



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

Conflict of Interest Policy and Disclosure Procedures

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Conflict of Interest Policy and Disclosure Procedures

Those working for or on behalf of the University of London have a responsibility to declare any external interests, to recognise perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest when they engage in University business, and to disclose any such conflicts in line with this Policy and its procedures.

This policy and set of procedures is designed to ensure that where any conflicts may arise, they will be managed in an appropriate manner such that University decision-making is not unduly impacted by the private interests of any individual.

The University has a global reputation and influence and encourages its members to engage in a wide variety of external activities. Many of its members can therefore expect to hold legitimate external interests but which may occasionally give rise to conflicts. This policy and set of procedures is designed to provide a framework allowing those experiencing conflicts of interest to place themselves beyond suspicion.

If you are working for or on behalf of the University and you need to declare a conflict of interest, you must read this policy and follow the procedures outlined in this document.

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The University of London's *Conflict of Interest Policy and Disclosure Procedures*

1. Policy statement

1.1 Individuals working for or on behalf of the University of London ('the University') have a responsibility to declare any external interests, to recognise perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest when they engage in University business, and to disclose any such conflicts in line with University procedure. This policy and set of procedures details how conflicts of interests can be disclosed and how they will be managed in an appropriate manner such that University decision-making is not unduly impacted by the private interests of any individual.

1.2 The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is:

- to enable all those working for or on behalf of the University to understand their responsibilities to identify and disclose any perceived, potential or actual conflicts of interest in order that they can be appropriately managed;
- to ensure that those working for or on behalf of the University are aware of the actions they should take should a conflict of interest arise in the course of their carrying out University business;
- to support the effective management and resolution of conflicts of interest; and thereby both to protect the good name and reputation of the University and to safeguard the University's employees;
- to ensure those required to complete the University's Annual Register of Interests have an appropriate awareness of relevant procedure;
- to enable those working for or on behalf of the University to continue their activities with confidence where their interests or connections do not constitute an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest that would conflict with regulatory requirements or undermine the University's reputation;
- to ensure that the interests of senior staff are declared and reported in a transparent manner;
- to ensure that the University – as a Charity - takes appropriate steps to implement the guidance on conflicts of interest issued by the [Charity Commission for England and Wales](#), and to help ensure that trustees fulfil their legal duty to act only in the best interests of the University; and
- to help demonstrate the University's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of conduct, including to fulfil the standards established by the UK Government for [Managing Public Money](#), to abide by the [Nolan principles of public life](#), and to abide by the [Office for Students Public interest governance principles](#).

- 1.3 Compliance with this Conflict of Interest policy is compulsory for all those working for or on behalf of the University. Failure to adhere to the policy may constitute a disciplinary offence.
- 1.4 This policy and procedure forms part of the University's broad framework of policies and guidance documents. The University of London's Conflicts of Interest Policy and Disclosure Procedure should be read in conjunction with related University [core policies](#) and guidance documents which by necessity also refer to Conflicts of Interest and which include:
- *Policy on Acceptance of Gifts and Donations*
 - *Bribery Act Policy and Procedure*
 - *Code of Good Practice in Research*
 - *Code of Practice for Examiners when teaching students under private arrangements*
 - *Disciplinary Procedure*
 - *Donation Acceptance Policy*
 - *Financial Regulations*
 - *Guidance for Students on Preventing and Responding to Harassment*
 - *Guidelines for Examinations*
 - *Intellectual property policy*
 - *Public Interest Disclosure Policy and Procedure*
 - *Relationships Code of Conduct*
 - *Research Ethics Policy and Procedure*

2. Who does this policy and procedure apply to?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all members of staff of the University and others working on behalf of the University. For the purposes of this policy, this includes: all members of staff of the University and others including all members of the Board of Trustees and the Collegiate Council; external members of the University's other committees, boards and groups; full-time and part-time staff; and individuals who are permanently or temporarily affiliated to the University through secondment, contract, honorary appointment, Emeritus appointment, Visiting Academic status or similar. For the avoidance of doubt, members of staff of the University is not intended here to include those working for or on behalf of the Federation Members of the University except where they are otherwise working on behalf of the University of London in one of the above capacities.
- 2.2 'Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers of the University' is intended to apply to a specific subset of staff members, including the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro Vice-Chancellors, members of the Board of Trustees, members of the Collegiate Council, any other members of the University's Senior Management Group; and any other senior staff as the Vice-Chancellor may from time to time determine.

