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Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy

This policy aims to provide guidelines for STC Higher Education staff to avoid potential corruption and bribery charges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

STC Higher Education is committed to conducting business in an ethical and honest manner and is committed to implementing and enforcing systems that ensure bribery is prevented. STC Higher Education has zero-tolerance for bribery and corrupt activities. We are committed to acting professionally, fairly, and with integrity in all business dealings and relationships, wherever in the country we operate.

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STC Higher Education will constantly uphold all laws relating to anti-bribery and corruption in all the jurisdictions in which we operate. We are bound by the laws of Malta, including the Bribery Act, in regard to our conduct both at home and abroad.

STC Higher Education recognises that bribery and corruption are punishable by up to ten years of imprisonment and a fine. If our company is discovered to have taken part in corrupt activities, we may be subjected to an unlimited fine, be excluded from tendering for public contracts, and face serious damage to our reputation. It is with this in mind that we commit to preventing bribery and corruption in our business, and take our legal responsibilities seriously.

2. WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

This anti-bribery policy applies to all employees (whether temporary, fixed-term, or permanent), consultants, contractors, trainees, seconded staff, home workers, casual workers, agency staff, volunteers, interns, agents, sponsors, or any other person or persons associated with us (including third parties), or any of our subsidiaries or their employees, no matter where they are located (within or outside of the Maltese islands). The policy also applies to Officers, Trustees, Board, and/or Committee members at any level.

In the context of this policy, third-party refers to any individual or organisation our company meets and works with. It refers to actual and potential clients, customers, suppliers, distributors, business contacts, agents, advisers, and government and public bodies – this includes their advisors, representatives and officials, politicians, and public parties.

Any arrangements our company makes with a third party is subject to clear contractual terms, including specific provisions that require the third party to comply with minimum standards and procedures relating to anti-bribery and corruption.

3. DEFINITION OF BRIBERY

Bribery refers to the act of offering, giving, promising, asking, agreeing, receiving, accepting, or soliciting something of value or of an advantage so to induce or influence an action or decision. A bribe refers to any inducement, reward, or object/item of value offered to another individual in order to gain commercial, contractual, regulatory, or personal advantage.

Bribery is not limited to the act of offering a bribe. If an individual is on the receiving end of a bribe and they accept it, they are also breaking the law.

Bribery is illegal. Employees must not engage in any form of bribery, whether it be directly, passively (as described above), or through a third party (such as an agent or distributor). They must not bribe a foreign public official anywhere in the world. They must not accept bribes in any degree and if they are uncertain about whether something is a bribe or a gift or act of hospitality, they must seek further advice from the company's Head of Institution.

4. WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

This section of the policy refers to 4 areas:

- Gifts and hospitality.
- Facilitation payments.
- Political contributions.
- Charitable contributions.

4.1 Gifts and Hospitality

STC Higher Education accepts normal and appropriate gestures of hospitality and goodwill (whether given to/received from third parties) so long as the giving or receiving of gifts meets the following requirements:

- It is not made with the intention of influencing the party to whom it is being given, to obtain or reward the retention of a business or a business advantage, or as an explicit or implicit exchange for favours or benefits.
- It is not made with the suggestion or expectation that a favour is returned.
- It is in compliance with local law.
- It is given in the name of the company, not in an individual's name.
- It does not include cash or a cash equivalent (e.g. a voucher or gift certificate).
- It is appropriate for the circumstances (e.g. giving small gifts around Christmas or as a small thank you to a company for helping with a large project upon completion).
- It is of an appropriate type and value and given at an appropriate time, taking into account the reason for the gift.
- It is given/received openly, not secretly.
- It is not selectively given to a key influential person, clearly with the intention of directly influencing them.
- It is not above a certain excessive value, as pre-determined by the company (usually in excess of €100).
- It is not offered to, or accepted from, a government official or representative or politician or political party, without the prior approval of the Head of Institution.
- As good practice, gifts given and received should always be disclosed to the Head of Institution. Gifts from suppliers should always be disclosed.
- The intention behind a gift being given/received should always be considered. If there is any uncertainty, the advice of the Head of Institution should be sought.

Where it is inappropriate to decline the offer of a gift (for example in instances when meeting an individual of a certain religion or culture who may take offence), the gift may be accepted as long as this is disclosed to the Head of Institution, who will assess the circumstances on an individual basis.

STC Higher Education recognises that the practice of giving and receiving business gifts varies between countries, regions, cultures, and religions, so definitions of what is acceptable and not acceptable will inevitably differ for each.

