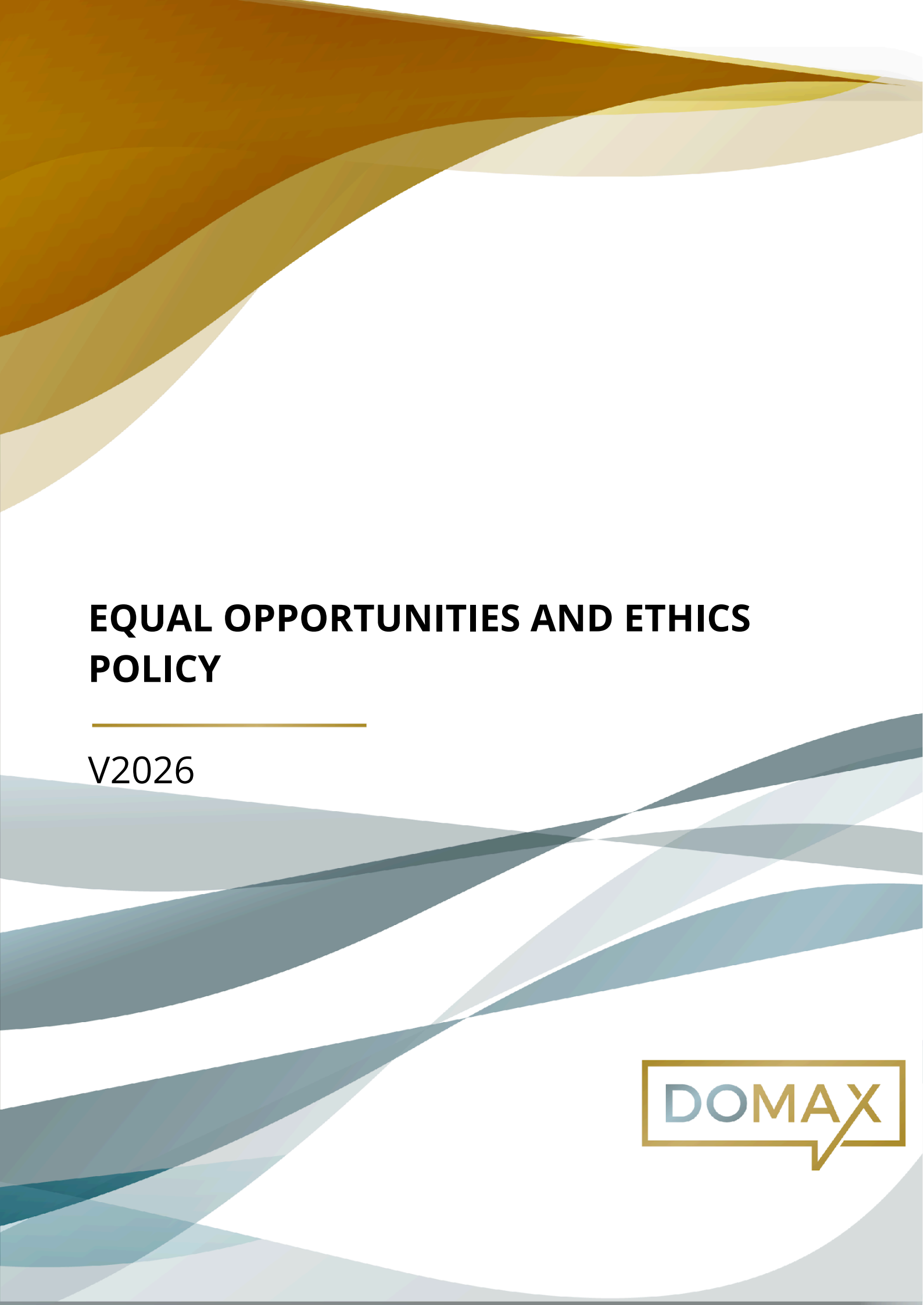




EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND ETHICS POLICY

V2026



1. Monitoring and Review of Programmes Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

DOMAX is founded on the belief that education flourishes in an environment where equality, fairness, and respect are not simply protected but actively promoted. This policy sets out the institution's ethical commitments and responsibilities in creating a community where every student and member of staff can reach their potential free from discrimination, bias, or prejudice.

