

# University of Cambridge Conflict of Interest Policy

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### A: Policy Statement

1. The University is committed to ensuring that high levels of integrity apply in all areas of its operation and that all activities are conducted in an honest and transparent manner. The aims of this Policy are to:
  - i. enable staff, plus student and external committee members, to recognise where their personal interests conflict with, or may reasonably be perceived to conflict with, their University duties (see [Section C](#));
  - ii. communicate the expectations for declaring and recording such conflicts (see [Section D](#)); and
  - iii. set out the processes for managing conflicts of interest in order to ensure that business decisions are made objectively and in the best interests of the University (see [Section E](#)).
2. A conflict of interest exists when the duties owed by an individual to the University conflict with, or may possibly conflict with a personal, financial or other interest or duty that the individual holds and/or with the interests of someone who has a close personal connection to the individual (including, but not limited to, any children, in-laws, siblings, partner or spouse).
3. The governance of the University, through its committees, must be conducted in accordance with this Policy. Therefore, in addition to applying to all staff, the Policy also applies to student and external committee members (see [Section F](#) for a summary of responsibilities).

### B: Individuals to Whom this Policy Applies

4. This Policy applies to all University staff, and to student and external members of University committees or equivalent bodies, such as working groups. For the purposes of this Policy:
  - i. reference to the 'University' does not include reference to the Colleges, Cambridge Assessment, Cambridge University Press or any subsidiary companies (see [Appendix 4](#) for related local policies);
  - ii. 'staff' refers to all individuals working within the University at all levels and grades (whether paid or unpaid), including employees (whether permanent, fixed-term or temporary), other visiting research or teaching staff, workers, trainees, seconded staff, agency staff, agents, volunteers, interns or any other person working in any context within the University.

### C: Defining and Recognising Conflicts of Interest

5. A conflict of interest exists when the duties owed by an individual to the University conflict with, or may possibly conflict with a personal, financial or other interest or duty that the individual holds and/or by the interests of someone who has a close personal connection to the individual. The existence of a conflict of interest does not therefore depend on whether the individual is actually influenced in their duties or decisions. It arises whenever an interest could reasonably be perceived as affecting, or having the capacity to affect, an individual's ability to make impartial decisions on the University's behalf. For example, a member of the Audit Committee, whose sibling is a senior figure in the firm currently performing the University's internal audit, has a conflict of interest, as the possibility of being influenced exists.
6. A potential conflict exists where the interests of an individual are not currently in conflict, but there is a reasonable likelihood that they may give rise to a conflict in the future. For example, where a member of staff is a trustee of a charity that is not currently linked to the University, or seeking collaboration with the

University, but that charity has an interest in research and is known to regularly seek collaborations with universities.

7. Conflicts of interest can arise both from roles or activities involving parties outside the University or where staff and other committee members hold multiple roles inside the Collegiate University. Conflicts may arise from activities such as procurement, commercial transactions, conduct and funding of research, contractor selection, admissions and recruitment.
8. Conflicts of interest can be financial or non-financial:
  - i. **Financial conflicts** can arise where there is, or appears to be: opportunity for personal financial gain; financial gain to someone with a close personal connection to the individual; or where it might be reasonable for another party to take the view that financial benefits might affect that person's actions. Examples include payments, benefits in kind, equity interests, gifts, hospitality or intellectual property rights.
  - ii. **Non-financial interests** may include any direct or indirect benefit or advantage, enhancement of an individual's career or education or gain to a connected person. Staff and other committee members should therefore consider who they are acting for, and whether there are any competing motivations or interests that could influence them, or be seen to influence them.
9. See [Appendix 1](#) for examples of areas where conflicts are particularly likely to occur in the university environment and ways to manage these conflicts.

