

Excel Education Systems, Inc.



Employee Corporate Handbook
Onboarding/Orientation/Training
Professional Development

Updated September 2020

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Section 1 – Welcome, Hiring Philosophy

Excel Education Systems, Inc. realizes that the success of our organization is reliant upon a highly trained and well-supported workforce. The stockholders and leadership of the Company greatly value our people and have developed policies and benefits that we believe will best serve our employees and create a positive culture that caters to the Company's mission and overall success. EES makes significant investments in our employees that contribute to the well-being of our staff, which ensures the best experiences and outcomes for our customers.

Mission Statement

At Excel Education Systems, we have a mission to be the country's most respected provider of accredited, distance learning products, and services. We have established a culture that supports our team members so that they can provide exceptional service to our students and educational partners.

Vision Statement

Our vision is to provide the marketplace with high quality, affordable and user-friendly, distance learning products, and services. Learning will be enhanced by the use of intuitive technologies and supported by a highly-qualified team of educators who are dedicated to the success of our students and partners.

1.1 History, Goals & Culture

Excel Education Systems, Inc. was incorporated in 2005 in the State of Minnesota with the goal of providing affordable, accredited, anytime, any pace, digital education programs for global learners seeking high-quality, web-based learning experiences.

EES is the parent company of Excel High School, Northgate Academy, Washington Online Learning Institute, and LearnStage. From our inception to present, our goals remain focused on offering the highest quality digital learning products and services for global learners. As the Company continues to grow our product and service offerings, we are fully committed to providing high-quality education products and services as we remain 100% focused on customer satisfaction and student success.

At Excel Education Systems, we have a keen understanding that our success starts and ends with our people. We strive to hire the best and brightest team members that share our vision of "people first." We foster a culture that promotes a winning performance and total job satisfaction for our employees. We know that satisfied employees equate to satisfied and well-supported customers. We invest in our people and challenge our employees to be their best at all levels.

1.2 Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared to inform employees of the policies and procedures of the Company and to establish the Company's expectations.

It is **not** all-inclusive or intended to provide strict interpretations of our policies; rather, it offers an overview of the work environment. This handbook is **not** a contract, expressed or implied,

guaranteeing employment for any length of time, and is not intended to induce an employee to accept employment with the Company.

The Company reserves the right to unilaterally revise, suspend, revoke, terminate or change any of its policies, in whole or in part, whether described within this handbook or elsewhere, in its sole discretion. If any discrepancy between this handbook and current company policy arises, conform to current company policy. Every effort will be made to keep you informed of the Company's policies; however, we cannot guarantee that notice of revisions will be provided. Feel free to ask questions about any of the information within this handbook.

This handbook supersedes and replaces any and all personnel policies and manuals previously distributed, made available or applicable to employees.

1.3 At-Will Employment

Employment at this Company is at-will. An at-will employment relationship can be terminated at any time, with or without reason or notice by either the employer or the employee. The at-will employment status of each employee cannot be altered by any verbal statement or alleged verbal agreement of company personnel. It can only be changed by a legally binding, written contract covering employment status. An example of this would be a written employment agreement for a specific duration of time.

1.4 Probation

All EES employees are placed on a 60-business day probation period from their start date through day 60 of employment. Employees will receive regular training and feedback from their supervisor to ensure success.

Section 2 – Workplace Commitments

2.1 Equal Opportunity Employment

This Company is an equal opportunity employer and does not unlawfully discriminate against employees or applicants for employment on the basis of an individual's race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law. This policy applies to all terms, conditions, and privileges of employment, including recruitment, hiring, placement, compensation, promotion, discipline, and termination.

Excel Education Systems is respectful of all employees' religious affiliations and political views. Excel Education Systems **does** operate a private Christian school. As such, there will be times where employees may be required to discuss some aspects of the religious curriculum with potential and current students.

Whenever possible, the Company makes reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities to the extent required by law. Employees who would like to request a reasonable accommodation should contact the Director of Operations or the HR Director.

2.2 Non-Harassment Policy / Non-Discrimination Policy

The Company prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and is free from discriminatory practices, including, without limitation, harassment. Consistent with its workplace policy of equal employment opportunity, the Company prohibits and will not tolerate harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law. Violations of this policy will not be tolerated.

Discrimination includes but is not limited to: making any employment decision or employment-related action on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, disability, national origin, marital or veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law.

Harassment is generally defined as unwelcome verbal or non-verbal conduct, based upon a person's protected characteristic, that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward the person because of the characteristic, and which affects the person's employment opportunities or benefits, has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the person's work performance, or has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment. Harassing conduct includes but is not limited to: epithets; slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; or denigrating jokes and display or circulation in the workplace of written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group based on their protected characteristic.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include: unwelcome or unsolicited sexual advances; displaying sexually suggestive material; unwelcome sexual flirtations, advances or propositions; suggestive comments; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; sexually-oriented jokes; crude or vulgar language or gestures; graphic or verbal commentaries about an individual's body; display or distribution of obscene materials; physical contact such as patting, pinching or brushing against someone's body; or physical assault of a sexual nature.

Complaint Procedure:

Any company employee who feels that he or she has been harassed or discriminated against or has witnessed or become aware of discrimination or harassment in violation of these policies should bring the matter to the immediate attention of his or her supervisor, Rod Clarkson or the HR Director. The Company will promptly investigate all allegations of

discrimination and harassment and take action as appropriate based on the outcome of the investigation.

An investigation and its results will be treated as confidential to the extent feasible and permitted by law, and the Company will take appropriate action based on the outcome of the investigation.

No employee will be retaliated against for making a complaint in good faith regarding a violation of these policies, or for participating in good faith in an investigation pursuant to these policies. If an employee feels he/she has been retaliated against, the employee should file a complaint using the procedures set forth above.

