What are professional values?

Someone who displays **professional values** will:

- portray a professional image through reliability, consistency and honesty
- dress and act appropriately
- deliver work outcomes to agreed quality standards and timescales
- be accountable for their actions.

As well as the above, organisations will have their own set of values plus specific instructions and rules for your particular role, alongside any relevant laws and legislation which you will be expected to understand and adhere to. It is likely you will have a full induction to explain all this when you start at an organisation, but there are certain behaviours which are relevant to any situation

What are employers looking for?

There are certain professional values which are universal and appropriate for all scenarios, whether it be at an interview, work experience or starting in a new role:

- **Dress appropriately** - if you are not sure of the dress code, ask!
- **Punctuality** - make sure you have planned your route and you are confident of turning up on time (every day!)
- **Politeness and respect for others -** creates good working relationships with colleagues and customers.
- **Discretion and confidentiality** - as well as being ethically right to protect sensitive information, the Data Protection Act makes it illegal to share data beyond its intended use.
- **Honesty** - you could damage your own or the organization's reputation by lying or being dishonest.
- **Personal responsibility** – if you have a deadline to meet, or have made a commitment to do something then take responsibility for delivering on time. Don't let people down, make excuses or blame others if you are unable to honor your commitments.
- **Continuing professional development (CPD)** – taking responsibility for your own learning, taking advantage of training available to you as well as seeking out opportunities to learn new skills and develop your knowledge.

As well as the above, each organization is likely to have its own specific sets of values. You can learn some of the values expected of you in a role through researching the organization- take a look at their '**About Us**' or '**Why work for us?**' pages; you are likely to find an indication of the company's ethos, branding or position in the marketplace.

For example, taken from a job description for a role here at The University of Bradford:

"It is the responsibility of every employee to uphold the University values of:

- encouraging participation and openness;
- encouraging creativity and innovation;
- supporting academic freedom and respecting the right to express diverse points of view;
- providing equal opportunities for all staff and students to achieve their full potential;

- applying the best ethical standards in everything we do"

And Cummins states that their 'mission' includes:

- "Motivating people to act like owners working together.
- Exceeding customer expectations by always being first to market with the best products.
- Partnering with our customers to make sure that they succeed.
- Demanding that everything we do leads to a cleaner, healthier, safer environment.
- Creating wealth for all stakeholders."

These wider values give an indication of what a organisation is like to work for, so you should be happy that a company's ethos fits with your own before applying for a job. Otherwise, you might find that a job is not the right fit for you once you have started in the role.

Gaining and developing professional values

Below are some examples of how you may already have gained professional values at the University of Bradford and beyond. There may also be some useful suggestions here if you are looking to develop your skills further:

- **your academic work and studies** - well presented and proofread work, submitted on time; attended all lectures and meetings.
- **part-time jobs, internships and work experience** - excellent attendance record, followed policies and procedures, wore a uniform / adhered to dress code, gave excellent customer service, learned and promoted a product range, protected confidentiality, etc.
- **position of responsibility in a student society or club** - budget responsibility, attended and chaired meetings, communicated to group, etc.
- **a first aider, fire warden or health and safety officer role**.
- **student ambassador or course rep** - upheld and promoted the values of the University.

Related key words / skills

- Responsibility
- Accountability
- Time management
- Professionalism
- Integrity
- Customer service