

Guide to good practice for education agents

1. Agents shall at all times conduct themselves with integrity and in a manner that will reflect positively on the image of their profession and of their partner (UK) institutions as reliable and trustworthy providers of high-quality education and training.

This standard of conduct underpins the others that follow and encompasses all aspects of agents' activities.

2. Agents shall promote themselves and their partner (UK) institutions in a professional and ethical manner and shall ensure that their business activities reflect best practice.

This standard of conduct refers both to ethical behaviour (doing the right thing) and to standards of professionalism (doing it well). Best practice means that an agent's business activities should not be of a kind that might bring discredit on their (UK) client(s) or UK education generally.

3. Agents shall be honest in communicating information about themselves, their partner (UK) institutions and potential students in published, oral or any other form. They shall not knowingly or by a failure of professional standards provide or disseminate false, incomplete or misleading information.

This standard of conduct is closely related to clause 5 and refers to any information released by an agent on behalf of its client institutions about facilities, entry requirements, admissions processes, course content, fees or any other matter. All claims made by an agent about itself, client institutions or students shall be capable of being substantiated.

This standard of conduct also applies equally to information provided about potential students in applications to client institutions and visa authorities.

In particular, information provided to potential students shall be sufficient to enable them to make an informed judgement. The inclusion of the word 'incomplete' in this standard is especially important: agents shall not in published or orally delivered information omit any fact which may reasonably be of material relevance to an international student, where an omission might be construed as being misleading.

The accidental production or dissemination of incorrect or incomplete information is likely to be viewed in itself evidence of a failure to adhere to professional standards, except where there is compelling evidence to suggest otherwise.

In summary, this standard requires agents to provide full, honest and accurate information about client institutions and the courses and facilities they offer.

4. Agents shall promote themselves and their partner (UK) institutions fairly and without recourse to unfavourable or negative comparisons with other institutions, or otherwise employ unfair or unprofessional practice to damage the interests of other institutions.

This standard of conduct refers to any attempt by agents to gain advantage for their clients by using information about other institutions negatively. Using verifiable data to show the standing of a client institution in relation to others is acceptable, but this practice shall not be executed in such a manner as to discredit other institutions. This means agents should promote products by focusing on the strengths and achievements of their client institutions rather than by making unfavourable comments about competitors.

5. Agents shall act at all times in the best interests of students or prospective students as well as (UK) partner institutions. They shall offer advice and counselling and provide information to students, and where appropriate their parents, in a manner consistent with this principle.

This standard of conduct is fundamental to good practice in education marketing and student recruitment. It refers not only to truthfulness and accuracy, but also to appropriateness. An example of inappropriate advice would be encouragement of a student to enter a course of study for which they were inadequately prepared in terms of language proficiency or academic attainment. The standard also includes advice or information given to sponsors of students and other such bodies or persons as well as directly to students. Again, the omission of salient information in an effort to secure the placement of a student is likely to be judged as a breach of this standard.

6. Agents shall conduct themselves with due regard to the regulatory conditions in the market(s) in which they operate. They shall comply with all applicable national laws, regulations and official policies.

7. Agents shall conduct themselves with due regard to the need for transparency and openness in all their dealings with client institutions.