2.3 Drug-Free / Alcohol-Free Environment

Employees are prohibited from unlawfully consuming, distributing, possessing, selling, or using controlled substances while on duty. In addition, employees may not be under the influence of any controlled substance, such as drugs or alcohol, while at work, on company premises, or engaged in company business. Prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, taken as prescribed, are an exception to this policy.

Anyone violating this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

2.4 Open-Door Policy

The Company has an open-door policy and takes employee concerns and problems seriously. The Company values each employee and strives to provide a positive work experience. Employees are encouraged to bring any workplace concerns or problems they might have or know about to their supervisor or some other member of management.

2.5 Immigration Compliance

The Company is committed to complying with federal laws and regulations concerning verification of employment eligibility and record-keeping for employees hired to work in the United States. As a condition of employment, every individual must provide satisfactory evidence of his or her identity and legal authority to work in the United States on his or her first day of employment with the Company. Anyone with questions regarding any aspect of employment and/or identity verification should contact the Director of Operations or the HR Director.

Section 3 – Company Policies and Procedures

3.1 Code of Professional Conduct

This Company expects its employees to adhere to a standard of professional conduct and integrity. This ensures that the work environment is safe, comfortable, and productive. Employees should be respectful, courteous, and mindful of others' feelings and needs. General cooperation between coworkers and supervisors is expected. Individuals who act in an unprofessional manner may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

3.2 Dress Code

An employee's personal appearance and hygiene is a reflection of the Company's character. Employees are expected to dress appropriately for their individual work responsibilities and position. Unless otherwise instructed, in the ordinary course of business operation, attire is smart business casual (for example: dress pants/slacks or nice jeans and a golf shirt/dress shirt for men, dress pants/slacks or nice jeans and a blouse/top for ladies). Jeans must not have any holes in them. Fridays, if you have no face to face meetings, you are allowed to be a bit more casual. Excel corporate apparel is also acceptable attire and is offered free of charge at various times of the year. Employees may also purchase corporate apparel anytime of the year. Natural color hair is expected at all times (no purple, blue, green, etc.).

3.3 Payday

Employees are paid twice a month, generally, every other Friday. In cases where the regular payday falls on a holiday, employees will receive payment on the last business day before said holiday.

The paycheck will reflect work performed up to the current paycheck date. Paychecks include salary or wages earned less any mandatory or elected deductions. Mandatory deductions include federal or state withholding tax and other withholdings. Elected deductions are deductions authorized by the employee, and may include, for example, contributions to benefit plans. Employees may contact Rod Clarkson or the HR Director to obtain the necessary authorization forms for requesting additional deductions from their paychecks.

All payroll disbursements are made by direct deposit only. Notify a supervisor if the paycheck appears to be inaccurate or if it has been misplaced. Advances on paychecks are **not** permitted. Information regarding final paychecks can be found under the termination section of this handbook.

Any change in name, address, telephone number, marital status, or number of exemptions claimed by an employee must be reported to Rod Clarkson or the HR Director immediately.

3.4 Company Property

Company property, such as equipment, vehicles, telephones, computers, and software, is not for private use. These devices are to be used strictly for company business and are not permitted off grounds unless authorized. Company property must be used in the manner for which it was intended. Upon termination, employees are required to surrender any and all company property they possess.

Company computers, internet, and e-mails are a privileged resource and must be used only to complete essential job-related functions. Employees are not permitted to download any "pirated" software, files, or programs and **must** receive permission from a supervisor before installing any new software on a company computer. Files or programs stored on company computers may not be copied for personal use.

Phones are provided for business use. The Company requests that employees not receive personal calls while on duty. If urgent, please keep personal calls to a minimum and conversations brief. Personal long-distance calls are **not** permitted. Employees are reminded that they should have **no** expectation of privacy in their use of company computers or other electronic equipment.

Violations of these policies could result in disciplinary action.

3.5 Social Media Policy

The Company understands that social media can be a fun and rewarding way to communicate with family, friends, and co-workers. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. To assist employees in making responsible decisions about the use of social media, the Company has established these guidelines for appropriate use of social media.

This policy applies to **all** employees who work for the Company.

GUIDELINES

In the rapidly expanding world of electronic communication, *social media* can mean many things. *Social media* includes all means of communicating or posting information or content of any sort on the internet, including to your own or someone else's weblog or blog, journal or diary, personal website, social networking or affinity website, web bulletin board, or a chat room, whether or not associated or affiliated with the Company, as well as any other form of electronic communication. The same principles and guidelines found in the Company's policies apply to employees' activities online. Ultimately, ***you are solely responsible for what you post online***. Before creating online content, consider some of the risks and rewards that are involved. Keep in mind that any of your conduct that adversely affects your job performance, the performance of fellow employees, or otherwise adversely affects customers, suppliers, people who work on behalf of the Company or the Company's legitimate business interests may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Know and follow the rules

Carefully read this Social Media Policy, the Equal Employment Policy, the Non-Harassment/Non-Discrimination Policy, and the Code of Professional Conduct and ensure your postings are consistent with these policies. Postings that may include maliciously defamatory remarks, unlawful harassment, and threats of violence or similar unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject you to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Be Responsible

Use your best judgment and exercise personal responsibility. Take your responsibility as stewards of personal information to heart. Integrity, accountability, and respect are core values. We trust and expect you to exercise personal responsibility whenever you participate in social media or other online activities. Remember that there can be consequences to your actions in the social media world – both internally if your comments violate company policies,

and with outside individuals and/or entities. If you are about to publish, respond, or engage in something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't do it.