#### **D: Declaring and Recording Conflicts of Interest**

10. Individuals must disclose all conflicts of interest in writing (email is sufficient) at the time the conflict first arises or becomes known, including when it is recognised that a conflict might reasonably be perceived. Conflicts of interest should be disclosed to the Head of Institution (or their nominated delegate e.g. the Department Administrator). If the recipient of the disclosure has an interest in the matter being disclosed, they should refer the disclosure to the Head of School (if the declarer is a member of a faculty/institution within the School) or the Registry (if the declarer works in the UAS/other NSIs) for approval. Similarly, Heads of Institution should declare any personal conflicts of interest to the Head of School or Registry as appropriate. As noted in Section E, the recipient should record the conflict in the institution's register of conflicts of interests.
11. 'Declarations of interest' should be a standing item at the beginning of every Committee meeting, so that members can declare any conflicts of interest in relation to that specific agenda. The Chair will decide on the course of action for managing each conflict. Both the declarations and any mitigating actions should be minuted.
12. In addition to declaring conflicts of interests to their Head of Institution and in relation to specific agenda items as outlined in paras 10 and 11, members of the University's principal, central decision-making bodies and Heads of Institution are required to declare their interests annually via an online declaration of interests form which will be issued by the Governance and Compliance Division. Given the rolling and prospective nature of this declaration, the level of disclosure required in the declaration of interests form exceeds the expectations of other staff, by encompassing not only existing conflicts of interest but also potential conflicts of interests. [Appendix 3](#) indicates the categories which are covered in the annual declaration of interests form. Information which is submitted via the form will be sent to the relevant committee Chairs for inclusion in their registers of interests.
13. Other than in relation to members of the University Council, whose declarations are published, conflicts of interest declarations will be treated confidentially insofar as the law permits.

#### **E: Managing Conflicts of Interest**

14. The Head of the Institution (or Head of School/Registry if escalated) should decide on the course of action for each conflict that is declared to them, confirm this to the declarer in writing and record it in the institution's register of conflicts of interests (see the template in [Appendix 2](#)). They may share the information with the Chair of a local committee, if the interest is relevant to the individual's membership of that committee. On rare occasions (e.g. in the case of particularly complex or disputed conflicts) the Head of School or Registry may wish to seek advice from:
  - i. the Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (for matters which could have ethical or reputational implications for the University); or
  - ii. the Research Policy Committee (for conflicts that relate to research).
15. Chairs of the University's principal, central, decision-making bodies will decide whether any action is necessary to manage each interest which their members disclose via the annual declaration of interest form.
16. In some situations simply disclosing and recording the interest may be the only necessary action.

17. In other cases, in order to ensure that decisions are made in a fair and transparent way, more active management may be required. This will depend on the nature and context of the interest, but could include:
  - i. not taking part in discussion of certain matters and any decisions/votes relating to those matters;
  - ii. not taking part in decisions relating to certain matters, but still being present for any preceding discussion;
  - iii. referring decision-making on certain matters to others;
  - iv. agreeing not to act as a particular person's supervisor;
  - v. divesting or placing in trust certain financial interests;
  - vi. publishing a notice of interest;
  - vii. standing aside from any involvement in a particular project;
  - viii. declaring an interest to a sponsor or third party.
18. [Appendix 1](#) gives examples of possible ways of managing different types of conflict.
19. The actions should be reviewed annually by the Head of the Institution or committee Chair as appropriate (or their nominated deputy) and updated as necessary to ensure they remain relevant. The actions should also be reviewed if the reviewer is notified of any material changes to the matter declared.
20. A conflict of interest should be avoided unless it can be properly managed using the above strategies. For example, in extreme cases, it might be necessary for an individual to resign one of the positions which is creating the conflict.
21. If the individual is not clear as to the course of action to be taken, they should contact the Governance and Compliance Division ([GCDEnquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:GCDEnquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk)).

## F: Summary of Responsibilities

22. **All staff** must disclose conflicts of interest with their University duties to their Head of Institution at the earliest opportunity.
23. **Members of the University's principal decision-making bodies and Head of Institutions** must declare any personal, financial or other interests (and/or those of their close personal contacts) which constitute existing or potential conflicts with their University duties via the online declaration of interests form. They should give notice of any changes to their interests via the form at the earliest opportunity.
24. **Heads of Institutions** are responsible for: ensuring that staff within their institutions, plus any student or external members of their institution's committees, are made aware of this Policy; ensuring that an up-to-date register of conflicts of interests is maintained for their institution; and for determining how to manage each conflict.
25. **All committee Chairs** are responsible for: asking for declarations of interest in relation to the agenda at the start of each meeting, determining how to manage each conflict in the context of their meeting, and ensuring that the declarations and any mitigating actions are minuted.
26. **Chairs of the University's principal, central decision-making bodies** are responsible for ensuring that an up-to-date register of interests is maintained for their body, and for determining how to manage each interest.
27. **Members of the University's Council**, as trustees of an exempt Charity regulated by the OfS, have a legal duty to avoid conflicts of interest and to act in the best interests of the Charity. In accordance with the good practice noted in Para 150 of the [OfS' Regulatory Framework](#), their declarations will be made publicly available on the University website. Individuals who are elected to the Council (classes a-d) must declare potential conflicts of interest upon election. Potential conflicts of interest should be declared during the appointment process for members in class e.
28. **The Governance and Compliance Division** is responsible for ensuring that this Policy is maintained, that appropriate explanatory guidance is provided and for monitoring compliance with the Policy.
29. **The Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs (CBELA)** and the **Research Policy Committee (RPC)** are responsible for considering issues escalated to them by the Head of School or Registrar, and for providing recommendations to the University. RPC, in consultation with CBELA, will review this Policy at least every five years, taking into consideration the latest guidance on best practice issued by relevant external bodies.
30. The **Audit Committee** will receive a report on compliance with the Policy through the University's assurance framework (currently provided through the Departmental Assurance Survey).

