



Employee Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to the Aquaculture Stewardship Council.

This Employee Handbook is designed both to introduce you to the ASC and to be of continuous use during your employment.

This handbook describes our general working conditions. It should be read in conjunction with your contract of employment which confirms all individually agreed terms and conditions. If you need further information or help in any way, do not hesitate to ask your Line Manager or contact HR.

For the avoidance of doubt these rules, policies and procedures do not form part of the contract of employment. The ASC is therefore entitled to amend, cancel or introduce such rules, policies and procedures, as it considers necessary.

About Us

The Aquaculture Stewardship Council is an independent, international non-profit organisation that manages the world's leading certification and labelling programme for responsible aquaculture.

We work with aquaculture producers, seafood processors, retail and foodservice companies, scientists, conservation groups and consumers to:

- Recognise and reward responsible aquaculture through the ASC aquaculture certification programme and seafood label.
- Promote best environmental and social choice when buying seafood.
- Contribute to transforming seafood markets towards sustainability.

Our Mission

To transform aquaculture towards environmental sustainability and social responsibility using efficient market mechanisms that create value across the chain.

Our Vision

A world where aquaculture plays a continuing and major role in supplying food and social benefits for mankind, whilst minimising negative impacts on the environment.

Detailed information about the ASC can be found at <http://www.asc-aqua.org>

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Equal Opportunities

The ASC is committed to the effective use of people in the organisation along with its employee's best interests, and will pursue equality of opportunity as a means of achieving this objective.

Therefore, the ASC's policy requires that employment and progression within it will be determined solely by personal merit and the application criteria which are related to the effective performance of the job and the needs of the business.

No applicant or employee will be treated less favourably than any other on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

Positive Work Environment

The way you conduct yourself as an employee of the ASC is paramount not only to its success but also to the reputation of the ASC and its employees. It is a basic requirement that every employee behaves in a respectful and professional manner towards their colleagues and all external contacts, at all times so as not to compromise this reputation or the organisations integrity.

In order that the organisation maintains a positive work environment for all employees any inappropriate behaviour, including any form of harassment or unlawful discrimination against any person (whether or not an ASC employee) will not be tolerated.

Employee's should obtain written consent from the CEO before making any public or semi-public statement (including blog entries, Facebook comments, Twitter messages or other internet based comments or statements accessible to any group of persons) or any statement to a person employed or associated with the media concerning the ASC, its clients, employees or their activities .

Employee's should also avoid placing themselves in a position in which their interests conflict with those of the ASC.

Documentation

The ASC reserve the right to ask all employees to provide proof of eligibility to work and may require this to be updated from time to time. Any change in your circumstances that may affect your entitlement to be in the country where you have agreed to work or to be in employment, must be communicated to the ASC as soon as possible.

The ASC assumes that information supplied by prospective employees prior to their employment, through curriculum vitae and similar information is true and accurate. Supplying incorrect or untruthful information may be considered as an act of gross misconduct and any employee found to have done so (either directly or via a recruitment agency) may be subject to disciplinary action.

Health & Safety

The ASC will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure your health, safety and welfare whilst at work. You must familiarise yourself with Health and Safety rules and any Health and Safety Policy implemented by the ASC from time to time. It is also your legal duty to take care for your own health and safety and that of your colleagues.

Relationships at Work Policy

Background and intent

ASC respects everyone's right to privacy. But as a matter of policy, colleagues who are in a personal relationship should declare it so that any potential for a conflict of interest to arise can be mitigated.

This policy is not intended to prohibit personal relationships between staff. Instead, it sets out a framework to manage conflicts of interest arising from personal relationships in the workplace. This policy seeks to provide guidance for managers to deal sensitively, consistently and fairly with personal relationships, where a legitimate management concern for a conflict of interest to occur has been identified.

