

Conflict of Interest Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

(1) The University of Queensland's (UQ or the University) framework for managing conflict of interest seeks to protect the University and its employees from the risks associated with actual, perceived and potential conflicts of interest. The framework has three key pillars: (1) education and awareness; (2) self-assessment and disclosure; and (3) management of conflicts.

(2) Conflicts of interest are a normal part of employment relations in a large complex organisation like the University. What is important is how conflicts are efficiently and effectively disclosed and appropriately managed.

(3) A conflict of interest involves:

- a. a perceived conflict where it could reasonably be perceived, or give the appearance, that a competing interest or obligation, whether personal or involving a third party, could improperly influence the performance of a staff member's duties and responsibilities to the University;
- b. a potential conflict of interest where a staff member has an interest or obligation, whether personal or involving a third party, that could conflict with the staff member's duties and responsibilities to the University; and
- c. an actual conflict where a staff member has a competing interest or obligation, whether personal or involving a third party, that directly conflicts with the staff member's duties and responsibilities to the University.

(4) This Policy is consistent with principles of the [Public Sector Ethics Act 1994](#) and the University of Queensland [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#), which require staff to acknowledge the primacy of the public interest and ensure that any conflict of interest is avoided, or resolved or appropriately managed.

Scope

(5) This Policy applies to all University staff (including contractors) and members of UQ Senate. Where conflicts of interest are identified, they must be disclosed and managed appropriately in accordance with this Policy and:

- a. for UQ staff – the [Conflict of Interest for Members of Staff Procedure](#) and the [Disclosure of Interests Relating to Commercialisation Procedure](#); and/or
- b. for members of UQ Senate – the [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Procedure for Members of Senate](#).

Section 2 - Principles and Key Requirements

Principles

(6) Accountability, honesty and common sense are central to the good management of conflicts of interest. Without limiting the obligations set out in this Policy, University staff must:

- a. restrict the extent to which a private interest could compromise, or be seen to compromise, their impartiality

when carrying out their official duties;

- b. refrain from involvement in official decisions and actions which could be compromised by other private interests and affiliations;
- c. avoid personal activities or undertakings which could, or could be seen to, provide an improper advantage through the use of confidential or privileged UQ information;
- d. refrain from using their official position or University resources for private personal gain or gain by others with whom the staff member has a relationship or personal association;
- e. ensure that there can be no perception that they have received an improper benefit that may influence the performance of their official duties; and
- f. refrain from taking improper advantage of their official position or confidential/privileged information gained in that position when seeking employment outside the University, or provide such advantage to others with whom they have an association.

Types of Conflict

(7) University staff and contractors must be aware of the different types of conflicts of interest and regularly self-assess their circumstances, and disclose and appropriately manage any conflict of interest in accordance with this Policy and the associated procedures.

(8) Conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, the examples outlined below.

Private Interests

(9) Conflicts of interest can arise from a University staff member avoiding personal losses or gaining personal advantage by virtue of their role or access to University information that is not available to others. A private interest may be financial or non-financial, and may include business interests in a company tendering for paid work from the University.

Personal Relationships

(10) University staff must carry out their official duties with integrity and avoid conflicts of interest between their personal relationships and their University responsibilities. Personal relationships may include:

- a. family and close personal relationships – staff must not be involved in decisions affecting the employment or academic administration or teaching of a person with whom they have a family or close personal relationship. These relationships may include spouse, children, siblings or cousins, relations by marriage, close relatives, close friendships or sexual relationships; and
- b. financial relationships – staff must not be involved in decisions affecting the employment or academic administration of a person with whom they have a commercial relationship or where a personal financial interest exists.

Personal Benefits

(11) A conflict of interest may occur where a University staff member receives a gift or benefit that is, or may be perceived as, influencing the performance of their official duties. The University's [Reportable Gifts and Benefits Procedure](#) requires staff to disclose their receipt of certain gifts.

Researchers

(12) Researchers have additional responsibilities under the University's [Responsible Research Management Framework Policy](#), which requires researchers to disclose and manage actual, potential, and perceived conflicts of interest which may relate to the design, conduct or reporting of research.