## G Related Guidelines and Contact for Queries

31. The University already has guidance, policies and procedures which include provisions for dealing with conflicts of interests in certain areas. Please refer to [Appendix 4](#) for a list and read this policy together with any other relevant policies or relevant guidelines. It is expected that local guidelines will be consistent with this overall Policy; if differences arise the overall Policy will take precedence.
32. If you have any queries relating to this Policy, please contact the Governance and Compliance Division ([GCDEnquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:GCDEnquiries@admin.cam.ac.uk)).

### Appendix 1: Examples of Conflicts of Interest and Ways to Manage Them

Situation	Declaration	Possible Management Strategy
<p><b>Teaching and/or supervision-related</b></p> <p>A staff member who has a close personal or familial relationship with a student or a person connected to the student and who may be involved in decisions about the student's admission, supervision or academic progress, or the award of studentships, prizes or grants to the student.</p>	<p>To Head of Institution or a senior member of the HR Division</p>	<p>The student will be made aware of the disclosure and arrangements will be put in place to avoid the staff member having any professional connection with the student.</p> <p>See: <a href="#">Policy on Personal Relationships Between Staff and Students</a></p>
<p><b>Research-related</b></p> <p>a. A researcher with a financial interest in the licensee (or proposed licensee) of University intellectual property for which they are a sole or joint creator.</p> <p>b. A researcher whose work is funded by a company and who has a financial interest in the company sponsoring or funding their research (or the research of a supervisee). This is exacerbated if the researcher's interest may be affected by the outcome of the research.</p> <p>c. A researcher who holds a position in an enterprise (e.g. as Director) that is funding research at the University and which may wish to restrict (or otherwise manage) research findings for commercial reasons, or not wish to publish the results of the research.</p> <p>d. A PI proposes that their company be used to carry out subcontracted work on a research grant.</p>	<p>To Head of Institution or appropriate delegate and (where appropriate) Cambridge Enterprise</p>	<p>a. All decisions relating to the negotiation of the licence that require input or decisions from the researcher or their Institution must be made by the Head of Institution in liaison with Cambridge Enterprise.</p> <p>b. The researcher declares this interest in all publications and as part of any application for ethical approval. The researcher should recuse themselves from any key decisions that could benefit the company.</p> <p>c. An appropriate collaboration agreement should be put in place by the Research Operations Office to set out the management of research findings and publications amongst other terms. The PI must not be involved in the negotiation of the terms of the agreement.</p> <p>d. The Head of Institution should first ensure, that Financial Regulations are followed regarding whether the subcontract is awarded to the PI-owned company. The PI should not be part of the University decision-making process due to their conflict of interest. If the subcontract is awarded to the PI-owned company, clear lines of demarcation will be needed to clarify when the PI is acting on behalf of the University (e.g. making decisions about the research funded by the grant) and when they are acting for the company. The Head of Institution will need to set up some form of scrutiny for any decisions where the PI is conflicted. Any staff from the company embedded in the PI's academic lab must be known to be company staff and only afforded access to University facilities etc on the commercial terms agreed in the subcontract.</p> <p>Managing conflicts of interest in research is part of a researcher's responsibility under the <a href="#">Concordat to Support Research Integrity</a></p> <p>Also see: <a href="#">Good Research Practice Guidelines</a></p>