Also, we encourage you to try to resolve all differences with an individual, organization, or even the Company through direct communications with the individual, organization, or Company. Remember, the Company has an Open-Door policy. It can be used to try to resolve differences with the Company, management, or even your co-workers. We encourage you to try to use the Open-Door policy. It works!

Nevertheless, if you decide to post complaints or criticism, avoid using statements, photographs, video, or audio that are maliciously defamatory, that are obscene, that disparage customers, that attack the Company's product, or that might constitute unlawful harassment.

Examples of such conduct might include false posts meant to intentionally or maliciously harm someone's reputation or posts that could contribute to a hostile work environment on the basis of race, sex, disability, religion, or any other status protected by law or company policy.

Be Honest and Accurate

The best practice is to check your facts before posting information or news, and if you make a mistake, correct it quickly. Be open about any previous posts you have altered. Remember that the Internet archives almost everything, and deleted postings can be searched. Never post any information or rumors that you know to be false about the Company, fellow employees, customers, suppliers, people working on behalf of the Company, or competitors.

Post only appropriate and respectful content

- Maintain the confidentiality of the Company's trade secrets and private or confidential information. Trade secrets may include information regarding the development of systems, processes, products, know-how, and technology.
- FTC regulations require persons with a material interest to disclose their association with a company if they give a testimonial or other product endorsement. Do not give a product testimonial, endorse the Company's product, or otherwise publicize or promote the Company in any way without identifying yourself as a company employee.
- Express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the Company. If the Company is a subject of the content you are creating, be clear and open about the fact that you are an employee and make it clear that your views do not represent those of the Company, customers, or its suppliers. If you do publish a blog or post online related to the work you do, or subjects associated with the Company, make it clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the Company. It is best to include a disclaimer such as "The postings on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Excel Education Systems."

Using Social Media at Work

Unless it is part of your specific job, refrain from using social media while on work time, unless it is work-related as authorized by a manager. To help reduce spam and other unwanted email traffic, employees should not use company email addresses to register on social networks,

blogs, or other online tools utilized for personal use. Please use your own individual or private email address.

Retaliation is prohibited

The Company prohibits taking negative action against any employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation. Any employee who retaliates against another employee for reporting a possible deviation from this policy or for cooperating in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

3.6 Privacy

Employees and employers share a relationship based on trust and mutual respect. However, the Company retains the right to access all company property including computers, desks, file cabinets, storage facilities, and files and folders - electronic or otherwise - at any time. Employees should **not** entertain any expectations of privacy when on company grounds or while using company property.

All documents, files, voice-mails, and electronic information, including e-mails and other communications, created, received, or maintained on or through company property are the property of the Company, not the employee. Therefore, employees should have no expectation of privacy over those files or documents.

3.7 Personnel Files

The Company maintains a personnel file on each employee. These files are kept confidential to the extent possible. Employees may review their personnel file upon request.

It is essential that personnel files accurately reflect each employee's personal information. Employees are expected to inform the Company of any change in name, address, home & cell phone number, home address, marital status, number of dependents, &/or emergency contact information.

Section 4 - Employment Classification

This Company assigns positions, determines wages, and compensates employees for overtime in accordance with state and local laws and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

4.1 Exempt Employees

Exempt employees are those that are excluded from the overtime pay requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act. Exempt employees are paid a salary, have certain types of job duties, and are expected to work beyond their regular work hours whenever necessary to accomplish the work of the Company.

As an exempt employee, your salary is subject to certain deductions. For example, absent contrary state law requirements, your salary can be reduced for the following reasons:

- Full-day absences for personal reasons.
- Full-day absences for sickness or disability.
- Full-day disciplinary suspensions for infractions of the Company's written policies and procedures.
- Family and Medical Leave absences (either full- or partial-day absences).
- To offset amounts received as payment for jury and witness fees or military pay.
- The first or last week of employment in the event you work less than a full week.
- Any full work week in which you do not perform any work.

Your salary may also be reduced for certain types of deductions such as your portion of health, dental, or life insurance premiums; state, federal or local taxes; Social Security; or voluntary contributions to an IRA or pension plan. In any workweek in which you performed any work, your salary will not be reduced for any of the following reasons:

- Your absence on a day because your employer has decided to close a facility on a scheduled workday.
- Absences for jury duty, attendance as a witness, or military leave in any week in which you have performed any work.
- Any other deductions prohibited by state or federal law.

Employees should consult with Rod Clarkson or the HR Director if they have questions regarding their classification as an exempt employee.

4.2 Non-Exempt Employees

Non-exempt employees are those eligible for overtime pay of 1.5 times the regular hourly rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 per work week. **All** overtime must be approved in advance. Employees should consult with an administrator if they have questions regarding their classification as a non-exempt employee.

4.3 Part-Time, Full-Time or Temporary Status

Part-time or full-time status depends on the number of hours per week an employee works. Regular employees who work fewer than 35 hours per week receive part-time classification. Part-time employees are **not** eligible for employee benefits, as described in this handbook. Regular employees who work at least 35+ hours each week receive full-time classification.

From time to time the Company may hire employees for specific projects or periods of time. Temporary employees may work either part-time or full-time but generally are scheduled to terminate by a certain date. Temporary employees who remain on duty past the scheduled termination remain classified as temporary. Only Lori Applegate, Rod Clarkson, or Mark Ulven may change an employee's temporary status. Temporary employees are **not** eligible for employment benefits.

Section 5 – Attendance Policies

5.1 General Attendance

The Company maintains regular working hours of 8:00 am through 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Hours may vary depending on work location and job responsibilities. Supervisors will provide employees with their work schedule.

Should an employee have any questions regarding his/her work schedule, the employee should contact their supervisor.

