



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Conflict of Interest Policy

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Introduction

- 1 Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) depends on its staff and associated persons to ensure that the highest standards of ethical conduct are maintained in all its dealings. As such BNU, its staff and associated persons are required to adhere to the:
 - [Public Interest Governance Principles](#)
 - [Seven Principles of Public Life \(the Nolan Principles\)](#)
- 2 This policy is to enable BNU to identify, manage and mitigate conflict of interest so that it can demonstrate that it is conducting its business honestly, fairly and professionally. All staff, associated persons and partner organisations have a responsibility to be aware of the potential for a conflict of interest.

Purpose

- 3 This policy sets out BNU's expectations in respect of the identification and management of Conflicts of Interest and the controls that are in place to facilitate this.
- 4 The purpose of this policy is to protect the integrity of BNU and its reputation. The policy is also designed to protect the BNU community by providing guidance on handling possible conflicts of interest, by defining what is meant by a conflict of interest and setting out responsibilities for managing conflicts of interest.

Scope of Policy

- 5 This policy applies to all staff, officers and Council members of BNU, and to temporary workers, consultants, contractors, agents, and subsidiaries acting for, or on behalf of, BNU ("associated persons") within the UK and overseas. This includes staff of partner institutions who may be delivering BNU awards and/or professional practice partners under an academic partnership agreement.
- 6 This policy is in addition to, and does not replace, any requirements of staff contracts of employment or other policies including BNU's [Code of Conduct](#) and [Respect, Fairness and Inclusion Policy](#).
- 7 It will also apply to students when they are acting on behalf of BNU, either in a paid or voluntary role.

Responsibilities

- 8 All BNU staff have responsibility for ensuring that they are familiar with the Conflict of Interest Policy, any guidelines and complete any required conflict of interest training.
- 9 All BNU staff must:

- disclose any activity that might give rise to a potential conflict of interest, erring on the side of disclosure if in any doubt
 - must not take on any such activities that could be deemed to compete or conflict with BNU's activities.
- 10 Where staff are unclear they are to contact their Line Manager, the University Secretary or the Human Resources HR Directorate further information and guidance.
- 11 Any potential or actual conflict of interest must be discussed with Line Managers in the first instance and documented records kept for audit purposes. The Line Manager must either resolve the issue or, for issues that cannot be resolved at this level, report the issue to the relevant Head of School or Director. Any matter unresolved by the Head of School or Director shall be referred to the University Secretary and or the Director of HR who will seek advice as appropriate.
- 12 Where an individual wishes to raise concerns relating to a conflict of interest they should do so to the University Secretary or Director of Human Resources. Any such reports will be thoroughly and promptly investigated in the strictest confidence.

Definition of Conflict of Interest

- 13 A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties. In the case of an individual, the conflict of interest could compromise or appear to compromise their decisions if it is not properly managed. The question as to whether or not particular circumstances will give rise to a potential conflict of interest may be difficult. The general principle to consider is whether the circumstances could reasonably be perceived to affect the judgment of the individual making a decision affecting BNU.
- 14 Conflicts of interest can arise in a variety of circumstances, for example:
- When an individual has a position of authority in one organisation that conflicts with their interests in another organisation.
 - When an individual has interests that conflict with their professional position where someone works for or carries out work on BNU's behalf, but may have personal interests – paid or unpaid – in another business which either uses BNU products or services, or produces similar products.
 - Where someone works for or carries out work on BNU's behalf, who has friends or relatives employed by BNU, studying at BNU or taking BNU assessments or examinations.

Principles

- 15 All staff share a duty to be open and honest in matters where a personal or business relationship may, or may be perceived to, influence the operation of BNU business.

- 16 All staff irrespective of their position of authority are required to identify and declare material conflicts of interest to ensure that these do not, or are not, perceived to influence BNU business.
- 17 Members of staff are required to declare formally personal relationships with existing members of staff, students or individuals with links to BNU, such as suppliers or partners so any conflicts can be appropriately managed. All declarations should be made in writing to Human Resources via: humanresources@bnu.ac.uk.
- 18 Bias or impropriety arising from a conflict of interest or personal relationship will not be tolerated and is likely to be a disciplinary offence and may result in dismissal.
- 19 Members of staff are not permitted to receive benefits without explicit written authority in situations where their personal interests and their obligations to BNU conflict or potentially conflict. Members of staff should be familiar with BNU's Financial Regulations.
- 20 While personal privacy will be protected as far as practicable, transparency is paramount. The guidance aims to assist managers and staff to reconcile these potentially conflicting principles, in accordance with BNU's Data Protection Policy.
- 21 Where staff are unclear they should contact their Line Manager, University Secretary or Human Resources Directorate for further information and guidance.

Guidance in specific circumstances

- 22 The guidance below is not exhaustive. If in doubt, members of staff should seek advice from the University Secretary, Director of Digital and Technical Services or the Human Resources Directorate as appropriate.

Conduct of meetings

- 23 Any committee member who has a clear and substantial interest in a matter under consideration by the committee should declare that interest at any meeting where the matter is to be discussed. At the discretion of the chair, the member concerned should withdraw from the meeting during the relevant discussion or decision. Committee meeting agendas will include an explicit item to declare any conflicts of interest.
- 24 Where the chair declares a conflict of interest they should pass the chairing of that item of the agenda to another member of the Committee.