<p><b>Secondment-related</b></p> <p>A Head of Department has a 0.2fte secondment to a research Institute (not part of the University of Cambridge) specifically to supervise a programme of research at, and funded generously by, that Institute. They are one of several staff in the Department who have close collaborations with that Institute.</p>	<p>Head of School</p>	<p>The Head of Department cannot absolutely determine and agree, on behalf of the University, the terms of their own secondment and any associated collaboration agreement. The matter should be escalated to the Head of School.</p> <p>In the event of a dispute between another member of the Department and the same Institute, the Head of Department is in a conflicted position as they owe duties to both institutions and should escalate to School level.</p>
<p><b>Start-up/spin-out-related</b></p> <p>a. An academic is sole owner of a start-up company and has a small amount of private funding to take it forward. As the funding is modest and access to an expensive piece of University equipment is key to developing the work, the academic places Dr X, a postdoc and company employee working on the start-up, in the corner of their University lab. Access to the equipment is governed by a Facilities Committee, which agrees both time and charges for use (subsidized by the Department for University research, higher charges for externals) on which the academic sits.</p> <p>b. An academic has some exciting IP and is planning to set up a spin-out company which could make a lot of money. The academic decides that a collaboration with an existing commercial partner would help prepare the ground for a joint venture between the spin-out and that company to develop their ideas and proposes a collaboration agreement between the University and the third party company. The Research Office pick up that the terms seem unusually favourable to the third party company and recommend a series of changes to protect the University, however the academic seems very resistant and reluctant to upset the third party company in any way.</p>	<p>Head of Institution</p>	<p>a. The academic should not be party to decisions on whether, and at what cost, Dr X is able to use the equipment. The company should also pay the Department bench fees for use of the lab by Dr X generally, in addition to the equipment fee. They should declare to the Head of Department and Chair of the Facilities Committee the full nature of the arrangements with Dr X and take no part on behalf of the University in the negotiation of terms of the agreement with the start-up.</p> <p>b. The academic needs to declare their conflict of interest to their Head of Department and take no further part on behalf of the University in the negotiation of terms with the third party company.</p>
<p><b>HR-related</b></p> <p>A staff member who would normally be involved in the selection process for a new appointment learns that a close family member is applying for the role.</p>	<p>Chair of the Recruitment Panel</p>	<p>No member of staff may be involved in the recruitment process where a relative is a candidate. Therefore, the staff member's role in the selection process should be carried out by another member of staff. See: <a href="#">Policy on Employing and Working with Relatives</a></p>
<p><b>Committee-related</b></p> <p>a. External committee member who advises or sits on committees at other universities.</p> <p>b. A committee member who has an outside interest in an item on the agenda.</p> <p>c. Student member of a committee, who is also part of a student society which has</p>	<p>To Head of Institution (for register of conflicts of interests) and Chair of Committee or delegate (when the conflict relates to a</p>	<p>a. Membership of other bodies which could constitute a conflict of interest should be recorded in the Institution's register of conflicts of interests.</p> <p>b-d. The individual should declare specific conflicts at the start of meetings when relevant. The Chair should decide what action may be necessary, which may include the conflicted member:</p>



<p>been lobbying for a policy that relates to one of the agenda items.</p> <p>d. A committee member is in a position to judge research (some of which is in their particular research area) that could be put forward for funding.</p>	<p>particular agenda item)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>absenting themselves from the discussion and decision of the item; or</li> <li>remaining for the discussion but not the decision on the item; or</li> <li>remaining for full item, but not participating in the decision.</li> </ul> <p>The conflict and action should be minuted.</p>
<p><b>Finance-related</b></p> <p>A staff member who takes part in the negotiation of a contract between the University and a supplier where they, or a person connected to them, has a financial or non-financial interest in that supplier.</p>	<p>To Head of Institution</p>	<p>The employee should declare the conflict prior to engaging the company, so that the Head of Institution can update the register of conflicts of interests and pre-authorise the engagement and/or expenses, if they are deemed appropriate. See: <a href="#">Procurement Services' Guidance</a></p>

## Appendix 2: Template Register of Conflicts of Interests for Institutions

The register of conflicts of interests should record any declared conflicts between the interests of members of the institution and their University duties. This will include those held by student and external members of the institution's committees.

This template indicates the information that should be recorded for each conflict, but should be adapted by institutions as necessary. Institutions should be mindful that records may be reviewed by Internal Audit.

Name of individual(s) concerned: <input type="text"/>	
Description of the nature of the conflict: <input type="text"/>	
Outline of the discussion between the individual and the Head of Institution (or nominated delegate) about managing the conflict: <input type="text"/>	
Details of the actions agreed to manage the conflict in the best interests of the University: <input type="text"/>	
Date from which conflict arose: <input type="text"/>	Date of last review*: <input type="text"/>

\*Actions should be reviewed annually and updated as necessary to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

## Appendix 3: Template Declaration of Interests Form for Heads of Institution and Members of Principal, Central Decision-Making Bodies

Members of the Council are expected to meet the Office for Students' definition of a fit and proper person.<sup>1</sup> Members of the University's principal, central decision-making bodies and Heads of Institutions are required annually to declare interests that fall within the categories specified below (where these interests conflict with their University duties or where there is a reasonable likelihood that they may give rise to a conflict in the future). The declarations should be submitted via an online form, which will be issued by the Governance and Compliance Division each year.

This annual declaration does not replace the need for individuals separately to declare relevant conflicts during the course of their role in the University, including the business of any committee, board or other body of the University of which they are a member.