The Company does **not** tolerate absenteeism without excuse. Employees who will be late to or absent from work should notify their supervisor in advance, or as soon as practicable in the event of an emergency. Chronic absenteeism may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees who need to leave early, for illness or otherwise, should inform their supervisor before departure. Unauthorized departures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

5.2 Tardiness

Employees are expected to arrive on time and ready for work at the designated time, this may mean you need to arrive a few minutes early to get set up. The Company recognizes that situations arise which hinder punctuality; regardless, excessive tardiness is prohibited and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Most employees are issued IP phone access, which can be accessed from the employee's home in the event of inclement weather. In the event of inclement weather, a message will be sent to all staff by 7:00 AM CST.

5.3 Breaks

Employees are entitled to a 30-minute break for every 8 hours worked.

Section 6 – Leave Policies

6.1 Vacations/PTO

The Company provides, as a benefit, paid vacation for its eligible employees. Forward requests for time off in advance to your supervisor, who may approve or deny the request based on company resources. The Company is flexible in approving time off when doing so would not interfere with company operations. Vacation/PTO days are granted **only** on a full-day or half-day (not an hour here and an hour there) schedule and on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A regular employee is eligible to receive paid time off **after** 6-months of full-time service. Accrued time off may be taken after 6-months. Employees must earn and accrue vacation/PTO benefits **before** they may be used. The Company provides 5-days of vacation for every 6-months of full-time service (10-days annually). **After three full years of employment**, employees are entitled to 15-weeks of vacation per calendar year. Any

remaining accrued time off may not be accumulated and will **not** be carried forward into the next year. Vacation/PTO benefits do not accrue during any period of extended leave of absence. There is **no** pay out of vacation/PTO upon separation from the company for any reason. These are calendar year benefits and reset each January.

6.2 Sick Leave

Situations may arise where an employee needs to take time off to address medical or other health concerns. The Company requests that employees provide notification to their supervisor as soon as practicable when taking time off. Employees are entitled to 3-paid sick days each calendar year, **after** 6-months of full-time service. After your 3 days have been used or before your 6 months of full time status, sick days are granted on an unpaid basis to regular employees, but vacation days may be used if you have any available. Sick days may **not** be taken as a planned day, this is for days you are sick or for medical appointments **only**. Sick days are granted on a half or full day basis only (not an hour here and an hour there). Unused sick days do not rollover. There is no pay out of sick time upon separation from the company for any reason. These are calendar year benefits and reset each January. Abuse of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

6.3 Family and Medical Leave Act Leave

The Company offers leave consistent with the requirements of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Under the FMLA, an employee may be eligible for an unpaid family and medical leave of absence under certain circumstances, if the employee has worked as an employee of the Company for at least 1,250 hours for 12 months, and the Company has more than (50) employees. ***As of the date of this handbook, EES has fewer than 50-employees.***

Reasons for Leave

Employees eligible for FMLA leave may take leave for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child and to care for the newborn child;
- Placement of a child into adoptive or foster care with the employee;
- Care for a spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- Care for the employee's own serious health condition.
- Qualifying emergencies arising out of a spouse's, child's, or parent's active duty or call to active duty as a member of the military reserves or National Guard ("Emergency Military Leave"); or
- Care for a spouse, child, parent, or next of kin (nearest blood relative) who is (a) an Armed Forces member (including the military reserves and National Guard) undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, therapy, or is otherwise in an outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, due to a serious injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty; or (b) a person who, during the five (5) years prior to the treatment necessitating the leave, served in the active military, Naval, or Air Service, and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable (a "veteran" as defined by the Department of Veterans Affairs) and who has a serious injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty while on active duty that arose before or after the member became a veteran ("Military Caregiver Leave").

Length of Leave

With the exception of Military Caregiver Leave, the maximum amount of FMLA Leave will be twelve (12) workweeks in any 12-month period.

If both spouses work for the Company and are eligible for FMLA leave, the spouses will be limited to a total of 12 workweeks off between the two of them for leave related to the birth, adoption, or foster care of a child, and leave to care for the serious health condition of a family member. The maximum amount of FMLA Leave for an employee wishing to take Military Caregiver Leave will be a combined leave total of twenty-six (26) workweeks in a single 12-month period.

If both spouses work for the Company and are eligible for FMLA leave, the spouses will be limited to a total of 26 workweeks off between the two of them when the leave is for Military Caregiver Leave, or a combination of Military Caregiver Leave with another leave category.

Leave may be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule in certain circumstances. When leave is taken intermittently, the Company may transfer the employee to another position with equivalent pay and benefits, which is better suited to periods of absence.

Notice and Certification

If the need for leave is foreseeable, employees should notify a supervisor 30-days prior to taking FMLA leave. If the need for FMLA leave arises unexpectedly, employees should notify a supervisor as soon as practicable, giving as much notice to the Company as possible.

Employees requesting FMLA leave may be required to provide: medical certifications supporting the need for leave if the leave is due to a medical condition of the employee or employee's family member; periodic recertification of the medical condition; and periodic reports during the leave regarding the employee's status and intent to return to work. Employees requesting Military Caregiver Leave, are required to provide: as much advance notice as is reasonable and practicable under the circumstances; a copy of the covered military member's active duty orders when the employee requests leave; and a completed Certification of Qualifying Emergency form within 15 calendar days, unless unusual circumstances exist to justify providing the form at a later date.

Certification forms are available from Human Resources. At the Company's expense, the Company may also require a second or third medical opinion regarding an employee's own serious health condition. Employees are expected to cooperate with the Company in obtaining additional medical opinions that the Company may require.

Employees are expected to return to work immediately after the completion of the requested FMLA leave, and employees who have taken leave because of their own serious health condition must submit a fitness-for-duty certification before being allowed to return to work.