3. What is a conflict of interest?

- 3.1 A 'conflict of interest' is defined here as a situation in which the personal interests, relationships or loyalties to others of a staff member could, or could reasonably be seen to, prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of the University.¹ The term 'conflict' is used interchangeably with 'conflict of interest' in this document.
- 3.1.1 An interest may be 'financial' – in the sense of representing something of material value such as pay, commission, consultancy fees, investments, royalties, gifts; or anything else of material value and which might reasonably be seen as capable of giving rise to a conflict.
- 3.1.2 An interest may be 'non-financial' in the sense of giving rise to an advantage or benefit such as access to privileged information or facilities; or the direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career, education or personal reputation; or anything else of non-material value which might reasonably be seen as capable of giving rise to a conflict.
- 3.1.3 With reference to non-financial and financial interests alike, a conflict may arise in relation to any advantage or gain to the individual staff member of the University. Equally, members need to ensure that they are not involved in any activity or decision-making on behalf of the University which could give rise to benefit to their immediate family, or other individuals with whom the member has a close personal or business relationship; or to any outside organisation of which the individual is a member or to which they hold duties or loyalties and whose aims, values and interests do not (or might not be seen to) coincide with those of the University.
- 3.1.4 A 'perceived' conflict arises where an informed observer could reasonably infer that a decision or action you take on behalf of the University might be unduly influenced or compromised on account of an interest. Similarly, where an informed observer might reasonably consider that an interest could potentially give rise to a lack of objectivity or compromised judgement, this represents a 'potential' conflict.
- 3.1.5 Although everyone holds external interests and the holding of external 'interests' does not necessarily give rise to conflicts, it is important that members of staff of the University and individuals working on behalf of the University err on the side of caution when considering if it is necessary to disclose a conflict, taking into account the importance of avoiding not only actual conflicts, but also situations where it would be reasonable for someone to infer that their objectivity may have been compromised on account of a competing interest. However, if there is no discernible means by which an interest might reasonably be seen as impacting your objectivity in carrying out work on the University's behalf, then it follows that such an interest need not be disclosed.

¹ This definition is derived from that given by the Charity Commission for England and Wales.

4. What are my responsibilities?

Members of staff of the University including all those working on behalf of the University

- 4.1 As a member of staff or individual working on behalf of the University (as defined at 2.1 above), you have a personal responsibility to comply with this policy.
- 4.2 Furthermore, as a member of staff, you must:
- act with integrity and in a transparent way, including to identify any conflicts of interest arising in the course of your work at the earliest reasonable opportunity;
 - declare any interests arising in accordance with the procedures outlined in Section 5, 'How and when to declare an interest or make a disclosure';
 - not use for personal gain any confidential information obtained through your involvement with the University;
 - be mindful of the provisions of the Bribery Act 2010 and follow the University's *Bribery Act Policy and Procedure*;
 - not give or receive gifts which would create a conflict of interest, and follow the University's *Policy on Acceptance of Gifts and Donations*.
- 4.3 If you are involved in a procurement exercise, you should declare any conflict of interest before tenders are issued.
- 4.4 If you are involved in conducting research, you should maintain the highest standards of research integrity, and follow the University's *Research Ethics Policy and Procedure*. The potential for personal gain must not, nor appear to, jeopardise the integrity of research activities whether in relation to the choice of research area, research design, or the interpretation or the publishing/reporting of findings.
- 4.5 If you are involved in educating, training, supervising or directing the work of students, you should ensure that no illegitimate interests influence or may appear to influence your approach to such activity.
- 4.6 Where relationships occur between members of staff, both individuals must deal appropriately with any potential conflicts of interest, and ensure that personal relationships do not advantage or disadvantage any member of staff or other individuals (such as job applicants or service providers). If a member of staff is involved in a close or familial relationship with an applicant for a job, they must not be involved in the selection process, and if appointed the successful candidate cannot be placed in a direct line management relationship with the existing staff member.
- 4.7 If you have a concern about what you in good faith believe to be a conflict of another member of staff of the University, then you should raise this directly with the University Secretary (or an officer delegated by the University Secretary) or under the University's *Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Policy and Procedure*.

Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers: additional responsibilities

- 4.8 Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers of the University are additionally responsible for declaring any interests in the Annual Register of Interests (see Annex A) and to update any entries in the Register during a given year should the need arise. The Register is held by the University Secretary. If they have no interests to declare, they are still required to complete a return annually to confirm the same. Membership of a Federal Member of the University of London shall not normally be a registrable interest for this purpose.
- 4.9 The University Secretary will retain the Annual Register of Interests. Further details concerning this Register are included in Annex A, 'Annual Register of Interests'.

Chairs of University meetings

- 4.10 If you are Chair of any University meetings, you are responsible for managing any conflicts arising during these meetings.

Examiners for University of London Worldwide

- 4.11 If you are an Examiner responsible for setting or marking assessments for the University of London Worldwide and you have relationships with third party institutions (e.g. through teaching, revision classes, staff training, consultancy, or inspection), then you must upon appointment declare any payments or other benefits received in a separate Register of Examiners' Interests.

DISCLOSURE AND MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

5. How and when should you declare an interest or make a disclosure.

Members of staff of the University

- 5.1 Members of staff have a duty to disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, and any situations that might give rise to their being perceived as being compromised by a conflict.
- 5.2 Members of staff must disclose in writing any conflicts of interest by contacting their line manager or head of division (or equivalent) for the relevant area of activity within which the conflict has arisen. The line manager or head of division (or equivalent) should make a written record of the disclosure, and of any action taken to manage the conflict in line with requirements set out in Section 6.
- 5.3 Members or attendees of University committees should declare any interest in relation to any item on a meeting agenda at the start of the meeting. The chair should ensure a record of the disclosure is kept, and of any action taken to manage the conflict in line with requirements set out in Section 6.

- 5.4 Members of staff involved in a procurement exercise should declare any conflict by writing to the University Secretary (or their delegee) who will inform the senior officer responsible for Finance who will keep a record of the declaration and manage the conflict.
- 5.5 If a member of staff has a personal relationship with a student to whom they have, or are scheduled to have, a professional responsibility, he/she must inform the Human Resources (HR) Department as soon as practicable and should separate his/herself from these responsibilities. HR will review the declared conflict. Failure to declare a conflict of interest in these circumstances may make the member of staff open to accusations of bias and abuse of trust. As a result of the power dynamic between a member of staff and a student, consent in a relationship may be coerced to compliance. Therefore, the University strongly discourages personal relationships with students. Any allegations of bullying or harassment will be dealt with under the relevant procedure.
- 5.6 Where relationships occur between members of staff, the individuals concerned must ensure that personal relationships do not advantage, unfairly disadvantage any member of staff or other individuals (such as job applicants or service providers). Staff in this situation should read and adhere to the University's *Relationships Code of Conduct*; and may seek further advice from the HR Department. Declarations concerning personal or family relationships will be kept confidential wherever possible however it may be necessary to share information to detail appropriately any conflicts of interest and/or to enable the University to meet its legal obligations.

Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers

- 5.7 In addition to completing the annual declaration of interests (see 4.8 above), Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers of the University must also disclose any new conflicts to the University Secretary (or their delegee) as soon as they arise.