ASC is committed to providing a workplace which is fair and equal for everyone and personal relationships must not influence work decisions particularly related to promotion, salary increases or work allocation. Care must also be taken to avoid allegations that expense claims have been inappropriately incurred because of a personal relationship (e.g. such as undertaking unnecessary joint travel). Confidentiality rules continue to apply regardless of any personal relationship and staff must always ensure that they protect all ASC confidential and commercially sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure.

Scope of the Policy

When we refer to personal-relationships we mean emotional relationships which go beyond the scope of normal professional friendships and behaviour, including family relationships, co-habiting relationships, and less formal situations (for example, where people are seeing one another on a regular and intimate basis). Personal relationships could involve ASC employees or consultants and customers, associates, or other persons dealing and/or associated with ASC work-related activities. This policy does not apply to normal friendships between colleagues who socialise outside of the work environment. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive definition, given the sensitive nature of personal relationships. If you are unsure about whether this policy applies to your circumstances, we encourage you to speak to your line Manager, or HR, in confidence.

Policy

As a matter of policy, colleagues who are in a personal relationship should not also be in manager/subordinate roles. Where such a personal relationship arises, members of staff have an obligation to themselves, partners and colleagues to speak to their line manager, HR, or the CEO. This is so even if the relationship is at an early stage and may not continue, or if it is at the end of the relationship when professionalism and discretion may be particularly important. We will work with you to try to agree a plan to minimise the impact of the personal relationship on ASC's business – this could include transferring line management responsibilities or putting in place appropriate safeguards to ensure transparency and fairness. We will seek to agree any such action with you.

We would also encourage colleagues to disclose any personal relationship, regardless of whether they are manager and subordinate, to their line manager, or HR, in confidence if there is a risk of a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest arising.

Regardless of whether a personal relationship is notified to ASC, any members of staff who are in a personal relationship are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner at work at all times in respect of such relationship. This means being considerate of the feelings of their other colleagues in their day-to-day dealings and being discrete in any discussions regarding their private life within the workplace. Essentially relationships should be conducted in a way that avoids possible embarrassment to others.

Managers will treat all notifications of personal relationships discretely and sensitively and, as far as possible, in confidence. Action will only be taken if we believe there is (or could potentially be) an issue or risk to our business and/or to working relationships and where we believe it is necessary to protect our business interests and/or the interests of either party involved.

We are committed to ensuring that no one is disadvantaged, discriminated against or otherwise subjected to a detriment because they are in a personal relationship. Any member of staff who has concerns about their treatment in respect of this guidance should raise this informally with their line manager in the first instance (if appropriate), or otherwise use the formal grievance procedure.

Bullying and Harassment

The ASC has a duty to provide its workers with a safe place and system of work in line with appropriate and all relevant legislation affecting health and safety at work in all countries in which staff are based. This includes a workplace free from bullying and harassment of any kind and covers every individual working for the organisation or at any of our premises irrespective of their status or level. No person will be adversely affected in employment with the ASC as a result of bringing forward complaints of bullying or harassment.

This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs at work and out of the workplace, such as on business trips or at work-related events or social functions. It covers bullying and harassment by staff (which may include employees, consultants and contractors), Board members, and third parties such as our customers or suppliers.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.

Both Bullying and harassment can take many forms, all of which are equally offensive whether they are in a sexual, racial, physical or mental disability or any other context.

The legitimate management of an employee's performance or conduct will not constitute bullying or harassment. The ASC may have the need to constructively criticise an employee's performance or behaviour / conduct; or make reasonable requests of an employee in the course of their employment.

If you believe you are the subject of bullying or harassment, irrespective of the nature and context in which it occurs, you should raise any matters formally or informally using the Grievance Procedure. Any grievances should be raised with your manager in the first instance. However, as per the Grievance Procedure, should the nature of the grievance make it difficult to raise the issue with your direct line manager, it should be raised with their manager, or directly with HR. In all cases, matters will be dealt with promptly.

