

**THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF TEACHERS  
OF THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE  
AUSTAT  
CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the Objects of AUSTAT is to establish and maintain standards and codes of professional conduct and integrity amongst teachers of the Alexander Technique. The purpose of this code of Professional Conduct (“the Code”) is to establish and maintain such standards.

The conduct of any one teacher may affect not only a particular pupil but also the reputation or standing of the profession. Every teacher, accordingly, has a legitimate interest and concern in maintaining professional standards.

The code provides a common standard of professional conduct for all teachers to follow as well as providing guidance both for them and the public.

In the absence of a code of professional conduct or ethics, our right to claim to be identified, recognised and treated by the public as a professional association would, to a substantial degree, be forfeited.

Teachers may find it helpful to seek advice from the Council on matters concerning conduct or the code or the disciplinary procedures contained in the Rules of AUSTAT.

This Code is a bye-law of AUSTAT. By becoming a Teacher member of AUSTAT, teachers are bound to observe the code and to submit to the disciplinary procedures concerning its enforcement which are contained in the Rules of AUSTAT.

## **CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**

This Code does not purport to be a complete code of professional ethics or to specify all forms of professional misconduct which may lead to disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the rules of AUSTAT. To do this would be impossible because, from time to time, new forms of professional misconduct may come to light. It could be said, however, that if a teacher in the pursuit of his or her profession has done or omitted to do something with regards to it which would be reasonably regarded as disgraceful or dishonourable by his or her colleagues, then that would amount to serious professional misconduct.

The following paragraphs designate areas of professional conduct as well as personal behaviour comprising conduct derogatory to the reputation of the profession, which need to be considered.

Throughout this code, the word “pupil” means any person under the instruction of an Alexander Teacher.

## A. THE TEACHER-PUPIL RELATIONSHIP

1. A teacher's obligation to a pupil is based primarily on the contractual relationship between them. The teacher, however, does have a duty to act with reasonable skill and care in accordance with the standards of the profession.
2. A teacher should clearly explain the nature of the contract with the pupil; in particular, the proposed number and duration of the lessons, the amount of the fees (including cancellation fees, if any) and method of payment.
3. A teacher should clearly explain the nature of the work and procedures to be followed during the course of lessons and ensure that the consent of the pupil is obtained. In the case of a pupil under the age of eighteen years the consent of the pupil's parent or guardian should be obtained.
4. A teacher should not make any kind of medical diagnosis of or prescribe treatment for a pupil unless qualified to do so. Recommendations to other appropriate qualified practitioners may be made where the pupil's problems or difficulties appear to be outside the scope of the Alexander Technique.
5. During the course of a lesson in the Alexander Technique, a teacher should not introduce other practices or disciplines, even if he or she is qualified to do so, except with the prior consent of the pupil involved.
6. A pupil affords the teacher privilege access to confidences. Good practice depends upon the maintenance of trust between teacher and pupil and the understanding by both that a professional relationship will be strictly observed. In this situation the teacher must exercise great care and discretion so as not to damage this relationship. Any action that breaches this trust may give rise to a case of serious professional misconduct. Three particular areas may be identified in which this trust may be breached:
  - (i) A teacher enters into a sexual relationship with a pupil; or an emotional relationship with a pupil, which disrupts that pupil's family life or otherwise damages or causes distress to the pupil or family. Any abuse by a teacher of his or her professional position in order to pursue such a relationship may raise a question of serious misconduct.
  - (ii) A teacher improperly discloses information that is obtained in confidence from or about a pupil. It is a teacher's duty to refrain from disclosing to any third party information about a pupil, which is learnt directly, or indirectly in a professional capacity as a teacher of the Alexander Technique. The death of a pupil does not absolve a teacher from this obligation.

