in ethical knowledge, and ethical judgment is developed through involvement in workplace discussions or ongoing professional development related to ethical standards and practices</li><li>2.3 Other staff are supported as necessary to contribute to ethical discussions and problem solving to develop their ethical judgment</li><li>2.4 Processes for preventing and reporting unethical conduct are used and others are assisted in their application</li></ul>

## Required Skills and Knowledge

### REQUIRED SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

This section describes the essential skills and knowledge and their level, required for this unit.

#### Required skills:

- accessing legislation and codes of ethics electronically or in hard copy
- reading complex and formal documents such as legislation and codes of ethics, applying them and assisting others to apply them to work practices
- applying objective and impartial evaluation of ethical problems
- using participative ethical decision making/problem solving
- preparing written reports that contain information that is impartial, substantiated, accurate and complete
- responding to diversity, including gender and disability
- adjusting communication to suit different audiences
- applying occupational health and safety procedures relating to ethical work practices

#### Required knowledge:

Look for evidence that confirms knowledge and understanding of:

- the nature of public sector ethics and ethical values as opposed to personal beliefs/value systems
- fundamental ethical principles such as justice, respect for persons and responsible care
- other ethics standards such as professional standards
- natural justice/procedural fairness
- equal employment opportunity, equity and diversity principles
- ethical decision making/problem solving models
- procedures and protocols for reporting unethical conduct
- environmental and occupational health and safety procedures relating to ethical work practice

## Evidence Guide

### EVIDENCE GUIDE

The Evidence Guide specifies the evidence required to demonstrate achievement in the unit of competency as a whole. It must be read in conjunction with the Unit descriptor, Performance Criteria, the Range Statement and the Assessment Guidelines for the Public Sector Training Package.

#### Units to be assessed together

- *Pre-requisite* units that must be achieved prior to this unit: *Nil*
- *Co-requisite* units that must be assessed with this unit: *Nil*
- *Co-assessed units* that may be assessed with this unit to increase the efficiency and realism of the assessment process include, but are not limited to, a range of (2 or more) generalist or specialist units of competency in the Certificate IV in Government. Choice from the following units is recommended:

PSPGOV402B Deliver and monitor service to clients

PSPGOV403B Use resources to achieve work unit goals

PSPGOV406B Gather and analyse information

PSPGOV408A Value diversity

PSPGOV411A Deal with conflict

PSPGOV412A Use advanced workplace communication strategies

PSPGOV414A Provide workplace mentoring

PSPGOV422A Apply government processes

PSPLEGN401A Encourage compliance with legislation in the public sector

PSPPROC409A Receive and select offers

PSPREG407B Produce formal record of interview

PSPREG410B Give evidence

#### Overview of evidence requirements

In addition to integrated demonstration of the elements and their related performance criteria, look for evidence that confirms:

- the knowledge requirements of this unit
- the skill requirements of this unit
- application of Employability Skills as they relate to this unit
- ethical conduct demonstrated and supported in others in a range of (3 or more) contexts (or occasions, over time) where contexts include generalist or specialist work activities such as applying government processes, delivering and monitoring services to

## EVIDENCE GUIDE

clients, using resources, conducting interviews, giving evidence, awarding contracts, etc

### Resources required to carry out assessment

These resources include:

- ethics-related legislation and guidelines
- codes of conduct and codes of ethics
- public sector standards, procedures and protocols
- ethical decision making models

### Where and how to assess evidence

Valid assessment of this unit requires:

- a workplace environment or one that closely resembles normal work practice and replicates the range of conditions likely to be encountered when working ethically in a public sector environment, including coping with ambiguity, difficulties, irregularities and breakdowns in routine
- ethical conduct demonstrated and supported in others in a range of (3 or more) contexts (or occasions, over time) where contexts include generalist or specialist work activities such as applying government processes, delivering and monitoring services to clients, using resources, conducting interviews, giving evidence, awarding contracts, etc

Assessment methods should reflect workplace demands, such as literacy, and the needs of particular groups, such as:

- people with disabilities
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- women
- young people
- older people
- people in rural and remote locations

Assessment methods suitable for valid and reliable assessment of this competency may include, but are not limited to, a combination of 2 or more of:

- case studies
- portfolios
- questioning
- scenarios
- simulation or role plays
- authenticated evidence from the workplace and/or training

## EVIDENCE GUIDE

### courses

For consistency of  
assessment

Evidence must be gathered over time in a range of contexts to ensure the person can achieve the unit outcome and apply the competency in different situations or environments



## Range Statement

### RANGE STATEMENT

The Range Statement provides information about the context in which the unit of competency is carried out. The variables cater for differences between States and Territories and the Commonwealth, and between organisations and workplaces. They allow for different work requirements, work practices and knowledge. The Range Statement also provides a focus for assessment. It relates to the unit as a whole. Text in *italics* in the Performance Criteria is explained here.

#### *Ethical values and principles may include*

- respect for the law
- integrity
- objectivity
- accountability
- honesty
- openness
- responsibility
- impartiality
- diligence
- trustworthiness
- confidentiality
- respect for persons
- responsible care
- probity
- economy and efficiency
- natural justice/procedural fairness, that is:
  - the right to be heard/put your case
  - the right to be informed of a complaint or case against you
  - the right to know reasons for decisions affecting you
  - the right to know the outcomes/recommendations of an investigation involving you
  - the right to privacy
  - the right to representation
  - the right to silence
  - the decision maker should not be a judge in his/her own cause

#### *Others may include*

- colleagues
- supervised staff
- contractors

## RANGE STATEMENT

### *Legislation and guidelines may include*

- legislation for public sector management
- freedom of information
- privacy legislation
- equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination law
- public sector standards
- Ministerial directions
- State/Territory/Commonwealth codes of ethics
- organisational codes for conduct/ethics
- organisational mission and values statements
- organisational policy, procedures/guidelines
- government policy
- professional codes of ethics and conduct
- equity guidelines, organisational workplace diversity guidelines

### *Unethical conduct may include*

- fraud, corruption, maladministration and waste
- unauthorised access to and/or use of information, money/finances, vehicles, equipment, resources, time
- improper actions during contractual processes, such as release of intellectual property, infringing copyright, release of tender information, inappropriate disclosure during tender process
- improper public comment on matters relating to the government and/or the organisation
- falsifying records
- giving false testimonials
- dishonesty
- improper use of plant and equipment, credit cards, frequent flyer points, telephones, email and Internet
- extravagant or wasteful practices
- personal favours
- preferential treatment
- putting barriers in place, hindering, blocking action
- compromising behaviour including sexual harassment
- lack of confidentiality
- directing others to act unethically
- oppressive/coercive management decisions
- resorting to illegality to obtain evidence

### *Ethical problems which may need to be referred*

- conflict between public sector standards and personal values
- conflict between public sector standards and other standards

## RANGE STATEMENT

*rather than resolved at this level may include*

- such as professional standards
- conflict between public sector standards and directions of a senior officer or Minister
- tension between two 'rights' - for example, the right to privacy versus the right to freedom of information
- conflict regarding issues of personal and organisational intellectual property

*Referrals of ethical problems may be made to*

- line management
- human resources
- workplace relations officer
- grievance officer
- chief executive officer
- public service commissioner
- public sector standards body
- organisational ethics committee
- internal grievance mechanisms
- confidant programs (whistleblower protection programs)
- organisational professional reporting procedures
- unions and professional bodies
- ombudsman

## Unit Sector(s)

Not applicable.

## Competency field

Competency field            Ethics and Accountability