We will investigate complaints in a timely and confidential manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience and, where possible, who has no prior involvement in the complaint. Should there be an allegation of bullying or harassment against a member of the Board, TAG, Senior Management Team or HR, or where the staff member who would ordinarily be appointed to conduct or oversee the investigation may have a conflict of interest, we will look to appoint an external professional who will be hired specifically for the purpose of the investigation.

Grievance Procedure

Any employee has the right to raise a grievance concerning their working conditions and employment arrangements, to seek redress and to be treated in a fair and effective manner.

The ASC recognises that it is generally in the interests of all parties that individual and group issues should be dealt with effectively and speedily in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence.

Informal stage

Where possible, employees should try to talk things over with their manager with a view to finding a solution informally. If the outcome of this discussion does not rectify the situation employees should progress to the formal stage.

If the nature of the grievance makes it difficult to raise the issue with your direct line manager, it should be raised with their manager, or HR.

Formal stage

Where you feel that the issue cannot be resolved informally, or if you wish to raise a grievance formally you should use the following procedure:

Step 1- Statement of Grievance

You must set out the grievance in writing to clarify the basis of the grievance and send the statement or a copy of it to your Line Manager. If your complaint is about your Line Manager, or for some other reason it is inappropriate for you to raise the issue with your Line Manager, then the grievance should be sent to their manager or HR.

Step 2 - Meeting

The manager will respond to the grievance within 28 working days of the matter being submitted to him/her in writing and will invite you to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance.

You must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. A short, written record of the meeting will be taken.

The manager will advise you of the outcome of the meeting in writing within 5 working days, wherever practicable.

Step 3 - Appeal

An employee may appeal against the outcome of the grievance meeting.

An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to your line manager or HR, within 5 working days of the date on which the decision was sent. An invite to an appeal meeting will then be sent as soon as possible. Where practicable, this meeting will be held by a manager senior to the one who conducted the grievance meeting.

Following an appeal the original decision may be confirmed, revoked or replaced with a different decision. The final decision will be confirmed in writing, if possible within 5 working days of the appeal meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

Right To Be Accompanied

At all formal grievance meetings (including any appeal) an employee may bring a companion. This may be either a trade union official or a fellow employee.

If a companion cannot attend on the date proposed for the meeting, an alternative may be offered within 5 days of the original meeting date.

A companion may make representations, ask questions and sum up an employee's position, but will not be allowed to answer questions on their behalf. An employee may confer privately with their companion at any time during the meeting.

If you chose a work colleague to be your Companion then that person is entitled to time off to attend the hearing. If you chose a trade union official their attendance does not constitute recognition of a trade union for other purposes,

The ASC may refuse a request for a particular companion if they believe it inappropriate.

Disciplinary Procedure

It is essential to the smooth running of the Organisation that standards of performance and behaviour are maintained.

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that a fair and consistent approach is applied to managing conduct and capability issues (including sickness absence) across the Organisation. The aim is to be corrective rather than punitive and to provide the opportunity and support to help change behaviour or improve performance. The procedure may be entered in to at any stage and stages may be jumped if the situation is serious enough.

In all cases of misconduct, poor performance or sickness absence management a full investigation of the allegation will be carried out as soon as possible and before any action is taken. In some cases the Organisation may consider it necessary to suspend employee's from work while this investigation is taking place. If so, this will normally be on full pay and will be kept to a minimum.

Informal Stage

Where minor breaches of discipline, initial issues with poor performance or concerns over sickness absence have been identified, the Organisation may decide that formal action is not appropriate. In these cases an informal meeting will be held with your line manager who will provide corrective advice and guidance on improving performance, behaviour or attendance in the future.

Formal Stages

Where it has been decided that formal disciplinary action will be taken, a disciplinary hearing will be held by your manager. In this instance you will receive an invite to the hearing which will contain information on;

- > The allegations being made with regards to the misconduct, capability or absence issues
- > Date, time and location of the meeting
- > Your right to be accompanied

You will be given reasonable time, usually at least 5 calendar days, to prepare for the meeting and any written evidence to be used will be provided in advance.