The policy affirms DOMAX's adherence to the principles of human dignity and equal rights as enshrined in the Maltese Constitution, European Union legislation, and the standards of the Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA). It also recognises that equal opportunity and ethical integrity are not static obligations but evolving practices that must be reviewed, discussed, and renewed through reflection and dialogue.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all members of the DOMAX community—students, academic and administrative staff, contractors, visiting lecturers, external assessors, examiners, and partner institutions. It governs every aspect of institutional life, including admission, recruitment, teaching, research, assessment, promotion, governance, and representation at events or on digital platforms.

3. Our Ethical Philosophy

At DOMAX, equality is understood as more than the absence of discrimination; it is an active process of ensuring fair access, participation, and recognition. Diversity is seen not as a challenge to be managed but as an enrichment of institutional life that deepens our collective understanding of language, culture, and education.

Ethical behaviour is defined by honesty, accountability, and care for others. Decisions and actions—whether academic, administrative, or managerial—must be guided by respect for truth, transparency, and professional responsibility. DOMAX's ethical culture relies on personal integrity supported by institutional mechanisms that encourage openness and discourage misconduct.

4. Principles of Equal Opportunity

DOMAX is committed to ensuring fair access, equity of experience, and the active promotion of diversity within its community. The institution recognises that equality does not mean identical treatment but rather ensuring that every individual has the support and opportunity necessary to succeed.

DOMAX's approach is underpinned by a zero-tolerance stance towards discrimination and harassment. Recruitment, admission, and assessment processes must be fair, documented, and transparent. All decisions must be made on the basis of merit and free from bias. The



institution values diversity as a strength and is committed to maintaining accountability and openness in all institutional processes.

5. Implementation and Institutional Responsibilities

The Internal Quality Assurance Officer provides strategic oversight of equality and ethics. The Ethics Committee coordinates implementation, ensuring that equality measures are integrated into programme design, assessment procedures, staff recruitment, and community engagement.

All Department Heads and Course Tutors must apply inclusive principles in curriculum development, class interaction, and assessment. They are expected to model fairness and professional courtesy in every aspect of their work. Students also share this responsibility. Every learner is expected to contribute to an inclusive environment, respect differing viewpoints, and avoid language or behaviour that marginalises others.

6. Embedding Equality in Practice

DOMAX promotes equality through deliberate institutional actions. Programme materials and examples reflect cultural and linguistic diversity, while recruitment and career progression are managed through transparent, bias-free procedures. Professional development opportunities focus on inclusive pedagogy, unconscious bias, ethical leadership, and responsible research.

The institution supports flexible and family-friendly arrangements and reasonable scheduling of meetings to accommodate diverse personal circumstances.

7. Ethics in Teaching, Research and Assessment

DOMAX considers ethical awareness an integral element of professional competence. Teaching and learning must be impartial and respectful, while assessment must be conducted with integrity and confidentiality. All work is graded on merit, and research involving human participants requires informed consent and adherence to data-protection laws. Conflicts of interest must be declared, and plagiarism or data fabrication is strictly prohibited. The ethical use of Artificial Intelligence is also admitted; AI tools may only be used when explicitly permitted, must be acknowledged transparently, and may never be used in ways that misrepresent authorship or compromise academic integrity.

8. Preventing and Addressing Misconduct

DOMAX is committed to a culture where individuals feel safe to raise concerns without fear of reprisal. Reports of harassment, discrimination, or ethical breaches are handled with sensitivity, confidentiality, and procedural fairness. The Complaints and Appeals Policy (Annex A) provides the mechanism for lodging grievances. Investigations are carried out promptly by the Ethics Committee, and corrective measures or disciplinary action are taken when necessary.