4.2 Facilitation Payments and Kickbacks

STC Higher Education does not accept and will not make any form of facilitation payments of any nature. We recognise that facilitation payments are a form of bribery that involves expediting or facilitating the performance of a public official for a routine governmental action. We recognise that they tend to be made by low level officials with the intention of securing or speeding up the performance of a certain duty or action.

STC Higher Education does not allow kickbacks to be made or accepted. We recognise that kickbacks are typically made in exchange for a business favour or advantage.

STC Higher Education recognises that, despite our strict policy on facilitation payments and kickbacks, employees may face a situation where avoiding a facilitation payment or kickback may put their personal security at risk. Under these circumstances, the following steps must be taken:

- a. Keep any amount to the minimum.
- b. Ask for a receipt, detailing the amount and reason for the payment.
- c. Create a record concerning the payment.
- d. Report this incident to the Head of Institution.

4.3 Political Contributions

STC Higher Education will not make donations, whether in cash, kind, or by any other means, to support any political parties or candidates. We recognise this may be perceived as an attempt to gain an improper business advantage.

4.4 Charitable Contributions

STC Higher Education actively encourages the act of donating to charities – whether through services, knowledge, time, or direct financial contributions (cash or otherwise) – and agrees to disclose all charitable contributions it makes.

Employees must be careful to ensure that charitable contributions are not used to facilitate and conceal acts of bribery.

STC endeavours to ensure that all charitable donations made are legal and ethical under local laws and practices, and that donations are not offered or made without the approval of the Head of Institution.

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 As an employee of STC Higher Education, you must ensure that you read, understand, and comply with the information contained within this policy, and with any training or other anti-bribery and corruption information you are given.
- 5.2 All employees and individuals who fall under STC's management are equally responsible for the prevention, detection, and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption. Everyone is required to avoid any activities that could lead to, or imply, a breach of this anti-bribery policy.
- 5.3 If you have reason to believe or suspect that an instance of bribery or corruption has occurred or will occur in the future that breaches this policy, you must notify the Head of Institution.
- 5.4 If any employee breaches this policy, they will face disciplinary action and could face dismissal for gross misconduct. STC Higher Education reserves the right to terminate a contractual relationship with an employee if they breach this anti-bribery policy.

6. WHAT HAPPENS IF I NEED TO RAISE A CONCERN?

This section of the policy covers 3 areas:

- a. How to raise a concern.
- b. What to do if you are a victim of bribery or corruption.
- c. Protection.

6.1 How to Raise a Concern

If you suspect that there is an instance of bribery or corrupt activities occurring in relation to STC Higher Education, you are encouraged to raise your concerns as soon as possible. If uncertain about whether a specific action or behaviour can be considered bribery or corruption, you should speak directly to your line manager or the Head of Institution.

STC Higher Education will familiarise all employees with its whistleblowing procedures so employees can vocalise their concerns swiftly and confidentially.

6.2 What to do if you are a Victim of Bribery or Corruption

You must inform the Head of Institution as soon as possible if you are offered a bribe by anyone, if you are asked to make one, if you suspect that you may be bribed or asked to make a bribe in the near future, or if you have reason to believe that you are a victim of another corrupt activity.

Refusal to accept or offer a bribe, or reporting a concern relating to potential acts of bribery or corruption, will likely result in feeling worried about potential repercussions. STC Higher Education will support anyone who raises concerns in good faith under this policy, even if investigation results that they were mistaken.

STC Higher Education will ensure that no one suffers any detrimental treatment as a result of refusing to accept or offer a bribe or other corrupt activities or because they reported a concern relating to potential acts of bribery or corruption. Detrimental treatment refers to dismissal, disciplinary action, threats, or unfavourable treatment in relation to the concern raised by the individual.

If you have reason to believe you've been subjected to unjust treatment as a consequence of raising a concern or refusal to accept a bribe, you should inform the Head of Institution.

7. RECORD KEEPING

STC Higher Education keeps detailed and accurate financial records, as well as appropriate internal controls in place to act as evidence for all payments made. STC will declare and keep a written record of the amount and reason for hospitality or gifts accepted and given, and understand that gifts and acts of hospitality are subject to audit.

8. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

STC Higher Education's management is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and will review its implementation on a regular basis. They will assess its suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness.

Internal control systems and procedures designed to prevent bribery and corruption are subject to regular audits to ensure that they are effective in practice.

Any need for improvements will be applied as soon as possible. Employees are encouraged to offer their feedback on this policy if they have any suggestions for how it may be improved. Feedback of this nature should be addressed to the Head of Institution.

STC Higher Education may amend this policy at any time so to improve its effectiveness at combating bribery and corruption.