You must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting and the Organisation reserves the right to hold the meeting in your absence if you do not attend without providing an explanation.

You may request that the meeting be postponed in the following circumstances;

- > If your Companion is unable to attend the meeting at the time it has been scheduled;
- > If you suggest an alternative time that is, in all the circumstances, reasonable and falls within five working days of the date originally set for the hearing.

Disciplinary Action

Following the disciplinary hearing, the outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing. This letter will also confirm;

- > What improvements are required
- > The timeframe in which to demonstrate the improvements
- > What will happen if an improvement is not seen within the specified timeframe
- > How to appeal against the decision

There are 3 possible levels of formal action; first written warning, final written warning, dismissal (with or without notice). In some cases, rather than choosing to dismiss the Organisation may decide to issue a final written warning alongside another sanction such as demotion, transfer to another department or reduction in pay.

General misconduct

The following list of offences is intended to be neither comprehensive nor complete. It is intended solely to give examples of the more common acts of misconduct. A general misconduct that is flagrantly, continuously or repeatedly committed can be regarded as gross misconduct.

- Failure to carry out reasonable instructions in a proper manner.
- Poor timekeeping or attendance.
- Failure to conform to basic safety regulations.
- Unauthorised absence from work.
- Concerning patterns of absence
- Inability to perform your role due to ill health
- Disruption of the work of others.
- Poor performance standards.

Gross Misconduct

Acts of gross misconduct undermine the relationship between employee and employer and bring into question the continuation of the employment contract. They generally can be expected to lead to summary dismissal (without notice). Examples of conduct that may amount to gross misconduct are detailed below:

- Disorderly or indecent conduct, harassment, fighting, physical violence, offensive or threatening behaviour.
- Damaging Organisation property, equipment, products or materials.
- Unauthorised consumption or possession of, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances on Organisation premises or in Organisation time.
- Unauthorised use or possession of Organisation property or the property of other employees.
- Falsification of records.
- Making false claims for payment of expenses or other benefits.
- Hiding, concealing or misappropriating Organisation property or the property of other employees.
- Serious breaches of Organisation regulations or procedures, including hygiene and health & safety regulations.
- Endangering the safety of people, plant or equipment.
- Failure to or refusal to carry out a reasonable and lawful instruction.
- Acts of incitement, or discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion or belief, disability, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital or

- civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity or age.
- Misuse of the Organisation's name, equipment, facilities or property.
 - Inappropriate use of e-mail or internet systems.
 - Negligence, recklessness or serious error, which causes unacceptable loss, damage, disruption or injury.
 - Unauthorised use or serious disclosure of confidential Organisation information.
 - Carrying an offensive weapon.
 - Bringing the Organisation into disrepute.
 - Being charged, investigated or prosecuted for an alleged criminal act which would be incompatible with continued employment with the Organisation, with the continuation of carrying out the employee's duties, or with working with other employees.
 - Breach any of the Organisation's Compliance Policies and Procedures.
 - Providing incorrect information in any CV or application form.

The list above is not exhaustive.

Appeal Procedure

An employee may appeal against the outcome of the disciplinary meeting.

An appeal should be made in writing, stating the full grounds of appeal, to your line manager or HR, within 5 working days of the date on which the decision was sent. An invite to an appeal meeting will then be sent as soon as possible. Where practicable, this meeting will be held by a manager senior to the one who conducted the disciplinary meeting.

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If you chose a work colleague to be your Companion then that person is entitled to time off to attend the hearing. If you chose a trade union official their attendance does not constitute recognition of a trade union for other purposes,

The ASC may refuse a request for a particular companion if they believe it inappropriate

Sickness absence policy

The ASC recognises that sickness absence can arise for a number of different reasons, from short intermittent periods to long term absence. We therefore wish to ensure that the reasons for sickness absence are properly understood in each case, investigated where necessary and where needed, measures are taken to assist people who are off sick to return to work. This will be done through use of the disciplinary procedure.