Conflicts arising from outside interests

- 25 A conflict may arise when a staff member undertakes external commitments which interfere with obligations arising under their contract of employment with BNU.

Use of confidential information

- 26 Individuals covered by this policy should not use for personal gain any confidential information obtained through their involvement with BNU. They must also be mindful of their responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation

Students and personal relationships

- 27 Where there is a family or personal relationship between a member of staff and a student, the staff member is required to comply with BNU's [Personal Relationships at Work Policy](#).

Student recruitment

- 28 Where there is a family or personal relationship between a member of staff and an applicant, the member of staff should declare the interest to their Line Manager and/or Head of School. They should take no part in the decision whether or not to offer a place to the applicant or advise on the nature of the offer.

External examiners

- 29 Former members of staff and students of BNU or of an institution with which Buckinghamshire New University has / had a collaborative partnership with should not act as external examiners within five years of leaving the University. Academic Registry is responsible for monitoring this.

Staff, Councillors and personal relationships

- 30 Where there is a family or personal relationship between staff or Council members, at any level within the University, neither member of staff or Council member should be involved (directly or indirectly) in any decision or process affecting the other, including, but not restricted to: promotion, performance review, remuneration, discipline, grievance, timesheets or expense claims. There should be no personal relationship which amounts to a manager/subordinate relationship. Should any case be found in existence, line management responsibility should be immediately reassigned.

Suppliers of goods and services

- 31 All purchases for the supply of goods or services should comply with BNU's procurement arrangements. Where a conflict of interest could occur, those responsible for making the decision should inform the Procurement Manager and if applicable a substitute would be appointed to assist with the process. Individuals should in any event be able to demonstrate value for money, in accordance with BNU's [Value for Money Policy](#).

Commercial conflicts of interest

- 32 Particular difficulties may arise in the commercial exploitation of intellectual property, whether this takes the form of a spin-out company or commercial research or consultancy. Members of staff should consult BNU's Intellectual Property – Policies and Procedures.

Annual Declarations

- 33 Individuals occupying the following positions shall be required to complete and submit a Register of Interests/Fit and Proper Person form in June/July annually:

- Members of BNU's Council (governing body)
- Directors of Subsidiary Companies
- University Executive Team
- Legal and Procurement staff
- Heads of School / Directors of Institutes

- Directors of Service
- CEO of the Students' Union
- Other staff with significant budgetary or procurement responsibilities

34 A record of all declarations made shall be maintained centrally by the University Secretary or their nominee.

Monitoring and Review

35 The Audit Committee has a general responsibility for monitoring the operation and effectiveness of Conflicts of Interest arrangements and will receive appropriate reports on any Conflicts of Interest activity.

36 The UET are responsible for ensuring that internal control systems and procedures remain effective and are monitored. The application of this policy will therefore be subject to regular review by the UET.

37 BNU is committed to reviewing on an ongoing basis the effectiveness of its policies and procedures in relation to conflict of interest if changes in legislation or significant organisational change require it.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. What is changing and why?				
The Conflict of Interest Policy was published in March 2018 and minor updates approved in November 2022. This has now been further reviewed to align with sector practice. Minor amendments have been made to ensure the policy is current and aligned with BNU practice.				
2. What do you know?				
All BNU staff are required to adhere to the Conflict of Interest Policy and declare any potential or actual conflicts of interest to their Line Manager and discuss and implement any mitigation to address the potential or actual conflict.				
3. Assessing the impact				
	Could benefit	May adversely impact	What does this mean? <i>Impacts identified from what you know (actual and potential)</i>	What can you do? <i>Actions (or why no action is possible) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations</i>
a) How could this affect different ethnicities? <i>Including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The policy sets out the responsibilities for all staff and provides a non-exhaustive list of examples of where conflict of interest may occur</p> <p>In some ethnicities it may be more common for family/close friends to be employed in similar industries/organisations or be educated by the same HEI therefore giving rise to potential conflicts</p> <p>The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for</p>	<p>By requiring all staff to declare potential and actual conflicts of interest these can be mitigated through appropriate action</p> <p>Line managers are responsible for maintaining records of any declared potential or actual conflicts of interest and for ensuring mitigation is put in place where required.</p>

			conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	
b) How could this affect cisgender and transgender men and women (including maternity/pregnancy impact), as well as non-binary people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	
c) How could this affect disabled people or carers? <i>Including neurodiversity, invisible disabilities and mental health conditions.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	
d) How could this affect people from different faith groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	

e) How could this affect people with different sexual orientations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise
f) How could this affect different age groups or generations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise
g) How could this affect those who are married or in a civil partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise
h) How could this affect people from different backgrounds such as: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates

substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers.			to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	
i) How could this affect people with multiple intersectional experiences?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The University operates in a diverse community and sector and therefore the potential for conflicts of interest to arise can occur across many areas. For example the University may have a policy or undertake action which relates to a particular sub-section of its community and therefore the potential for conflict could arise	
4. Overall outcome				
No major change needed <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Adjust approach <input type="checkbox"/>	Adverse impact but continue <input type="checkbox"/>	Stop and remove <input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Details of further actions needed				
None				
6. Arrangements for delivery and future monitoring				
7. Completed by:	Ellie Smith	University Secretary	Date	15/02/2024
8. Signed off by:	Name	Position	Date	Click or tap to enter a date.



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