Use of Paid and Unpaid Leave

Subject to certain conditions, the employee or the Company may choose to use accrued paid leave (such as sick leave or vacation leave) concurrent with FMLA leave.

Benefits

The Company will maintain group health insurance coverage for an employee on family and medical leave on the same terms as if the employee had continued work. If applicable, arrangements will be made for the employee to pay their share of health insurance premiums while on leave. The Company may recover premiums paid to maintain health coverage for an employee who fails to return to work from family and medical leave.

If an employee would like the Company to maintain other paid benefits during the period of leave, premiums and charges, which are partially or wholly paid by the employee, must continue to be paid by the employee during the leave time.

FMLA leave will not result in the loss of any employment benefit accrued prior to the date on which the leave commenced. However, an employee on FMLA leave does not continue to accrue benefits (e.g., sick leave or vacation leave) during the period of family and medical leave. Questions regarding particular benefits should be directed to Rod Clarkson or the HR Director.

Reinstatement

Upon returning from FMLA leave, an employee will be restored to his/her original job or an equivalent job with equivalent benefits, pay, seniority, and other employment terms and conditions, to the extent required by the Family and Medical Leave Act. If an employee fails to return to work at the conclusion of the FMLA leave, and has not obtained an extension of the leave, the Company may presume that the employee does not plan to return to work and has voluntarily terminated his or her employment.

6.4 Holidays

The Company observes the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The Day After Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

Holidays are observed on a paid basis for all eligible full-time employees.

6.5 Jury Duty Time Off

The Company understands that occasionally employees are called to serve on a jury. Employees who are selected for jury duty must provide a copy of their jury summons to a supervisor. Time taken for jury duty is granted on a paid basis. Employees released from jury duty with 4-hours remaining in the workday, are expected to return to work.

6.6 Voting Time Off

Employees are encouraged to participate in elections. The Company grants incremental time off to cast a ballot in an election. Voting time off is granted on an unpaid basis. Should extenuating circumstances arise while voting, notify a supervisor as soon as possible. The Company will ensure that all employees are released from their shift allowing enough time to participate in the election process.

6.7 Military Leave

Employees called to active military duty, military reserve, or National Guard service may be eligible to receive time off under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. To receive time off, employees must provide notice and a copy of their report orders to an immediate supervisor. Military leave is granted on a paid basis of up to 60-days. Upon return with an honorable discharge, an employee may be entitled to reinstatement and any applicable job benefits they would have received if present, to the extent provided by law.

6.8 Leave of Absence

Regular full-time employees may request an unpaid leave of absence after the exhaustion of paid leave. A request for a leave of absence must be submitted in writing in advance to the employee's immediate supervisor.

Leave of absences that are granted are **unpaid** and will not be considered until an employee has exhausted **all** appropriate accrued leave balances. Continuation of employee benefits during a leave of absence will be addressed on an individual basis, as required by law.

6.9 Appointments

Excel Education Systems realizes that sometimes you can only schedule necessary appointments during the work day. If your appointment requires you to be gone less than 3 hours from the work day, we will allow, in cooperation with the Director of Operations, for you to make those hours up. The absent hours need to be made up within the same work week as the absence. You may work with the Director of Operations to come in early, stay late or reduce the time of your lunch breaks to make up that time. If you need more than 3 hours you will need to take a half day of PTO or sick time if it is a medical appointment.

Section 7 – Work Performance

7.1 Expectations

The Company expects every employee to act in a professional manner. Satisfactory performance of job duties and responsibilities is key to this expectation. Employees should attempt to achieve their job objectives, and act with diligence and consideration at all times. Poor job performance can result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

7.2 Reviews

The Company will evaluate an employee's performance a minimum of once every 12-months. The goal of a performance review is to identify areas where an employee excels and areas that need improvement. The Company uses performance reviews as a tool to determine pay increases, promotions, and/or terminations.

All performance reviews are based on merit, achievement, and other factors that may include, but are not limited to:

- Quality of work
- Attitude
- Knowledge of work
- Job skills
- Attendance and punctuality
- Teamwork and cooperation
- Compliance with company policy
- Past performance reviews
- Improvement
- Acceptance of responsibility and constructive feedback

Employees should note that a performance review does **not** guarantee a pay increase or promotion. Written performance evaluations (aka PIP - performance improvement plan) may be made at any time to advise employees of unacceptable performance. Evaluations or any subsequent change in employment status, position or pay does not alter the employee's at-will relationship with the Company.

Forward any questions about performance expectation or evaluation to the supervisor conducting the evaluation.

7.3 Insubordination

Supervisors and employees should interact with mutual respect and common courtesy. Employees are expected to take instruction from supervisors or other persons of authority. Failure to comply with instructions or unreasonably delaying compliance is considered insubordination. Acts of insubordination are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

If an employee disagrees with a supervisor, the employee should first try to mediate the situation by explaining their position. If possible, a compromise might be met, and accusations of insubordination avoided.

Section 8 – Discipline Policy

8.1 Grounds for Disciplinary Action

The Company reserves the right to discipline and/or terminate any employee who violates company policies, practices, or rules of conduct. Poor performance and misconduct are also grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

The following actions are unacceptable and considered grounds for disciplinary action. This list is **not** comprehensive; rather, it is meant merely as an example of the types of conduct that this Company does not tolerate. These actions include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in acts of discrimination or harassment in the workplace;
- Possessing, distributing, or being under the influence of illicit controlled substances;
- Being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol at work, on company premises, or while engaged in company business;
- Unauthorized use of company property, equipment, devices, or assets;
- Damage, destruction, or theft of company property, equipment, devices, or assets;
- Removing company property without prior authorization or disseminating company information without authorization;
- Falsification, misrepresentation, or omission of information, documents, or records;
- Lying;
- Insubordination or refusal to comply with directives;
- Failing to adequately perform job responsibilities;
- Excessive or unexcused absenteeism or tardiness;
- Disclosing confidential or proprietary company information without permission;
- Illegal or violent activity;
- Falsifying injury reports or reasons for leave;
- Possessing unauthorized weapons on premises;
- Disregard for safety and security procedures;
- Disparaging or disrespecting supervisors and/or co-workers; and
- Any other action or conduct that is inconsistent with company policies, procedures, standards, or expectations.