For staff and others who are not members of a principal decision-making body, disclosure should be made, and recorded in the institution's register of conflicts interests, at the time a conflict first arises or becomes known, or it is recognised that a conflict might be perceived.

<sup>1</sup> [Public interest governance principles - Office for Students](#)

### Declaration of Interests Form for Individuals

Individuals are asked to declare interests in the relevant section of the form, where these interests conflict with their University duties or where there is a reasonable likelihood that they may give rise to a conflict in the future.

Name:

**1. Trusteeships of charities**

This includes any position (whether paid or unpaid) on the governing body or board of directors of any charitable body, including a charitable subsidiary undertaking, whether or not the position is formally described as a trusteeship.

Name of charitable trust or other charitable body\*:

\* if applicable, please give the full name as listed in the [Charity Commission's register of charities](#)

Position:

Date of Appointment:

**2. Directorships (including non-executive directorships) of publicly quoted or private companies (including wholly owned subsidiaries of the University)**

Name of Company:

Position:

Date of Appointment:

**3. Partnerships (including membership of any ordinary or limited liability partnerships)**

Name of Partnership:

Date of Appointment:

**4. Positions of employment or other remunerated posts (other than trusteeships or directorships)**

Name of employer or remunerating organisation:

Position:

Date of Appointment:

**5. Consultancies**

Name of Client:

Position:

Relevant dates:

**6. Significant (>1%) Share Options or Holdings (including those held by partners or close relatives) in private or public companies with which the University has an existing or potential business relationship (e.g. for the provision of services or research or for investment).**

Name of Company:

Shareholding:

Date share options/holdings were obtained:

**7. Membership of professional bodies, charities or voluntary organisations**

Name of Organisation:

Position:

Date membership started:

**8. Membership of Lobbying Organisation(s) (Trade Union membership is exempt from disclosure via the declaration of interests form. However, individuals should declare Trade Union membership at meetings if it could reasonably be perceived to represent a conflict with a particular agenda item)**

Name of Organisation:

Position:

Membership dates:

**9. Close personal connections (including, but not limited to, any children, in-laws, siblings, partner or spouse), if their interests could reasonably be perceived as representing a potential or existing conflict of interest with your University duties.**

Name of close personal connection and nature of relationship:

Nature of contact's interests which could reasonably be perceived as representing a potential or existing conflict of interest with your University duties:

Date that the interest arose (if known):

**10. Any interests or benefits not declared above which may (or may appear to) influence your decision-making, or might be seen to affect your ability to perform your duties:**

Date:

Signature:

**Privacy Notice:** The information collected on this form is used solely for the purpose of monitoring conflicts of interest in accordance with University policy and relevant law. The personal data is used to perform a task

carried out in the public interest, to further the University's legitimate interests, and in part to meet its legal obligations. Any 'special category' (sensitive) personal data collected is necessary to fulfil functions that protect the wider public against malpractice, unfitness, mismanagement or failures in its services. The information will be stored securely, with access restricted to those who have a legitimate reason to use it, and it will be treated confidentially insofar as the law permits. It will be retained while an individual remains a member of staff or student of the University, plus a further six years. Wider statements about the uses made of the personal data of staff, students and others are published at <https://www.information-compliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/data-protection>.

#### Appendix 4: List of Related Policies and Guidelines

Area of conflict:	Relevant policies/guidelines
Relationships between staff and students	<a href="#">Staff Student Relationship Policy</a>
Research	<a href="#">Good Research Practice Guidelines (Section 2.2)</a> <a href="#">Concordat to support research integrity</a> For any research funded by the US National Institute of Health, the <a href="#">NIH Conflict of Interest Policy</a> applies.
HR	The HR Division's <a href="#">policy on Employing or Working with Relatives</a> .
Financial	<a href="#">Financial Regulation A.2 (ethical principles)</a> <a href="#">Bribery and corruption policy</a> Gifts and hospitality policy (in preparation) <a href="#">Internal control procedures and conflict of interest</a>
Procurement	<a href="#">Procurement Services' guidance on conflicts of interest</a>
Donations	<a href="#">Ethical Guidelines for the acceptance of benefactions</a>
<b>Local policies</b>	
Cambridge University Press	<a href="#">Cambridge University Press - Section 7 of Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy</a> . This is also accompanied by a procedure document which is available to employees of CUP.
Cambridge Assessment	Cambridge Assessment Conflict of Interest Policy available to employees working at Cambridge Assessment.
Cambridge Enterprise	Cambridge Enterprise Conflict of Interest Policy is available to employees of Cambridge Enterprise.