9. Ethical Leadership and Governance

DOMAX leaders are expected to act as role models of integrity. Decisions must be evidence-based, conflicts of interest declared, and power exercised with fairness and humility. The Ethics Committee reviews equality data, monitors compliance, and recommends further actions for improvement.



Academic and support staff are responsible for:

- modelling appropriate digital conduct
- maintaining safe online learning spaces
- intervening when inappropriate behaviour occurs
- reporting cyberbullying or digital misconduct through the appropriate channels
- ensuring that online sessions follow safeguarding and data-protection expectations

10. Communication and Review

This policy is made publicly available on the DOMAX website and the LMS. It is reviewed by the Ethics Committee on an annual basis or if legislation or institutional needs require. The review includes consultation with students, staff, alumni, and community partners to ensure that the policy remains effective and representative of DOMAX's values.



DOMAX Code of Conduct for Students and Staff

Document Code: DOMAX-IQA-10B

1. Purpose

The Code of Conduct translates DOMAX's ethical and equality commitments into daily practice. It defines the standards of behaviour expected from everyone representing the institution—whether in the classroom, online, at partner institutions, or in external professional contexts.

2. Living by the Values

Members of the DOMAX community are expected to demonstrate courtesy, honesty, and professionalism. Each person shares responsibility for creating a learning and working environment where ideas can be challenged respectfully, diversity is valued, and integrity underpins every action. Respect means listening carefully to others, avoiding assumptions, and acknowledging that people's experiences and perspectives differ. Integrity means acting consistently with one's words, acknowledging mistakes, and correcting them promptly.

3. Professional Behaviour and Boundaries

Students and staff must behave professionally in all online interactions, including:

- discussion forums
- messaging tools
- video-conferencing sessions
- collaborative platforms
- email and LMS communication

Authority should never be misused, and personal boundaries must always be observed. Communication—whether verbal, written, or online—should remain courteous and appropriate. Academic and administrative staff must avoid conflicts of interest, particularly in assessment or recruitment. Students are expected to engage actively in their learning, meet deadlines, and seek clarification when unsure about academic or ethical expectations.

4. Learning and Research Integrity

All academic work must be produced honestly and independently. Plagiarism, collusion, and misuse of AI tools constitute academic misconduct. Research participants must provide informed consent, and all data must be handled securely. Research findings must be reported truthfully, and ethical breaches will be treated seriously.

5. Respectful Community Conduct

Bullying, harassment, or discrimination of any kind—verbal, physical, psychological, or online—will not be tolerated.

Prohibited behaviours include:

- sending threatening, abusive, discriminatory or demeaning messages;

- posting harmful or defamatory content about peers or staff;
- excluding, humiliating or targeting individuals in online spaces;
- sharing private information without consent;
- misusing digital tools to intimidate, manipulate or harm others.

Any form of cyberbullying will be investigated by the Ethics Committee under the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy and may result in disciplinary action. Anyone who experiences or witnesses unacceptable conduct should report it through the designated channels. The institution guarantees confidentiality, fair investigation, and protection from retaliation.

6. Digital and Social Media Conduct

The same standards of respect apply online as in person. Posts, messages, and shared content must not bring the institution into disrepute, disclose confidential information, or target individuals or groups. Online learning environments are official spaces, and students and staff are expected to behave as they would in a physical classroom—punctual, attentive, and respectful.

To maintain a safe and effective learning environment, all users must:

- use the LMS and communication tools only for legitimate academic purposes;
- follow tutor instructions regarding online sessions, camera/microphone use and participation;
- refrain from sharing inappropriate, copyrighted or harmful content;
- avoid actions that disrupt online classes or compromise the learning environment.