This list exhibits the types of actions or events that are subject to disciplinary action. It is not intended to indicate every act that could lead to disciplinary action. The Company reserves the right to determine the severity and extent of any disciplinary action based on the circumstances of each case.

8.2 Procedures

Disciplinary action is any one of a number of options used to correct unacceptable behavior or actions. Discipline may take the form of oral warnings, written warnings, probation, suspension, demotion, discharge, removal, or some other disciplinary action, in no particular order. The course of action will be determined by the Company at its sole discretion as it deems appropriate.

8.3 Termination

Employment with the Company is on an at-will basis and may be terminated voluntarily or involuntarily at any time.

Upon termination, an employee is required:

- To continue to work until the last scheduled day of employment;
- To turn in all reports and paperwork required to be completed by the employee when due and no later than the last day of work;
- To return all files, documents, equipment, keys, access cards, software, or other property belonging to the Company that are in the employee's possession, custody, or control, and turn in all passwords to his/her supervisor;
- To participate in an exit interview as requested by the HR Director.

Section 9 – Employee Health and Safety

9.1 Workplace Safety

The Company takes every reasonable precaution to ensure that employees have a safe working environment. Safety measures and rules are in place for the protection of all employees. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each employee to help prevent accidents. To ensure the continuation of a safe workplace, all employees should review and understand all provisions of the Company's workplace safety policy. Employees should use all safety and protective equipment provided to them and maintain work areas in a safe and orderly manner, free from hazardous conditions. Employees who observe an unsafe practice or condition should report it to a supervisor or HR Director immediately. Employees are prohibited from making threats against anyone in connection with his/her work or engaging in violent activities while in the employ of the Company. Any questions regarding safety and safe practices should be directed to their supervisor or to a member of the senior management team.

In the event of an accident, employees must notify a supervisor immediately. Report every injury, regardless of how minor, to a supervisor immediately. Physical discomfort caused by repetitive tasks must also be reported. For more information about on the job injuries, refer to the workers' compensation section of this handbook.

Employees should recognize any potential fire hazards and be aware of fire escape routes and fire drills. Do not block fire exits, tamper with fire extinguishers, or otherwise create fire hazards.

9.2 Workplace Security

Employees must be alert and aware of any potential dangers to themselves or their coworkers. Take every precaution to ensure that your surroundings are safe and secure. Guard personal belongings and company property. Visitors should be escorted at all times. Report any suspicious activity to a supervisor immediately.

9.3 Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, dial 911 immediately. If you hear a fire alarm or other emergency alert system, proceed quickly and calmly to the nearest exit. Once the building has been evacuated, only a supervisor may authorize employees to reenter.

Section 10 - Employee Benefits

This handbook contains descriptions of some of our current employee benefits. Many of the Company's benefit plans are described in more formal plan documents available from Rod Clarkson or HR Director. In the event of any inconsistencies between this handbook or any other oral or written description of benefits and a formal plan document, the formal plan document will govern.

10.1 Health Insurance

The Company makes group health benefits available to eligible employees and their family members. Eligible employees are full-time employees who have worked for at least 60-days and can only enroll on the 1st of the month. Part-time employees are not eligible for the company health benefit plan.

The Company reserves the right to modify or terminate any or all of its health care benefits or to change benefit providers at any time with appropriate notice.

Employees can receive details about benefits provided and eligibility from Rod Clarkson or the HR Director.

10.2 Retirement Plan

The Company participates in a corporate IRA plan that is administered by Edward Jones Financial Services. The plan is offered so that employees may save a portion of their earnings for retirement. Regular full-time employees who have worked *at least 35 hours per week for 2-months are eligible to participate*. Employees may elect to make regular contributions to the IRA plan up to the maximum amount allowed by federal law. The Company offers **up to a 3% match** to employee retirement contribution.

Contact the Director of Operations or the HR Director for detailed information regarding eligibility, employee contributions, vesting period, or employer contributions. More information can also be found in the plan summary description, which is available from Jason Christianson (Edward Jones Advisor) or the Director of Operations. If there are any inconsistencies between this handbook and any of the Summary Plan Descriptions, the Summary Plan Descriptions shall govern. *The Company reserves the right to modify or terminate any or all of its retirement benefits or to change benefit providers at any time with or without notice.*

10.3 Workers' Compensation

As required by law, the Company provides workers' compensation benefits for the protection of employees with work-related injuries or illnesses.

Workers' compensation insurance provides coverage to employees who experience job-related injuries or illnesses. If an employee is injured or becomes ill as a result of his/her job, it is the employee's responsibility to immediately notify a supervisor of their injury in order to receive benefits. Report every illness or injury to a supervisor, regardless of how minor it appears. The Company will advise the employee of the procedure for submitting a workers' compensation claim. If necessary, injured employees will be referred to a medical care facility. Employees should retain all paperwork provided to them by the medical facility. Failure to report a work-related illness or injury promptly could result in denial of benefits. An employee's report should contain as many details as possible, including the date, time, description of the illness or injury, and the names of any witnesses.