Long Term Ill Health

The ASC will adopt a sensitive and supportive approach to managing employees experiencing long term ill health. If an employee is suffering from an illness which may result in them no longer being able to perform their role the ASC will hold regular reviews with the employee and their manager to establish;

- > The employees state of health
- > The employees fitness to attend work
- > The affect on the employees performance on their return to work following a long term illness

Any employee absent from work due to ill health should expect to be contacted by their manager from time to time, to discuss their condition. This is intended to ensure the employee's ill health is managed properly and contact will be kept to a minimum.

We are aware that any sickness absence may be disability related. If sickness absence is being managed under the disciplinary procedure, particular consideration will be given to whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the requirements of a job or other aspects of working arrangements which would provide support at work and/or assist a return to work.

Any employee who considers that they are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects their ability to undertake their work should inform their manager.

Abuse of sickness absence procedure

Employees that are absent from work due to sickness are expected to act in such a manner that would assist their return to work at the earliest opportunity. It is not usually expected that an Employee undertake any activities while on sick leave that may be detrimental to their recovery or are inconsistent with their condition.

Family Friendly Policies

The ASC believes that it is important to sustain a good work life balance and as such endeavour to support employees with their individual requirements to enable this. All information around family friendly policies including maternity, paternity and other leave can be requested from HR, as required.

Data Protection

The ASC is committed to fully comply with all requirements of the Data Protection Act, 2018 and the associated General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

For the purposes of administration and management, the ASC needs to retain and process certain personal and sensitive data about its Employees and clients. This will only be done in line with its responsibilities and obligations as laid out in the GDPR.

The complete ASC Data Protection Policy can be found in the HR folder of the ASC drive, along with the Company's Privacy Statement and Retention Policy. The ASC expects all of its Employees to comply fully with this policy and the principles of the data protection legislation. Any breach of this policy may result in action being taken under the Organisation Disciplinary Procedure.

Information Technology Systems

The purpose of this policy is to define inappropriate use of computers, internet services, networks, email systems and voicemail. The following activities are in violation of this policy:

- Any illegal activities, or activities in support of illegal activities
- Use of resources not related to the business
- Transmitting defamatory, threatening, obscene, or harassing materials, or messages that disclose personal and/or confidential information without authorization
- Interfering with or disrupting network users, services, or equipment. Disruptions include, but are not limited to, distribution of unsolicited advertising, propagation of computer worms and viruses, and using the network to make unauthorized entry to any other machine accessible via the network
- Unauthorized copying of material or media protected by copyright
- Propagation of fraud or spam
- Downloading of defamatory, obscene, or offensive materials

The above list is not exhaustive.

Email Privacy

All messages composed, sent, received, or stored are the property of ASC. They are not the private property of the employee, and therefore, the confidentiality of any message should not be assumed. ASC reserve the right to review, audit, intercept, access, disclose, and use messages created, received, or sent through its email systems. The contents of email may be disclosed and used by ASC to protect its rights and/or property without the permission of the employee, at ASC's discretion.

Technology and Network Security

The security of ASC's technology and networks depends upon each user behaving responsibly while accessing the networks. Those using the ASC networks are advised to guard passwords; regularly update operating systems, anti-virus software, and anti-malware software; and avoid potentially dangerous online content presented in browsers, email applications, and other media platforms. If an employee is uncertain about safeguarding their technological resources, it is the responsibility of individual employees to seek advice from qualified experts.

Technology Care

Employees entrusted with technology purchased by ASC are expected to exercise reasonable care in using the technology. Employees are expected to be careful with the equipment, adequately safeguard it against theft and misuse from non-ASC employees, transport it in protective carrying cases, not leave it unattended in public places, and otherwise exercise care and judgment that would be generally considered reasonable with respect to expensive equipment. Employees who lose or damage ASC equipment for reasons of gross irresponsibility or negligence may be liable for the replacement cost.

