

Conflict of Interests and Gifts and Hospitality Scenarios and Mitigations Guidance

This guidance sits under the Disclosure and Management of Conflicts of Interest and Gifts and Hospitality Policies and Procedures

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| Brief Description & Purpose: | This guidance sets out example scenarios and suggested mitigations that would require disclosure as a conflict of interest, gift or hospitality | | |
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The scenarios and mitigations provided below are not exhaustive but aim to offer guidance and illustration about the issues you may need to consider if you have a potential conflict of interest or whether to declare a gift or hospitality. There may be additional mitigations to be considered for your specific situation. Further advice is available from Richard Elliott and Clare Stogden, Governance Services

Example scenarios and mitigations for potential Conflicts of Interest

These examples relate to situations involving personal relationships that you may have with a person or company connected to the University or seeking to be connected. In all cases of potential Conflict of Interest it is important to be aware of any perception of conflict as well as an actual conflict and all mitigations should be transparent and demonstrable should anything be queried at a later date.

| Scenario | Mitigations & approval route |
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| You are involved in a procurement process and you, a member of your family or close friend owns, works for or otherwise has a close connection with or significant influence over one of the companies involved | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of the perception that you or your family may personally benefit if a company successfully wins a tender or is awarded a contract.</p> <p>Recommended mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> remove yourself from all aspects of the procurement process. <p>Where you still need to be part of the procurement process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure a neutral party is also involved and reviews all negotiations and decisions and you are not an approver in the processor. <p>You should discuss this with your procurement contact and your line manager as soon as you become aware that there is a potential conflict of interest and disclose it via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact</p> |

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| | <p>Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |
| <p>Someone known to you applies for a job role for which you are the line manager</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of the perception of nepotism and unfair recruitment practices.</p> <p>Recommended mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excuse yourself from all aspects of the recruitment process; • if the person is successful they will need to have an alternative Line Manager; <p>Where you still need to be part of the recruitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure at least 3 panel members to be involved in shortlisting, interview and decisions; • If you are the contact for the role ensure you only provide information you would provide to all candidates; • that any offer made is within the boundaries of the relevant HR policy. <p>You should discuss this with your HR contact and your line manager as soon as you become aware that there is a potential conflict of interest and disclose it via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> <p>Further information on relationships at work is provided in the Staff Code of Conduct page 16.</p> |
| <p>Someone known to you applies for a place on a programme directly with the University, through UCAS or a University partner</p> <p>*refer to other examples for additional mitigations for specific scenarios</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be ensure that you are following the principles of the General Data Protection Regulations at all times, especially if you have access to systems containing student data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss this situation with your line manager and ensure your department/service is aware of the situation as early as possible; • Disclose the potential conflict of interest via the online form asap; • If you have access to student data your line manager will need to complete the Student Data Mitigation form; • Review the examples for suggestion mitigations where you are involved in selection, teaching or supervision of applicants. |

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| | <p>You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |
| Someone known to you enrolls as a student on a programme or module you teach | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of both positive and negative bias to the student.</p> <p>If possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for them to be taught by a colleague; • Ensure that they are not one of your tutees; • Ensure that you do not mark their work; • Be aware of GDPR e.g. if the student is a niece/nephew it may be tempting to give information to their parents. As with any student you should only disclose information with their consent. <p>Discuss the situation with the programme leader and your line manager as early as possible, they will need complete the Student Data Mitigation form. Disclose the conflict of interest via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |
| Someone known to you applies for a PhD project you are supervisor of | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of both positive and negative bias to the student.</p> <p>Recommended mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If possible arrange for an alternative supervisor and excuse yourself from the selection process; • Where you need to be part of the supervision team due to subject specialism arrange for someone else to be the lead supervisor and selection lead, ideally a selection panel would have at least 3 members; • Ensure you only provide advice that you would provide to all students or enquiries to minimise potential bias; <p>Discuss this situation with your line manager and ensure your department are aware of the situation as early as possible. Disclose the conflict of interest via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |

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| <p>Someone known to you applies to study on a programme where you are involved in the selection process.</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of both positive and negative bias to the applicant.</p> <p>Recommended mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove yourself from the selection process; • Arrange for someone else to send all correspondence; • Ensure that you are not the named contact in any correspondence; • Be aware of GDPR e.g. if the student is a niece/nephew it may be tempting to give information to their parents. As with any student you should only disclose information with their consent. <p>Discuss this situation with your line manager, they will need to complete the Student Data Mitigation form and ensure your department is aware of the situation as early as possible. Disclose the conflict of interest via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |
| <p>You have administrative responsibilities for a programme where someone known to you (relative, friend, or close personal connection) is a registered student</p> | <p>In this situation you may have access to sensitive information including student records, assessment marks, exam papers, personal contact details, and other confidential data. You need to be aware of potential conflicts of interest that could arise from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing their records when not strictly necessary for your role; • Being involved in assessment administration or marking processes; • Having access to information before it is formally released to students; • Being in a position to influence decisions affecting their progress or outcomes. <p>Recommended mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove yourself from any processes directly affecting this student (e.g., marking, assessment boards, extenuating circumstances panels, appeals processes); • Arrange for a colleague to handle all correspondence and administrative matters relating to this specific student; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you are not the named contact for this student in any communications; • Do not access their student record unless there is a legitimate and documented business need; • Arrange for another staff member to handle exam paper distribution, invigilation duties, or results processing where this student is involved; • Be aware of GDPR – you must not disclose information about the student's academic performance, attendance, or personal circumstances to family members or mutual friends without the student's explicit consent. <p>Discuss this situation with your line manager as soon as you become aware of it. They will need to complete the Student Data Mitigation form, and ensure your department is aware of the situation as early as possible. Disclose the conflict of interest via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated</p> |
| <p>You or someone you are close to has a financial interest in a company sponsoring your research;</p> | <p>In this situation you need to ensure you are not influencing (or being perceived to be influencing) any agreements and costs to the company to enhance the financial benefit to yourself</p> <p>Possible mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excuse yourself from any contract and IP negotiation; • Treat the sponsor as you would any other external partner; • Independent review of research to ensure there is no bias and conclusions are balanced <p>Ensure that you inform all relevant parties as early as possible e.g. Research Innovation Services, Legal Services, Line Manager and discuss mitigations with them. Disclose the potential conflict of interest and identified mitigations via the online form for review by the Head of Governance Services. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |

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| <p>You or someone you are close to is connected to a company that is related to your area of research, this may be as a founder, director, or shareholder.</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of potentially providing the company with a competitive advantage, breaching Intellectual Property agreements and influencing your research to benefit the company.</p> <p>Possible mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excuse yourself from any contract, IP, cost negotiations; • As far as possible you should treat the company as you would any external partner; • Any external funding application or consultancy proposal should be endorsed by the Faculty Research and Knowledge Committee for explicit consideration and if appropriate, approval by RaKE. This should be as a specific item, not as part of any overall routine approval package. <p>You should inform your line manager and relevant services as soon as possible and every time there is a related situation e.g. Legal Services, Research Innovation Team. As there may be different situations e.g. they become a sponsor, request consultancy, become a supplier, involving this potential conflict mitigations should be reviewed and updated for every situation.</p> <p>Disclose the Conflict via the online form when it first becomes known and initial mitigations have been agreed for review by the Head of Governance Services. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |
| <p>You are applying for grant funding in collaboration with an external organisation where you or someone you are close to (e.g. a spouse, partner, or family member) has a significant role or financial interest (e.g. director, shareholder, employee).</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of potentially providing the company with a competitive advantage, breaching Intellectual Property agreements and influencing your research to benefit the company.</p> <p>Possible mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclose the relationship as early as possible, ideally before the bid is developed or submitted; • Ensure the bid development process is transparent and includes oversight from a neutral party (e.g. line manager or Research Innovation Services); <p>Treat the external organisation as you would</p> |