Commercialisation or Financial Conflicts of Interest

(13) The University recognises financial conflicts of interest may arise as staff commercialise their research or teaching resources into products and services. A financial conflict of interest occurs when the primary interest of a University staff member, in maintaining and promoting the University's [vision, mission and values](#), is put at risk through the potential conflict of a significant financial interest.

Disclosing and Managing a Conflict of Interest

Senate Members

(14) Conflicts of interest relating to Senate Members will be disclosed and managed in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Procedure for Members of Senate](#).

University Staff

(15) All conflicts of interest must be disclosed and managed transparently between relevant parties and should align with a conflict of interest management plan. Strategies available to manage conflicts of interest include:

Register	Disclose and establish the details of the conflict.
Restrict	Restrict the staff member's involvement or actions in the matter.
Recruit	A disinterested third party should oversee processes involved in the matter.
Remove	The individual may remove themselves from their involvement in the matter.
Relinquish	The individual and/or their related parties may relinquish the private interest.
Resign	The individual's resignation is an option of last resort if no other options are workable.

Section 3 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities

Senate Members

(16) Under the [University of Queensland Act 1998](#), Senate Members are responsible and accountable to Senate. Senate Members are required to disclose and avoid conflicts of interest in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest and Disclosure Procedure for Members of Senate](#).

University staff

(17) Staff must comply with this Policy and associated procedures.

(18) Staff are required to:

- complete mandatory training and undertake regular self-assessment;
- disclose or update any conflict of interest involving themselves, and suggest an appropriate management plan;
- work with their supervisor to refine a management plan they have submitted; and
- alert supervisors to conflicts of interest held by other staff where they have reasonable belief the conflict of interest has not previously been disclosed.

Supervisors

(19) As defined in clauses 26-33 of the [Conflict of Interest for Members of Staff Procedure](#).

Integrity Unit

(20) The Integrity Unit is responsible for:

- a. administering conflict of interest training;
- b. maintaining the staff self-assessment tool; and
- c. investigating breaches of this Policy and the University [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#) in relation to conflicts of interest, where appropriate and in accordance with complaints management practices.

(21) The Integrity Unit will also maintain records of all conflict of interest matters it investigates, including outcomes and any external referrals that have been made. Where necessary, breaches of this Policy can be referred to the Human Resources Division or the Office of Research Integrity for action as appropriate.

Section 4 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance

Compliance

(22) Failure to comply with this Policy and associated procedures will constitute a breach of the University's [Staff Code of Conduct Policy](#) and may be dealt with as misconduct or serious misconduct in accordance with the [University of Queensland Enterprise Agreement 2021-2026](#).

(23) A member of the University Senate who fails to disclose a conflict of interest in the exercise of their functions may be removed from office under provisions of the [University of Queensland Act 1998](#).

(24) The University has a legislative obligation to report breaches of this Policy, where necessary, to external agencies including the Queensland Audit Office and the Crime and Corruption Commission.

Monitoring

(25) The University, through the Provost and Chief Human Resources Officer, will periodically review this Policy and its procedures for their effectiveness.

Section 5 - Recording and Reporting

Conflict of interest register

Senate Members

(26) The Senate Secretary is responsible for maintaining a confidential register of interests for members of Senate.

University Staff

(27) A University conflict of interest register must be established and maintained in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest for Members of Staff Procedure](#). Staff are required to submit and maintain conflicts of interest via the disclosure tool in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest for Members of Staff Procedure](#).

Section 6 - Appendix

Definitions, Terms and Acronyms

Term	Definition
Academic administration (including research administration)	Means any administrative aspect of a student's enrolment in a program at the University including admission, enrolment and assessment.
University staff	Means all officers and employees of the University, persons acting in an honorary or voluntary capacity for or at the University, and Members of the University Senate. For the purposes of this Policy, this definition also includes contractors undertaking work for or on behalf of the University.
Supervisor	Refer to clause 19 of this Policy, or for Members of the University Senate, the Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor or a person elected to preside over a Senate meeting under section 27(2) of the University of Queensland Act 1998 .

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