There are, however, the following exceptions to this rule:

- (a) if the disclosure is done with the knowledge and consent of the pupil and it is in the interests of the pupil to do so;
- (b) if the disclosure is to another teacher to whom the pupil has been referred and the pupil gives consent to such disclosure
- (c) if the law requires such information to be disclosed;

(d) if the disclosure of case details is used for the purpose of research, training or education in furtherance of the objects of AUSTAT as laid down in the Rules of AUSTAT, provided that all case information is de-identified. No reference should be made as to the identity of the pupil concerned, and care is taken that the pupil's identity is not otherwise made known. Research involving human subjects must comply with the NH&MRC revised National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). Issued by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) in accordance with the *NHMRC Act, 1992* (Cth).

(iii) A teacher abuses his or her professional position by improperly exerting influence upon a pupil in order to acquire personal gain or services, other than the agreed fee; for example: persuading a pupil to lend money or to alter a will in the teacher's favour.

7. A teacher should give due attention to the safety of a pupil in a lesson or a workshop.

## **B. THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO COLLEAGUES**

1. It is improper for a teacher to disparage, whether directly or indirectly, the personality, professional skill, knowledge, qualifications or work of any other teacher; such disparagement may raise a question of serious professional misconduct. Even if such disparagement were justified, it would tend to undermine the confidence of the public in the profession. It is, however, proper for a teacher, after careful consideration and in good faith, to express a professional opinion differing from that of a colleague, provided it is done in an appropriate context.
2. A teacher should not solicit or canvass the pupils of a colleague.
3. A teacher has a duty, where the circumstances so warrant, to inform the Council about a colleague whose conduct or behaviour may have raised a question of serious professional misconduct or whose fitness to practise may be seriously impaired by reason of illness or injury.
4. When in a position of authority over other teachers, a teacher shall make their best endeavours to ensure that those under his or her direction are afforded every reasonable opportunity to advance their knowledge and experience.

## **C. THE TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION**

1. A teacher may not train any person to teach the Alexander Technique unless first having applied for and obtained the written authority of the Council.
2. The protection of the public as well as the public reputation of the profession require that every teacher should observe proper standards of personal behaviour. For this reason, a teacher's conviction of a criminal offence may lead to disciplinary proceedings even if the offence is not directly connected with the profession. In particular, the following areas of personal behaviour may raise a question of serious professional misconduct and lead to disciplinary proceedings:

- (i) personal misuse or abuse of alcohol or other drugs leading to convictions and which may indicate habits which are discreditable to the profession or be a source of danger or distress to pupils; it would be regarded as particularly serious if a teacher performed or attempted to perform his or her professional duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - (ii) any conviction for criminal deception, forgery, fraud, theft or any other offence involving dishonesty;
  - (iii) any conviction for assault or indecent behaviour; such behaviour would be regarded as particularly serious if committed in the course of the teacher's professional duties.
  - (iv) any teacher engaged in work with children must obtain the necessary Working with Children Check in their State or Territory in accordance with the *Working with Children Act 2005*.
3. (i) A teacher may advertise his or her services to the public by notice or announcement, published in an appropriate newspaper, journal, magazine or other media or displayed in an appropriate establishment, provided that such advertising is informative and educative and is factual and not misleading.
- (ii) In any advertisement in which group classes or lessons are offered or referred to, it should be clearly stated that they are to be introductory classes or lessons only, save in the case of group lessons being offered to advanced pupils, or with the authority of the Council.
  - (iii) A teacher may distribute or circulate pamphlets or leaflets intended to inform and educate the public about the nature of the Alexander Technique and the work entailed in the learning and practise of it. In this regard, emphasis should be placed on the re-educational aspects of the work and claims as to cures should be avoided.
  - (iv) A teacher who publishes or writes a book or article or delivers a lecture or participates in a broadcast on the Alexander Technique should ensure that:
    - (a) he or she possesses the necessary knowledge, skill or experience for any such purpose;
    - (b) no information or material is published or presented in a manner that misrepresents the Alexander Technique or AUSTAT.
  - (v) In any publication, literature, material or presentation referred to in paragraphs (iii) and (iv) above, reference should be made to the teacher's membership of AUSTAT, the contact details including website, and telephone number.
  - (vi) a teacher, for the purpose of promoting directly or indirectly any commercial product or service may only personally endorse the product or service and shall not warrant that AUSTAT or the profession has endorsed the product or service.