A separate insurance company administers the workers' compensation insurance. Representatives of this Company may contact injured employees regarding their benefits under the plan. Additional information regarding workers' compensation is available from Rod Clarkson or the HR Director.

The Company also provides the following benefits:

10.4 Home Purchase Assistance

Full-time employees may receive a one-time home purchase down payment assistance benefit of \$ 3,000 **after** they have been employed for 12+ months.

10.5 Tuition Reimbursement

Excel Education Systems has a formal partnership with the American College of Education to support the growth and development of our employees'. Excel covers the tuition cost for full-time employees to earn various certificates and degrees that align with the employee's position at EES, **after** 12+ months of service. Excel covers 100% of the cost associated with professional development in compliance with approved professional development plans. Approval is required by Rod Clarkson.

Section 11 – Termination Policies

11.1 Voluntary Termination

The Company recognizes that personal situations may arise which require a voluntary termination of employment. Should this occur, the Company requests that the employee provide two weeks advance notice in writing. This request does not alter an employee's at-will relationship with the Company.

All rights and privileges of employment with the Company terminate upon the date of separation. As further discussed in Section 8.3, terminating employees are required to return all company property assigned to them. Failure to do so may result in the withholding of their final paycheck.

11.2 Final Paycheck

Employees who terminate employment with the Company will be given their final paycheck within 24-hours. Should the employee be unable to personally retrieve their paycheck, it will be mailed to the address on file. Any company property in possession must be returned to the Company **before** a final paycheck will be issued.

11.3 COBRA Continuation of Health Benefits

Under the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), a qualified employee who terminates employment (for reasons other than gross misconduct on the employee's part) or who loses health and dental coverage due to a reduction in work hours may temporarily continue group health and dental coverage for him/herself, his/her spouse, and any covered dependent children at the full premium rate plus administrative fees. That eligibility normally extends for a period of eighteen (18) months from the qualifying date. For more information regarding COBRA health insurance benefits, see Rod Clarkson or the HR Director.

11.4 Exit Interview

The Company may request an exit interview upon notice of termination. The purpose of the exit interview is to complete necessary forms, collect company property, and discuss employment experiences with the Company.

Onboarding/Orientation/Training

Welcome to the Excel Education Systems Family. From the time of the initial job interview to the day you begin work at EES, the Company follows a structured onboarding, orientation, and training process.

Section 12 - Onboarding/Orientation/Training

12.1 Onboarding

Mandatory Employment Forms

New employees are required to complete and submit the following forms. DocuSign will be used for any sensitive information and signatures as it is secure and encrypted:

- Employment Application
 - Persons making an application to Excel Educations Systems for a full or part-time employee position must submit a completed employment application. Employment candidates are also required to submit results for the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator assessment, the Wonderlic new hire assessment, and pre-employment drug screening.
- Official academic transcripts and copies of licensing credentials must be received **prior** to your first day of employment with Excel Education Systems.
- Background check release form
- Employment Eligibility Form I-9
 - On the day of hire, each new employee is legally obligated to complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and submit documents establishing identity and eligibility within the next three business days. The same policy applies to re-hired employees whose I-9's are over two years old or otherwise invalid.
- W-4
 - Federal form required by the IRS as a federal withholding certificate.
- Non-Disclosure Agreement
 - This agreement prohibits the unauthorized disclosure of confidential Company information, by any means of communication, including, but not limited to, face-to-face, over the phone, and via the Internet.
- At-Will Employment Agreement and Acknowledgement of Receipt of Employee Handbook
- Direct deposit authorization form
 - You will need a voided check and all bank account information so we can deposit your paycheck directly into your account. We do not give paper checks.

Commented [1]: do we require this?

12.2 Orientation

New employee orientation generally takes a good part of your first day at EES. Employees will complete **all** new hire forms, will be introduced to the staff, and be issued a corporate ID badge. New employees will spend a lot of time with the Training Lead to discuss job duties and specific expectations. New employees are given a comprehensive overview of the company and school policies. The first day of work will also entail a tour of the office/campus.

*All new employees will meet with either the Director of Operations or Vice President of Operations within their first week of employment. This is a time for new employees to hear more about the vision of EES and learn about opportunities within the organization.

12.3 Training

In general, new employees will receive direct one on one intensive training with the Training Lead and other staff members for 14 days. After week two of employment, hands-on training is provided as needed. For employees that work in our call center, recorded call reviews are done daily to provide feedback and guidance as needed. Excel Education Systems is committed to equipping our employees with exceptional training support and professional development. After day five, new employees are issued necessary equipment to perform their job.

12.4 Professional Development

Excel Education Systems is committed to the growth and development of our employees. In order for the Company to achieve success and realize our mission, we invest in and challenge our people to be their very best. Every EES employee is required to have a professional development plan in place. All employees are required to meet with their professional development coordinator once every 6-months or so. In most cases, EES will pay 100% of the cost for all **approved** professional development plans, pending approval by Rod Clarkson.

Section 13 - Systems Quality Assurances

13.1 Graduation Requirements

All Excel Education Systems schools adhere to the Minnesota State Graduation Requirements as defined by Minnesota Statute, section 120B.024. This statute requires students to complete a *minimum* of 21.5 course credits as follows:

- 4 credits of language arts
- 3 credits of mathematics
- 3 credits of science
- 3½ credits of social studies
- 1 credit of fine arts
- ½ credit of health
- ½ credit of physical education
- 6 elective credits

Excel Education Systems high school students graduate with a minimum of 21.5 credits.

Washington Online Learning Institute students graduate with the credits required to meet approved program requirements as set forth by its accreditors.

