

Guiding Ethical Principles

The mission of the University of Oxford's Mindfulness Centre (OMC) is to improve lives through mindfulness. We envision a world where mindfulness is accessible and integrated into everyday life, and where mindfulness teachers and champions in all areas of society provide courses and training and bring mindfulness into their everyday work and way of living to support well-being. As an organisation, we embody mindfulness as best we can in all that we do. We work with the values and understanding we would like to see in the world, recognising that ethics and integrity are key.

In the same way that many professional bodies have codes of ethics to guide their behaviour and decision-making, professionals in the mindfulness field need clearly articulated standards of ethical behaviour. Mindfulness professionals will inevitably encounter situations that require skilful responses to unforeseen and complex issues. Responding ethically to these situations requires a clear understanding of the ethical principles that underpin our work. To facilitate this understanding, we have developed guiding ethical principles for all those involved with the OMC.

We recognise that many mindfulness teachers are members of professions with codes of ethics to which they must adhere. Our intention is not to replace existing guidelines but to sit alongside extant ethical guidelines for those who have them, and to provide guidelines for those who do not.

The guidelines that follow are intended to create an ethical environment that supports the wellbeing and flourishing of all those involved with the OMC: researchers, partners, teachers, trainers, participants, trainees, and colleagues. It is based on the core principle of professional ethics codes: to work for the benefit and wellbeing of all participants while avoiding, minimizing, and mitigating harm, and on other principles that are common to professional ethical codes dating back many centuries and from many parts of the world:

1. **Commitment:** Work for the **benefit** of others and **to do no harm**.
2. **Competence:** Work with populations and in areas only within the boundaries of your education, training, study, or supervised professional experience.
3. **Respect for rights and dignity:** Respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination.
4. **Integrity:** Promote accuracy, honesty, and truthfulness in the science, teaching, and practice of mindfulness.
5. **Responsibility to the public and the profession:** Aspire to enhance the well-being of individuals, communities and wider systems, as well as the field of mindfulness.

For an overview of the field, we recommend two chapters:

- *Ethics and integrity in mindfulness-based programs*. Chapter 9. In Feldman, C. & Kuyken, W. (2019). *Mindfulness: Ancient wisdom meets modern psychology*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Baer, R. A. (2017). *Professional ethics and personal values in mindfulness-based programs: A secular psychological perspective*. In L. M. Monteiro, J. F. Compson, & R. F. Musten (Eds.), *Practitioner's Guide to Ethics in Mindfulness-Based Interventions*, pp. 87-111. Springer.

Ethical Guidelines for Teachers & Trainers

<p>Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure you have the appropriate professional training for the work you are doing, e.g., to teach MBCT consistent with the OMC’s training pathway. ▪ Develop and maintain a personal mindfulness practice. ▪ Undertake appropriate professional training for the sector in which you work, e.g., clinical, education or workplace sectors including safeguarding training appropriate to the groups you are working with. ▪ Keep your knowledge and skills up to date. ▪ Engage in regular supervision with an experienced mindfulness teacher. ▪ Recognise and work within the limits of your competence, seeking additional supervision, mentoring, or training when necessary. ▪ Assess individual needs and expectations of all potential participants; engage only if they are likely to experience benefits and any potential harm has been considered and mitigated. ▪ Offer programmes at suitable levels for participants. ▪ Take prompt action if anyone’s well-being is compromised in any way. Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) sits alongside medical and psychological treatments; consult and refer where appropriate. ▪ If health-related or other personal problems are impairing your capacity to work competently, seek assistance and refrain from professional work until your capacity is restored. 	<p>Responsibility to the public, the profession, and the mindfulness field</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act in ways that avoid harm, abuse of trust, and misuse of authority in all aspects of your professional work. ▪ Communicate clearly and transparently about the training you have completed, the services you offer and the fees for your services. ▪ Provide accurate, evidence-based and up-to-date information when describing the mindfulness field to members of the public. ▪ Represent MBCT as a secular programme informed by psychological science and contemplative traditions. ▪ Work with colleagues in ways that best serve the field; e.g., where possible actively engage in research, training and peer collaboration initiatives. ▪ Recognise unethical conduct of peers and address this as appropriate. ▪ When collaborating with mindfulness organisations, operate ethically in relation to business arrangements. ▪ Respect ownership and copyright of ideas and products, including research and training programmes. ▪ Work to ensure access and inclusion, alongside the need for economic viability and sustainability, by balancing the costs of service and income generation with the economic needs and welfare of participants.
<p>Respect for rights and dignity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act with respect, diligence, empathy and care in all aspects of your professional work. ▪ Integrate key attitudinal dimensions of mindfulness into your work; e.g., compassion, kindness, acceptance, non-judging, and equanimity. ▪ Listen to and respond to individual concerns. ▪ Respect the right to confidentiality and ensure that participants understand any legal limits to confidentiality that may apply. ▪ Work to ensure informed consent by providing all potential participants with clear information and opportunities to ask questions. ▪ Respect individual differences and diversity of values and cultures. Where necessary engage in training to inform personal and professional understanding. ▪ Do not attempt to influence participants with your political, ideological or religious views. 	<p>Integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Act with integrity, honesty and fairness in all aspects of your professional work. ▪ Represent your own work openly, honestly and without bias. ▪ Maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships and avoid combining personal and professional relationships if there is any possibility of real or perceived exploitation or conflict of interest. Sexual relationships between teachers/trainers and students/trainees are never appropriate. ▪ Manage administrative duties with care and integrity to appropriately and legally handle paperwork and protect confidentiality. ▪ Maintain the integrity of the MBCT curricula and use them as intended, both in their published forms and when adapting your teaching or training to new contexts and populations.