7. Consequences of Misconduct

Breaches of the Code of Conduct are investigated in accordance with DOMAX's disciplinary procedures. Depending on the gravity of the case, outcomes may include written warnings, suspension, dismissal, or expulsion. Where appropriate, restorative measures such as mediation or additional training may be applied.

8. Support, Mediation and Resolution

DOMAX encourages open communication and early resolution of conflicts. Mediation is available through the Ethics Committee. Confidential counselling and welfare support are offered to anyone affected by discrimination, harassment, or ethical dilemmas.

9. Declaration of Commitment

Upon joining DOMAX, all staff and students sign the Code of Conduct Declaration Form (Annex B), confirming their understanding of and agreement to uphold these standards.

10. Review and Dissemination

This Code is reviewed annually alongside the Equal Opportunities and Ethics Policy. Updates are communicated through staff briefings, student inductions, and the institutional LMS to ensure shared ownership and understanding.

ANNEX A

The Complaints and Appeals Policy

This policy establishes the framework through which students and staff may raise concerns or appeal decisions made by DOMAX. Its aim is to promote fairness, accountability, and mutual respect while ensuring that issues are resolved promptly and constructively.

DOMAX encourages the resolution of matters at the earliest possible stage through open dialogue and mediation. The formal procedure is intended for cases where informal resolution is not possible or has been unsuccessful.

2. Scope

The policy applies to:

- Current students enrolled in DOMAX programmes.
- Alumni with grievances relating to their period of study (within 6 months of completion).
- Members of staff who wish to lodge a formal complaint regarding workplace conduct or procedural irregularities.
- External candidates or partners directly affected by DOMAX decisions (e.g. assessment moderation, partnership oversight).

This policy covers both non-academic complaints (e.g. service quality, behaviour, communication) and academic appeals (e.g. assessment decisions, disciplinary outcomes).

3. Guiding Principles

1. **Fairness and Impartiality** – All parties are treated equally, and decisions are based on evidence.
2. **Confidentiality** – Information is shared only with those directly involved in the process.
3. **Timeliness** – Every effort is made to resolve issues within reasonable timeframes.
4. **Accessibility** – Procedures are transparent and available to all students and staff.
5. **Protection from Retaliation** – No person will suffer disadvantage for raising a genuine concern in good faith.
6. **Learning and Improvement** – Findings from complaints and appeals contribute to institutional enhancement.

4. Definitions

- **Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction with any aspect of DOMAX's services, staff conduct, learning environment, or facilities.
- **Appeal:** A formal request for review of an academic or disciplinary decision believed to be unfair, procedurally flawed, or inconsistent with policy.
- **Appellant/Complainant:** The person submitting the complaint or appeal.
- **Respondent:** The staff member, department, or committee whose decision or action is being questioned.

5. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1: Informal Resolution

Students and staff are encouraged to raise issues directly with the individual or department concerned within 10 working days of the incident.

- The matter should be discussed respectfully and, where possible, resolved through explanation or minor corrective action.
- If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the complainant may proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

A written complaint should be submitted to domax@domaxltd.org using the **Complaint Form (Annex C)** within 20 working days of the event.

The submission must include:

- Full details of the concern.
- Steps already taken to resolve it.
- Desired outcome or proposed resolution.

Upon receipt, the Ethics Committee begins to investigate the complaint. The complainant and respondent may be interviewed separately by the Academic Director.

A written response outlining findings and proposed actions will be issued within 15 working days.

Stage 3: Final Institutional Review

If mediation fails or is declined, a **Complaints Review Panel** comprising three senior members of staff (none previously involved) will consider the case.

The Panel will:

- Review all evidence;
- Interview the complainant and respondent if necessary;
- Issue a final written decision within 20 working days.

The Panel's decision is final within DOMAX. A summary (excluding personal data) is forwarded to the Ethics Committee.