13.2 Academic Assessment System

Excel Education Systems has implemented the following process to ensure academic quality in its schools. The following six tools are used in this process:

- End of course surveys
 - At the end of each course, students complete a survey that collects their feedback on the course organization, grading, and academic support. This data is shared with the Excel team members for input, feedback, and suggestions.
- Graduation Surveys
 - Once a student graduates from an Excel Education Systems school, they are given a survey about their experiences as a student at the school. The topics are wide ranging from how they found the school to begin with, to the level of customer service, to the colleges or universities they will be or are attending. These survey results are used in marketing efforts, while also giving valuable insight into what adjustments can be made to make the student experience better moving forward.
- Course Grade Reports
 - Another way Excel Education Systems administrators and teachers assure academic quality is by monitoring Course Grade Reports. These reports give the administrator or teacher a snapshot of how the students in this course are progressing as a whole, and also lists individual students and their grades so that the teacher can easily identify which students need additional support.
- Instructor Feedback
 - Feedback from instructors and academic support staff are extremely important to Excel Education Systems leadership. This feedback can be given formally during their yearly evaluation, or informally any day of the year by emailing or calling their direct supervisor. This feedback is discussed and considered when future curriculum decisions are made.
- Pre-/Post Tests
 - When students enroll at any Excel Education Systems school, they take a Pre-Program Test as part of their Orientation Course. This test establishes a baseline of knowledge for the student in the areas of English and Math. Upon graduation, the student is given the same assessment as a Post-Program Test. This process serves two purposes, it gives the school a sense of where the student currently is academically, and it acts as an indicator that quality learning is taking place at the school. All Excel Education Systems students are encouraged to take the ACT or SAT depending on the preference of the college or university they plan on attending.
- Curriculum Review

- Curriculum at Excel Education Systems schools is formally reviewed at least annually and informally reviewed on a monthly basis. Based upon the data from any of these five tools, issues or concerns with curriculum can be discussed and addressed any day of the year. If there is an issue with any component of the curriculum, it is the expectation of Excel Education Systems leadership to address the issue or concern as soon as possible. It is not required to wait until the yearly, formal curriculum review, if there are issues affecting our students today.

13.3 Staff/Teacher Evaluations and Professional Development

Every Excel Education Systems Team member goes through a formal evaluation process at least once per calendar year. In addition to annual formal evaluations, regular check-ins by supervisors are made via text message, email, and phone calls.

13.4 Learning Management System Assurances

Excel Education Systems uses data and feedback to monitor the efficacy of the Learning Management System (LMS) and Student Information System (SIS). Excel Education Systems utilizes data from its school's graduation surveys to monitor the quality of its LMS and the system's technology in general. According to the graduation surveys, 99.92% of graduates responded that the school's technology was "Easy to Use" (Question 6). Feedback regarding the LMS from staff and teachers is frequently solicited.

13.5 Scaling Procedures

The scaling procedures in place at Excel Education Systems are data driven. Staffing needs are determined through a variety of data points along with anecdotal feedback from stakeholders. Through surveys submitted by students, parents, staff, and teachers, leadership is able to assure there is enough academic support along with enough office staff support. If there is an increase in students replying that there isn't enough academic support in a course (Question 3 from End of Course Surveys), leadership will examine and likely add support if deemed necessary. Office leadership daily monitors the level of customer service to ensure that we are living out the organization's mission, vision, and purpose of providing exceptional customer service. If an increasing amount of phone calls are being missed, or academic questions are not able to be returned in a timely manner because of overwhelming workloads, more office support will likely be added. As Excel Education Systems continues to realize revenue growth, the staff will continue to grow accordingly. Even though there is not a set formula for adding staff, in general, every 3-5% increase in revenue, would justify at least 1 full-time office position.

13.6 Policy Update Procedure

The need to change existing policies at Excel Education Systems and its schools arise periodically. The governing body for policy changes at the corporate level or at any of its schools, is the Executive Committee. The Excel Education Systems executive committee consists of Rod Clarkson – CEO, Dr. Mark Ulven – President/CAO, Koorosh Vaziri – Chief Technology Officer, Dr. Muhammad Raheel – CFO, Lori Applegate – Vice President of Operations, and Lisa McDonald, Director of Operations.

All corporate and school policies are formally reviewed once per year, but the committee meets informally to address immediate concerns on an as-needed basis.

Most policy changes originate with a need brought forth from a staff member to school leadership, which is then brought to the Executive Committee for a decision. If school or corporate policies are changed, notification immediately gets emailed out to all affected stakeholders, and is discussed at the next quarterly staff meeting. Policies that have any possible legal ramifications are reviewed by the Excel Education Systems general counsel, Paul Shoemaker, Esq.

Acknowledgement of Receipt for Employee Handbook
(**Employee** Copy – Keep with handbook)

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Employee Handbook. I understand that I am responsible for reading the information contained in the Handbook.

I understand that the Handbook is intended to provide me with a general overview of the Company's policies and procedures. I acknowledge that nothing in this Handbook is to be interpreted as a contract, expressed or implied, or an inducement for employment, nor does it guarantee my employment for any period of time.

I understand and accept that my employment with the Company is at-will. I have the right to resign at any time with or without cause, just as the Company may terminate my employment at any time with or without cause or notice, subject to applicable laws. I understand that my at-will employment cannot be altered by any verbal statement or alleged verbal agreement made by company personnel. It can only be changed by a legally binding, written contract covering employment status.

I acknowledge that the Company may revise, suspend, revoke, terminate, change or remove, prospectively or retroactively, any of the policies or procedures outlined in this Handbook or elsewhere, in whole or in part, with or without notice at any time, at the Company's sole discretion.

(Signature of Employee)

(Date)

(Company Representative)

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(Signature of Employee)

(Date)

(Company Representative)

Updated September 2020