Examiners for University of London Worldwide

- 5.8 In addition to declaring any interests by making an entry in the Register of Examiners' Interests (see 4.11 above), Examiners for University of London Worldwide programmes must also disclose any new conflicts to the University Secretary (or their delegee) as soon as they arise.

6. How are conflicts of interest managed?

Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers

- 6.1 In the case of Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers of the University, the University Secretary (or their delegee) will act as reviewer, seeking appropriate advice where necessary.
- 6.2 In the event of a significant and irresolvable conflict of interest arising, a member of the Board of Trustees may totally recuse themselves, or be asked to totally recuse themselves, from the committee.

Members of staff of the University

- 6.3 In the case of other members of staff, any conflicts of interest should be disclosed to the individual's line manager or head of division (or equivalent). The line manager or head of division (or equivalent) will act as reviewer, seeking advice where they feel this is necessary from the divisional head (where they are not the reviewer) and/or relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor responsible for the affected area of work.
- 6.4 The reviewer should evaluate the nature and severity of the conflict, and then determine the appropriate and proportionate measures to be taken which may include that the individual manage the conflict by:
 - not participating in projects,
 - not participating in discussions and/or decision-making in relation to relevant activity,
 - temporarily suspending participation in an external commitment,
 - referring either whole tasks or decisions on to other appropriate individuals,
 - or, in the rare case that it is not possible to manage the conflict, the reviewer may prohibit the activity to protect the public interest and/or the interests of the University.
- 6.5 If a conflict of interest is disclosed and the reviewer considers that either the matter is serious or that it has already had an influence on the work of the relevant individual, then the reviewer should make a report of this to the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor(s) responsible for the affected area of work, who will determine what, if any, additional and/or remedial actions should be taken.
- 6.6 The University Secretary (or their delegee) should be informed by the reviewer of any conflicts of interest that have arisen and of the actions taken to manage them. This is necessary as the University Secretary (or their delegee) will help to facilitate the regular review of this policy and its effectiveness.

Managing conflicts of interest arising during University meetings

- 6.7 'Declarations of Interests' is a standing item on the agenda for each University meeting, and members are invited to declare any interests in relation to any item on the agenda at the start of any meeting.

6.8 In the specific case of conflicts of interest arising during University meetings, the chair of the meeting will be responsible for determining if any person declaring an interest during a University meeting should:

- leave the meeting,
- absent themselves from any part of the discussion and/or vote taken on the item, or
- in exceptional cases, stand down from the committee.

If the conflict relates to the chair, then the deputy chair may act as chair for the relevant item or the chair may otherwise absent themselves from the relevant discussion/decision. The chair is responsible for ensuring that the minutes of the meeting provide a record of the details of any disclosures made and actions taken. If the conflict relates to a Member of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, or a senior officer of the University, the member or officer is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate entry is made in the Register of Interests. If the conflict relates to any other member of staff, then the individual should report the conflict of interest to their line manager as per 6.2 - 6.5 above.

Annex A. The Annual Register of Interests

- (a) The University Secretary is responsible for the maintaining of an Annual Register of Interests of the members of all the committees constituted under its Statutes and Ordinances, as well as its senior officers. The purpose of the Register is to provide information about members' interests including those which others might reasonably think could influence the actions and decisions of any individual required to make an entry in the Register. It is updated annually and (as per regulatory expectations) is publicly available for inspection.

- (b) Members of the Board of Trustees and Collegiate Council, and senior officers of the University will, upon appointment, be invited to declare any interests, and must thereafter declare any new interests or disclose any conflicts of interest as soon as reasonably practicable when they arise. They must also review the information relating to them held in the Register at intervals on an annual basis.

- (c) Any disclosed conflicts of interests will be managed as set out in Section 6 of the Conflicts of Interest Policy and Disclosure Procedures, 'How are conflicts of interest managed'.