6. Academic Appeals Procedure

Grounds for Appeal

Appeals against academic decisions will be accepted only on one or more of the following grounds:

1. A procedural irregularity or administrative error occurred.
2. New, material evidence is available that could not reasonably have been presented earlier.
3. Evidence of bias or unfair treatment.

Disagreement with academic judgement (i.e., an assessor's evaluation of performance) is **not** grounds for appeal. Refer to Assessment, Grading and Forum Participation Policy, "Re-marking and Appeals", for appeals regarding assessment evaluation.

Stage 1: Notification

The student must submit a written **Notice of Appeal** within 10 working days of receiving the assessment or disciplinary decision.

Stage 2: Initial Review

The Course Tutor reviews the case to verify whether grounds for appeal exist. If minor errors are confirmed, the grade may be adjusted and recorded accordingly.

Stage 3: Formal Appeal Hearing

If the issue cannot be resolved, the matter proceeds to the Academic Director and including two independent academic members.

The Board will review:

- The appellant's written submission;
- The assessor's rationale and evidence;
- Relevant moderation records and marking schemes.

The appellant may be invited to present their case in person or online. A written outcome is communicated within 20 working days.

Stage 4: External Review

If the student remains dissatisfied after all institutional stages, they may refer the matter to the **Malta Further and Higher Education Authority (MFHEA)** or an external awarding partner (where applicable).

7. Record-Keeping and Confidentiality

All records of complaints and appeals—including correspondence, forms, meeting notes, and decisions—are stored securely on the DOMAX LMS and internal QA system for a minimum of five years.

Data is handled in accordance with **DOMAX Data Protection measures** and GDPR requirements.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Ethics Committee:** ensures fair application of the policy; investigates cases impartially and maintains accurate records.
- **Internal Quality Assurance Function:** oversees institutional compliance; monitors outcomes and reports trends in the Annual QA Report.

9. Communication and Support

Students and staff are informed of this policy during induction and can access it on the DOMAX website and LMS. Support and guidance are available from:

- Course Tutors;
- The Student Support Desk (DOMAX Registrar).

DOMAX encourages any member of its community to seek advice early, before a situation escalates.

10. Review

This policy is reviewed regularly by the Ethics Committee. Feedback from staff, students, and external stakeholders is used to ensure ongoing relevance, transparency, and compliance with MFHEA standards.



ANNEX B

Code of Conduct Declaration Form

This declaration form confirms that the undersigned has received, read, and understood the **DOMAX Code of Conduct for Students and Staff** and agrees to uphold the ethical, professional, and behavioural standards defined therein.

It applies to all academic, administrative, and collaborative activity undertaken on behalf of DOMAX, whether conducted in person, online, or through partner institutions.

Commitment Statement

By signing this document, I confirm that I:

1. Have read and understood the **DOMAX Equal Opportunities and Ethics Policy** and the **DOMAX Code of Conduct for Students and Staff**.
2. Recognise that I share responsibility for maintaining a professional, inclusive, and respectful learning and working environment.
3. Agree to conduct myself with honesty, courtesy, and integrity in all interactions with students, colleagues, and partners.
4. Understand that discrimination, harassment, bullying, or any other form of misconduct is unacceptable and subject to disciplinary action.
5. Will comply with DOMAX regulations on assessment integrity, plagiarism, data protection, confidentiality, and use of institutional resources.
6. Acknowledge my duty to report any observed or suspected breaches of conduct through the proper institutional channels, acting in good faith and without fear of reprisal.
7. Accept that failure to observe these principles may result in disciplinary measures in accordance with DOMAX's internal policies and procedures.

Declaration of Understanding

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that:

- I have received a copy of the **DOMAX Code of Conduct** and related policies.
- I understand their contents and the responsibilities they impose.
- I will act in accordance with DOMAX's values of fairness, equality, and ethical professionalism.

I acknowledge that this declaration will be kept on record by DOMAX as evidence of my compliance with institutional quality-assurance and ethical-governance requirements.



Equal Opportunities and Ethics Policy

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