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| | <p>any other potential partner, ensuring no exclusive access or undue influence.</p> <p>Discuss the situation with your line manager and relevant services as early as possible. Disclose the conflict of interest via the online form once mitigations have been confirmed. Should your funding bid be successful you will need to submit a new declaration with additional mitigations appropriate to the new situation.</p> |
| <p>A member of staff holds shares in a company which contracts with the University.</p> <p>You or someone you are connected to is a director or shareholder of a company that offers services to, or competes with, the University.</p> <p>This includes spin-out companies</p> | <p>In this situation you need to be aware of potentially advantaging the company and yourself e.g. providing information which allows them to win tenders.</p> <p>Possible mitigations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another member of staff acts as the point of contact and communicator with the company; • You leave meetings where there is a risk of becoming privy to information which could advantage the company; • You are not involved in contract negotiations; • If you are active in the company i.e. director or employee you should ensure that you do not do company work during your University contracted hours. If a spin-out you should, with your line manager, ensure the time put into the spin-out is not disproportionate and disadvantaging your other University work. <p>Disclose the Conflict via the online form when it first becomes known and initial mitigations have been agreed for review by the Head of Governance Services. You should contact Governance Services whenever the situation changes and new issues or mitigations are identified, and your original disclosure will be updated.</p> |

Example scenarios and mitigations for Gifts and Hospitality

| Scenario | Mitigations & approval route |
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| A student gives you a gift before you are due to mark their thesis, exam or partake in their viva. | <p>In this situation you should refuse the gift as inappropriate, regardless of the value of the gift, as it could be viewed as a bribe.</p> <p>All declined gifts and hospitality still need to be declared via the Gifts and Hospitality procedure.</p> |

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| <p>You are given a gift from a student after results have been released</p> | <p>This would be considered a thank you gift and can be accepted. If the value of the gift is over £50 it would require approval prior to accepting.</p> <p>All gifts need to be declared on the Gifts and Hospitality register (link)</p> |
| <p>You are offered hospitality by a collaborative partner, supplier or provider of goods and services when contracts are still under negotiation.</p> | <p>In this situation you should refuse the gift as inappropriate, regardless of the value of the gift, as it could be viewed as a bribe.</p> |
| <p>You are offered hospitality by a collaborative partner, supplier or provider of goods and services after a contract has been signed.</p> | <p>In this situation it is also useful to consider the perceived value of the hospitality. Relatively low value hospitality such as a lunch or dinner would usually be acceptable if within the requirements of the policy or if you receive free accommodation as part of an invite to a conference. If valued or estimated at >£50 it will require approval in advance</p> <p>High value hospitality such as a concert or sports event should usually be declined unless it is specifically related to University Business e.g. assessing a venue for a potential conference or relationship building with a key partner or potential partner.</p> <p>All hospitality whether accepted or not should be declared on the Gifts and Hospitality register (link)</p> |
| <p>You are repeatedly offered gifts and hospitality by a collaborative partner, supplier or provider of goods and services</p> | <p>Even if the gifts or hospitality are low value and individual of low concern taken together it could be perceived to be inducement or bribe and a potential conflict of interest. E.g. if from a supplier that regularly bids on contracts from the University you may be perceived to be more inclined to give them further business because you expect to receive something in return.</p> <p>In situations like this you should decline further gifts or hospitality, ideally requesting that they stop sending/inviting. If possible, remove yourself from future decisions involving them until it is confirmed that they are no longer sending gifts or hospitality. If this is not possible you should follow the Conflict of Interest Policy and procedure and discuss possible mitigation with your line manager.</p> |

Related Procedures, Guidance and Other Resources

The following relevant policies and procedures are available on the [University Policy Page](#)

- Disclosure and Management of Conflicts of Interests Policy
- Disclosure and Management of Conflicts of Interests Policy – Related Parties Guidance
- Scenario and Mitigations guidance
- Financial Regulations
- Gifts & Hospitality Policy
- Public Interest Disclosure “Whistleblowing” Policy
- Reportable Incidents Policy
- General Data Protection Policy

[Declaration of Conflict of Interest Form](#) (staff access only)

[Student Data Mitigation form](#) (staff access only)

[Due Diligence Framework](#) (staff access only)

[Staff Code of Conduct](#)

[Disciplinary Procedure \(Staff access only\)](#)

[Instrument of Government](#)

[Articles of Government](#)

[Managing External Work](#) (staff access only)