

## Conflict of Interests Policy and Procedure

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### 1. Introduction and Policy

As an employer, the College trusts the professionalism of its staff. However, there are some safeguards which the College is obliged to put in place to protect both individual and College reputation and to limit the risk of exposure to bribery, fraud and other malpractice as much as possible.

All members of staff, members of the College Council and associates of the College must act and be perceived to act impartially, and not allow other social or business relationships to influence their judgement. Links with external bodies which benefit the College are desirable but can easily give rise to perceived and apparent conflicts of interest which must then be properly managed.

### Procedure

#### 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff and members of Council and its Committees, particularly individuals involved in procurement and strategic decisions. It is designed to avoid the conferring of unfair advantage or disadvantage on students, staff or other individuals, as well as to provide an opportunity allowing those experiencing conflicts of interest to place themselves beyond suspicion.
- 2.2 The Secretary and Registrar will oversee matters relating to conflict of interest.
- 2.3 The Council Executive Committee is responsible for reviewing this policy and should receive assurance about the operation of the Register of Interests
- 2.4 Council Executive should review the Register of Interests for members of Council and its committees. Academic Board Executive should review the Register of Interests for members of Academic Board, College Executive should review the Register of Interests for members of the Senior Management team.
- 2.5 The Organisational Development team within HR will provide training that will be accessible to all staff.

#### 3. What is a Conflict?

- 3.1 Conflicts of interest may arise in many circumstances. An interest should therefore be considered to occur where the individual can be perceived to be prevented from acting in the best interests of the College as a result of a relationship with a person or another body, or where the individual personally benefits, or is perceived to benefit, from an activity or transaction. In some cases it may not be clear that there is an obvious benefit but nevertheless others could consider that impropriety has occurred as a result of the individual's involvement. A conflict can be actual, perceived or potential, and can include both business, personal, family or other interest or loyalties.
- 3.2 Should any member of College staff feel they are in a position giving rise to an actual or potential conflict of interest, they must contact their line manager as a matter of urgency. Appropriate steps will then be taken to deal with the conflict of interest situation in line with the below.

#### 4. Declarations of interest

- 4.1 Where the possibility of conflicts of interests exists, it is universally accepted that prior declaration by all parties of their interests is essential. Declaring an interest is as much to protect the individual from subsequent accusation as it is to protect the College. It is not always necessary for the individual to withdraw from a connected activity but it is important that the people with whom you are working understand the context to your activities and can adjust their actions or decisions accordingly. **There is a duty on all staff and members covered by this procedure to declare relevant interests. Staff are reminded that failure to declare a significant interest is potentially a disciplinary matter and staff are advised to declare an interest if they are in any doubt about its relevance or materiality.**

- 4.2 There are two ways in which interests should be declared
- i. on the Register of Interests (Annual Declaration)
  - ii. as they arise to the line manager or person leading the activity or transaction

i. Register of Interests (Annual Declaration)

Council members, Academic Board members, Grade 10 staff, members of the Senior Management team and members of staff with financial authority over £25k are required to complete an annual declaration to be included in the Register of Interests. Any comparable interest held by close family members and partners should also be declared.

The Register is maintained by the Secretariat and updated annually at the start of the academic year. The register is available for inspection on request.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: The College recognises and encourages staff to undertake external appointments such as external or visiting examiner roles. Staff are expected to ensure these commitments do not interfere with their College role and to inform their line manager of such external commitments. In cases of doubt, declare.**

Declarations should be made using the web form available at (tbc). The below table is not an exhaustive list but provides examples of what should and should not be declared:

Declare	Don't declare
Directorships or trusteeships	With regard to academic roles, where there are specific procedures these should always be followed.
Paid work outside the College	Academic roles such as external or visiting examiner.
Property ownership where its value might be directly affected by a College decision	Paid academic work during Sabbatical leave should be reported on the appropriate sabbatical leave form
Close personal relationships with another member of staff or student where there is a working relationship	Teaching and other activity authorised using the leave of absence procedure
Membership of a board, committee or other organisation where interests may conflict with those of the College	
Membership, or being an officer of, an organisation where loyalty to those members could pose a problem.	
Shares held in any company where the share value might be affected by a College decision.	
Wherever an individual is asked to provide advice on the College's activities or views as a part of external service or work	
Any work outside the College which may significantly impact on your time commitment to your College duties	Work authorised using the Consultancy Policy does not need to be declared.
Interests as above held by close family members and partners.	

ii. As they arise

From time to time all staff and members of Council and its committees may find that conflicts arise because of a particular set of circumstances, for example acting as a member of a shortlisting or interview panel where a candidate is a family member or friend. Interests should be declared to the line manager or the person leading the activity or transaction as appropriate. As soon as possible an online declaration form should be completed and submitted. The secretariat will record and take any necessary action, for example, if the interest is ongoing the declaration will be included on the Register of Interests.

**Prior to submission the Declaration may be discussed with your Line Manager or Head of School, who is best placed to understand how any external activities overlap with your College activities.**

## **5. Managing a Conflict of Interest**

5.1 If an interest is declared to a line manager or person managing the activity it is their responsibility to:

- Ensure they have enough information about the conflict caused by the interest to judge whether it poses an actual or perceived risk for the College. If not, they should seek additional information, taking advice from colleagues who may be better placed to make the assessment (faculty staff, HR, finance, secretariat). The basic test is would you be able to justify the conflict to a sceptical member of the public.
- If it is judged that there is no conflict you should write to the individual acknowledging that they have declared the interest, and confirm that you are satisfied that there is no conflict and no further action needs to be taken. Email will suffice, but should be kept on the individual's department record.
- If the line manager agrees that there is a conflict they should take appropriate action to manage it. This could include:
  - informing other parties involved in the activity of the possible conflict
  - altering their role in the activity to avoid the possible conflict of interest
  - advising the individual to withdraw from the activity or transaction

5.2 If the individual is reluctant to take appropriate action to manage and monitor the conflict the matter should be referred to the College Secretary and Registrar

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