Working from Home Policy

This policy sets out the ASC's support arrangements for staff working from home. ASC's priority is to ensure anyone working from home has a safe and reasonable space in which to work.

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment

In line with ASC's duty of care to all its workers ASC has developed a working from home Display Screen Equipment (DSE) self-assessment. This is to assess the current working conditions and workstation set up of all ASC workers (employees and consultants) and to help address any concerns or issues you may have concerning your work environment.

ASC would like to invite all of our workers to complete the assessment and return a copy to the Office Manager in Utrecht. This will then be shared with your line manager and HR.

If any concerns are raised following completion of this assessment, your line manager will discuss any further action required with you. This may involve considering additional equipment needs or undergoing an Occupational Health assessment in order to better understand any additional needs.

If at any point you feel uncomfortable discussing your situation with your line manager, please contact HR directly.

Equipment

Following completion of the DSE self-assessment, ASC will provide any equipment that we consider is reasonably required by ASC employees to work from home. Any purchases require prior authorisation by your line manager and any equipment bought will remain the property of ASC.

ASC will also provide up to £100 of additional funding per year (or the local equivalent sum) to all ASC employees to cover any additional non-essential equipment that you may like to purchase to improve your work environment, such as an ergonomic office chair. This money can also be used to contribute to use of a shared office space if this is preferable. All costs must be authorised by your line manager in advance and can then be claimed via the expenses procedure.

If you work for ASC on a consultancy basis, the costs of equipment required following the DSE self-assessment will be the responsibility of the consultancy company.

Health, safety and wellbeing

When working at home you should take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of anyone else who might be affected by your actions and omissions, as you would if you were in the office.

Please also ensure that you take rest breaks and ensure that your work patterns and levels of work (both any over time and during shorter periods) are not detrimental to your health and wellbeing. If you have any concerns around this, please discuss it with your manager or a member of HR as soon as possible. **Further help on this can be found in the [introduction to wellbeing webinar](#).**

Data security and confidentiality

Please ensure you are familiar with the ASC [data protection](#) and [privacy](#) policies. In line with these, all equipment and information must be kept securely and you should take all necessary steps to ensure that private and confidential material is kept secure at all times.

If you discover or suspect that there has been an incident involving the security of information relating to the company, clients, customers or anyone working with or for the company, you must report it immediately to your line manager.

Morcan have installed software on your computer to perform periodic backups. If you have any questions about how this software operates or if you have not yet had the software installed, please contact Morcan directly.

Insurance

Please be advised that working at home may affect home insurance policies, mortgages, rental leases or rental arrangements. Employee's should check their policies. It is the employee's responsibility to make any necessary arrangements with insurers, banks, mortgage providers or landlords.

“Whistle-blowing” Policy

It is understood that employees may, at one time or another, have concerns about what is happening within the organisation. Generally, these concerns can be easily resolved. However, some concerns may be about serious malpractice.

This policy therefore provides a procedure to enable employees to raise concerns about possible serious malpractice at an early stage and to provide assurance to employees that any matters raised will be dealt with seriously, without fear of reprisal and, where possible, confidentially.

The ASC is committed to operating its business within current legislation and to the highest standards of professional conduct.

It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of the activities that might constitute misconduct or malpractice but, broadly speaking, employees would be expected to report any of the following:

- Criminal offences
- Failure to comply with legal obligations
- Miscarriages of justice
- Actions that endanger the health and safety of employees or the public
- Actions which cause damage to the environment
- Bribery or corruption

In order to raise a concern, the employee does not have to have evidence of the malpractice, but must have a reasonable belief that the malpractice has occurred.

If an employee has a concern, they should use the Grievance Procedure. If however, an employee feels unable to do this for any reason, they should raise their concern with the Finance Manager. The employee must declare any personal interest they have in the matter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I confirm that I have read, understood and agree to abide by the rules, policies & information contained in this handbook.

Signed by the Employee:

Printed name:

Date: