



Portfolio of Policies





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Who we are:

Natural Academy is an eco-social enterprise rooted in 12 years of training people to work with others in nature. Its vision is that through the potential of training and education there is a way of helping support solutions to the human health crisis and the environmental crisis. At its core is the principle of Healthy people: Healthy planet.

It has four main audiences.

- Individual practitioners seeking professional development in Nature, Health and Wellbeing and Green Care.
- Individuals wanting to develop a professional career in Eco-psychology, Eco-therapy and Nature Based Practice
- Organisations, operating in health, wellbeing, conservation, community and environment who are seeking to develop Nature, Health and Wellbeing, Green Care, Eco-therapeutic or Deeper Nature services.
- Networks bringing together nature and health organisations where it represents professional training and the setting of standards. Such as the Nature Partnerships and the developing Green Care networks.

Biographies of founders of Natural Academy



Rhonda Brandrick:

Rhonda is a nature-based practitioner, supervisor, counsellor, teacher, author and nature vision quest guide. She brings a wealth of experience from her many years of working with the health, healing and wellbeing of people individually and in groups. With her deep curiosity about our human-nature reciprocal relationship with the earth and our on-going personal and collective development within this, she has been apprenticing as a wilderness guide with Animas Valley Institute and Bill Plotkin for the past 5 years. She is dedicated to helping nature-based practitioners develop the skills and knowledge to work with people and also for them to have access to the support they need to work optimally with their participants. Rhonda loves dancing, Samba drumming, dream working and is a Mother and Grandmother.



Michéal Connors:

Michéal is an eco-psychologist, mountain leader, author and holistic health and wellbeing professional. He is a qualified psychotherapist, supervisor and FE lecturer. He taught and led departments in counselling and psychotherapy and has a deep understanding of innovative education. He has been working in the health sector for the past 12 years developing self-care services for people with cancer and with long-term conditions as part of this he created eco-therapy services and nature and health residential courses for people affected by cancer. He is a trained Wild Mind Practitioner. He has been in the fields of education, health and wellbeing for over 25 years and brings a deep experience of different psychological and holistic approaches to his work. He is currently working with a number of different nature-based organisations helping develop sustainable reciprocal nature services with clear outcomes and impacts. He is also working with Rhonda in developing training and support for people working with others in nature. He is a musician, poet, song writer, Father and Grandparent.



Developing the Natural Academy

Although we have been delivering our courses for 8 years we are now taking the next step for the academy both in terms of accreditation and growth of our courses. Over the next 3 years we intend to develop a suite of accredited courses in nature-based health and wellbeing and eco-psychology.

Staffing Structure for the Natural Academy

Management

The executive directors are Michéal Connors and Rhonda Brandrick and they are jointly responsible for the curriculum and governance. They have a co-director Brady George who will be involved in finance, governance and oversight.

Tutors

The main tutors in England are Michéal Connors & Rhonda Brandrick who teach on the Threshold Award and the Certificate in Eco Psychology and Nature Based practice.

The internal moderator for the Certificate is Mark Deane.

He is part of the team just beginning to develop the courses in N Ireland, alongside Jennifer Deane.

Finances: Course budget example: see appendix 1.



Policies and Procedures

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GENERAL POLICIES

1. Equality and Diversity

NA is committed to encouraging equality and diversity among our workforce, student body and customers and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our workforce and student body to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for each person to feel respected and able to give their best.

The policy's purpose is to:

- provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time
- not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation
- oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities

NA commits to:

- encourage equality and diversity in the workplace as they are good practice and make business sense
- create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination,
- promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and value.

Our Commitment

- This commitment includes informing all about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination
- All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, students, suppliers and the public.



- They should take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities
- make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation
- decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act)
- review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law
- monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality and diversity, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality policy
- Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality policy, and any sporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them annually, and considering and acting to address any issues

Procedures

Any acts that are against this policy will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and any appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice

Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence

The equality policy is fully supported by senior management



2. Natural Academy Health and Safety

Emergency and serious incident plan

Natural Academy have in place a number of procedures and processes, including risk management and risk assessment, which aim to reduce the risks of a serious accident or incident. These are created for each course and any outdoor environment. However, on occasions the unforeseen will happen and it is important that in such an event we have the ability to respond quickly and efficiently in order to:

- **Provide immediate support for those affected.**
 - **Get colleagues and students to the scene to provide support and control.**
 - **Help the emergency services by providing important information.**
1. Natural Academy staff to secure safety of whole group from further danger. Stop all work/activities if needed. Call in and locate group promptly as agreed with group in advance. If possible, remove whole group from any further danger or threat of danger.
 2. First Aider to attend to any casualties with adult helper and with regard for maintenance of required supervision ratios for the rest of the party. At least one first aider must be on site at all times. A record of changes in casualties' state and anything administered to them to be made if possible.
 3. Emergency services contacted as necessary, ideally by an adult helper. Give following address to such services.
 4. Safety of the rest of group will be maintained by the remaining staff, volunteers and adults away from the scene of the incident.
 5. Immediately report any major injury or fatality
 6. Informing next of kin should be carried out as soon as practicable after the incident by senior Natural Academy Staff or by the designated member of staff of the partner organisation according to their own health and safety policy.
 7. Incident report completed and sent to appropriate director.
 8. Incidents leading to admittance to hospital for more than 24 hours or resulting in an injury preventing a person working for three or more days afterwards need to be registered with RIDDOR within 24hours Tel 0845 3009923 (HSE - Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5pm).
 9. First aid kits must be restocked after use and a stock check carried out every 6 months.
 10. Any incident or near miss must be subsequently investigated by staff team to review existing controls and procedures.

See Appendix 2 for Incident form.



3. COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, made either verbally or in writing, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Natural Academy and/or its staff, affecting an individual employee or student or group of students or employees.

PROCEDURE

Responsibilities

The Tutors are responsible for the coordination of the complaints policy and procedure.

The Tutors are responsible for overseeing the process of monitoring and reporting the progress of the complaint and any responses made.

The Internal Moderators and Director of Natural Academy are responsible for the investigation of complaints directly related to their areas of operation.

Process for complaint handling

Complaints should preferably be in writing, addressed to the Tutor and signed by the complainant, complete with address.

Telephone and verbal complaints will be entered into the complaints system, but wherever possible, should be confirmed in writing.

Anonymous complaints should also be recorded and assessed, and action taken where necessary.

In order to deal with complaints effectively and efficiently in order to resolve the problem, where possible all complaints will be resolved at the point of complaint. However, where that is not possible they will be dealt with in the following manner:

1. Natural Academy staff will handle straightforward, minor complaints. Where these minor complaints cannot be dealt with immediately, they will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days. The letter will detail what action will be taken, who the responsible person will be and a contact number, and the anticipated time for a response where this is known.
2. Complaints which cannot be handled by Natural Academy staff should be referred to the Internal Moderator or Director.
3. Any follow up complaint to an original request/complaint will progress immediately to the Internal Moderator or Director.
4. Where a complaint involves a number of different issues which require action by different members of staff, officers in the Customer Service Centre will send a letter of acknowledgement and then enter each complaint as a separate CARS (Customer Action Request System) entry to be forwarded to each relevant officer who will follow up on each complaint until its completion.



5. Serious complaints involving inappropriate behaviour (e.g. rudeness, discrimination or harassment) will be brought to the attention of the Director.
6. Serious complaints involving personal injury, a breach of the law or financial implications will be made known to the course tutors and a response from staff can be referred to a director.
7. Should the Director / Tutors consider that a complaint is of a nature that requires the involvement of an independent mediator/facilitator, this process could be employed to assist in a review.

In cases where the Student does not accept the outcome achieved by Natural Academy as a result of following its complaints procedure, the complainant should be advised of alternative options open to them. These include approaching the Awarding Body and/or the Governing Board of Natural Academy.

4. Criminal Records Check Policy

We will use the DBS system in England and Wales and Access NI in Northern Ireland to ensure that all staff who are in contact with vulnerable adults, young people or children have suitable Criminal Record Checks.

We will follow the code of practice as recommended by DBS and Access NI in following this policy.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar people. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences. We will treat all applicants, employees and volunteers fairly but reserve the right to withdraw an offer of employment if information directly relevant to the position is not revealed, or if the check reveals information which we believe would make someone unsuitable for the role.

EDUCATION POLICIES

5. Staff development and qualifications

All staff will be required to be experienced and/or qualified teachers in the specific subject areas. They will be needing to understand the requirements for an accredited course and teach, manage and assess within these requirements.

Internal moderators will be qualified teachers with experience of moderation and have an appropriate understanding of OCNL requirements for moderation.

The team will learn and develop through in-house training, dissemination of practice and external training when this is necessary



6. Fair Assessment

1. Natural Academy will ensure that all tutors assess fairly and appropriately against the assessment criteria.

2. They will do this through

- cross marking,
- internal moderation,
- external verification
- reasonable adjustments for any disability or difficulty that put the student at a significant disadvantage.
- Special consideration

For Cross Marking, Internal Moderation and External Verification. See Internal Verification and Standardisation policy.

Reasonable Adjustment

3.1 Natural Academy will endeavour to make sure all necessary reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that all learners have fair assessment. This will mean we adjust assessment if necessary for a learner with any disability or difficulties, that places them in a significant disadvantage in assessments.

3.2 Any decision to make adjustments will be done pre-assessment and a clear identification of eligibility. The needs identified may include one or more of these.

- Communication and interaction needs;
- Cognition and learning needs;
- Sensory and physical needs;
- Behavioural, emotional and social needs.

3.3 What we change depends on the unique situation and It may mean that we:

- Change the arrangements or method of assessment
- Change the materials used.
- Provide assistance



3.4 We will ensure we do not substantively change the validity of the assessment criteria and that all students work is assessed to an equal standard.

3.5 Records that show the detail of the adjustment will be kept in order to clarify that they are allowed under any awarding bodies requirements.

Special Consideration

Special consideration can be given to learners who experience temporary illness, crisis or injury.

4.1 the learner can apply for special consideration and must supply evidence in support of this. This can be medical evidence or a statement.

4.2 The tutor/centre representative must sign and date this and pass on to the manager/lead tutor responsible for the decision.

4.3 The decision and any impact on assessment of the learner's outcomes will be recorded alongside how the learner's performance can be reviewed.





7. Natural Academy Internal Moderation and Standardisation

1. We will ensure that there is an internal verifier.

1.1 For each of our courses an appropriate, independent, internal moderator will be employed to review the standards and levels of assessment.

1.2 We will ensure that the internal verification is valid and fair.

1.3 We will ensure there will be accurate and appropriate recording of any decisions.

2. We will have a cross marking

2.1 We will ensure that there is appropriate cross marking of a sample of assessed work

2.2 This cross marking will be recorded with comments.

3. We will ensure standards are set internally to meet the level of the learning outcomes.

4. We will work with the external verifier to ensure standardisation of all of our qualifications.

Procedures

- All staff will be aware of the policy and will be briefed and attend any necessary standardisation training.
- In the case of co tutors cross marking will occur to standardise the assessment within the team.
- An appropriate sample of assessed work will go to our internal verifier, on appropriate occasions, who will verify decisions and validate assignments.
- We will work with the external verifier to ensure standards are correct and appropriate.



8. Natural Academy Appeals Policy:

1. Appeals by Students: This procedure applies specifically to those students who undertake an assessment that is within the control of Natural Academy. As part of the assessment procedure, students will be asked to sign that they accept and understand their assessment. If a student believes that they have a justified grievance related to an assessment process or decision, the appeals policy applies.

Stage 1 – Tutor/Assessor and Student.

1.1 The learner should discuss the matter with the tutor who undertook the assessment in the first instance within five working days of receiving their assessment decision.

1.2 The Tutor/Assessor must consider the reasons and look again at the assessment. He or she must then give the student a response which must be either:

- confirmation in writing that the original assessment decision stands;
or
- a new decision with an explanation of the reason for the change.

1.3 The response must be filed either in the Lead Internal Verifier Programme Quality file or electronically (as appropriate).

1.4 If the learner accepts the tutor's response, then the appeal stops at this point. If the learner is still unhappy with the decision, he/she must tell the tutor within five working days of receipt. The appeal will then move to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Lead Internal Verifier

Following notification that the learner is still unhappy with the assessment decision, the tutor must give the Lead Internal Verifier the following information within two working days of the appeal reaching Stage 2:

2.1. the original assessment record and learner's evidence, where appropriate; and the written explanation and confirmation of the assessment decision.

2.2 The Lead Internal Verifier will reconsider the assessment decision, taking the following into account:

- the learner's reason for appeal;
- the learner's evidence and associated records;
- the assessor's reason for the decision; and
- the opinion of another assessor from the center.

2.3 The Lead Internal Verifier must then give the reconsidered decision, in writing, within five working days of receiving the appeal, to both learner and Tutor.



2.4 The learner must tell the Lead Internal Verifier and confirm in writing if they are still unhappy with the reconsidered assessment decision within five working days of receipt of the decision.

If so, the appeal moves to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Appeals Panel

If the learner is dissatisfied with the decision after Stage 2, they have the right to go to an Appeals Panel. The staff member who conducted the Stage 2 process must send the following details to the Nominated Quality Director.

3.1 the written explanation and confirmation of the assessment decision; the assessment record sheets; and any written comments.

3.2 Within ten working days of receiving the appeal, the Quality Director will convene a NA Appeals Panel to hear the appeal. The Appeals Panel will consist of the Quality Director, subject expert (internal or external to the College)

3.3 The learner may speak to the Appeals Panel and may be accompanied by an adviser*, and/or make a written submission.

3.4 The tutor who made the original decision will be asked to attend the Appeals Panel to answer questions.

3.5 The Appeals Panel will then discuss the matter in private and reach a majority decision. All parties will then be informed of the decision.

The decision of the Appeals Panel is final, although learners may appeal to the Awarding Body once the internal appeals decision has been completed.





9. Natural Academy Malpractice & Maladministration Policy

Purpose

Incidents of malpractice/maladministration can potentially lead to learners being disadvantaged and may cause reputational damage to the NA. It is, therefore, desirable to prevent malpractice or maladministration from occurring, whenever possible.

Scope

This policy applies to internal and external summative assessments, assignments and examinations and their reporting.

It is the responsibility of all Natural Academy staff to be vigilant with regard to any events which may lead to malpractice / maladministration occurring, and report promptly to the management and staff team where they suspect malpractice / maladministration has and /or may occur so that appropriate action can be taken to address this with immediate effect. The Management and staff team are responsible for notifying relevant awarding bodies of cases of suspected / actual malpractice and maladministration to ensure the appropriate action may be taken.

Objectives:

- to identify and minimize the risk of malpractice by staff or learners;
- to identify and minimise the risk of maladministration by staff;
- to respond to any incident promptly and objectively;
- to standardise and record any investigation to ensure openness and fairness;
- to impose appropriate penalties and/or sanctions on learners or staff where incidents (or attempted incidents) are proven;
- to protect the integrity of NA and awarding bodies.

In order to do this, NA will:

- seek to avoid potential malpractice by using the induction period and the student handbook to inform students of the policy on malpractice and the penalties for attempted and actual incidents of malpractice;
- show students the appropriate formats to record cited texts and other materials or information sources;
- ask students to declare that their work is their own;
- ask students to provide evidence of any sources used;
- conduct any investigations in a form commensurate with the nature of any allegation;
- ensure the handling of individual cases takes account of the needs of the student, including those arising from protected characteristics.

Malpractice overall definition



The term 'malpractice' covers any deliberate actions, neglect, default or other practice associated with the examples below; it may include a range of issues from the failure to maintain appropriate records or systems to the deliberate falsification of records in order to claim certificates.

Student malpractice: any action by the learner which has the potential to undermine the integrity and validity of the assessment of the learner's work. (plagiarism, collusion, cheating, etc.)

Examples of Malpractice by Learners

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by the Academy at its discretion:

- plagiarism of any nature;
- collusion by working collaboratively with other learners to produce work that is submitted as individual learner work;
- copying (including the use of ICT to aid copying);
- deliberate destruction of another's work;
- fabrication of results or evidence;
- false declaration of authenticity in relation to the contents of a portfolio or coursework;
- impersonation by pretending to be someone else in order to produce the work for another or arranging for another to take one's place in an assessment/examination/test;
- inclusion of inappropriate, offensive, discriminatory or obscene material in assessment evidence.

Examples of Malpractice by Academy Staff

This list is not exhaustive and other instances of malpractice may be considered by this center at its discretion:

- improper assistance to candidates;
- inventing or changing marks for internally assessed work (coursework or portfolio evidence) where there is insufficient evidence of the candidates' achievement to justify the marks given or assessment decisions made;
- failure to keep candidate coursework/portfolios of evidence secure;
- fraudulent claims for certificates;
- inappropriate retention of certificates;
- allowing evidence, which is known by the staff member not to be the learner's own, to be included in a learner's assignment/task/portfolio/coursework;
- facilitating and allowing impersonation;
- falsifying records/certificates, for example by alteration, substitution, or by fraud;
- fraudulent certificate claims, that is claiming for a certificate prior to the learner completing all the requirements of assessment;



- failure to comply with awarding body procedures for managing and transferring accurate learner data.

Maladministration

Maladministration is any non-deliberate activity, neglect, default or other practice that results in NA or student not complying with the specified requirements for delivery of the qualifications as set out in the relevant codes of practice, where applicable.

Actions and Responsibilities

The Senior Managers of NA are expected to:

- establish the culture and overall values
- appoint a named person responsible for ensuring the institution is dealing effectively with any student plagiarism; (Rhonda Brandrick)
- ensure policies and procedures are appropriate to the current situation;
- maintain systems for keeping records of all incidents and what action has been taken;
- allow consultation, discussion and dissemination of relevant information.
- **inform awarding bodies of any acts of malpractice.**

All teaching staff are expected to:

- provide students with clear explanations of what is valued in academic work (integrity, honesty, wide-ranging research, choosing and using others' ideas etc.) and why academic conventions are important;
- make available a wide selection of exemplar materials on referencing, citations and assessment approaches, showing clearly the difference between acceptable and unacceptable practice;
- model integrity themselves when they cite sources in their lectures, or talk about selecting and using authoritative sources to support an argument;
- develop students' study skills as an integral part of their course. These include note-taking, paraphrasing and summarising, and using in-text citations. In technical areas, students need to know the difference between copying the model and applying it;
- ensure that all incidences of cheating and plagiarism, including the results of any conversations, meetings or feedback with students, are properly reported and recorded;



- consult with colleagues, managers and awarding bodies on alleged misconduct offences and seek appropriate guidance, where needed, on managing the investigative process;
- ensure that curriculum managers receive an annual course report on cheating and plagiarism issues at the end of each academic year in the course self-assessment report.

Internal Verifiers are expected to:

Make malpractice checks when internally verifying work

- supervise the investigation and resolution of moderate and serious cases of academic misconduct;
- report on cheating and plagiarism issues as part of the self-assessment process;
- keep senior managers informed of case developments and progress.

students are expected to:

- submit work for assessment that is their own original work;
- attend all study skills sessions that are relevant to developing their note-taking, paraphrasing, synthesizing and referencing skills;
- seek advice on assessment practice and procedures from course tutors prior to submitting work;

