

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist staff and managers to:

1. Understand how a conflict of interest may arise in different situations; and
2. Comply with the requirements of the University's Conflict of Interest Policy.

General Guidelines

A conflict of interest exists when the duties or responsibilities of an employee, contractor, or office holder of the University could be seen to conflict with another interest they may hold. This includes personal, financial, cultural, or professional interests that may influence, or be perceived to influence, the objective performance of their University role. A conflict may also arise where an individual holds multiple roles or responsibilities within the University itself. Conflicts may be actual, potential, or perceived.

Disclosing and managing conflicts of interest is not about implying wrongdoing — it is a safeguard to maintain integrity, trust, and transparency in University processes. Proactive disclosure is a shared responsibility, and everyone must exercise judgment and act in good faith.

Responsibilities

While the primary responsibility for disclosure lies with the individual who holds the conflict, managers also play a key role in maintaining an effective and transparent system for managing such conflicts. Managers should:

- Be familiar with the Conflict of Interest Policy and ensure it is clearly understood within their teams;
- Discuss the policy during induction, performance planning, and when relevant situations arise;
- Promptly assess disclosed conflicts, consult where appropriate (e.g. with HR, Governance and Assurance, or the Office of the DVC Māori), and agree on an appropriate management plan;
- Ensure that all disclosures and management plans are formally recorded on the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form;
- Review all disclosed conflicts at least annually (e.g. as part of the Performance and Development Planning (PDP) process) or earlier if circumstances change.

Options for Managing a Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of interest can be managed through a range of strategies. The approach taken should be proportionate to the nature and level of risk. Options include:

1. Avoiding the Conflict

- Reassigning duties to remove the conflict;

- Transferring the conflicted person to another project or position (temporarily or permanently);
- Refraining from further dealings with the affected individual, group, or organisation;
- Relinquishing the private interest or stepping away from the conflicting role;
- Agreeing on another method to fully remove the intersection of interests.

2. Managing the Conflict

- Implementing oversight or peer review to ensure impartiality;
- Withholding access to certain confidential or sensitive information;
- Restricting involvement in parts of a project or decision-making process;
- Having an independent third party review decisions or actions;
- Withdrawing from meetings, discussions, or votes related to the conflict (while potentially still providing advice if appropriate and agreed).

3. Minimal Action (Disclosure Only)

In low-risk situations where the conflict is minor or immaterial, it may be sufficient to document the disclosure without additional action. Even in these cases, it is important to monitor the situation and record how changes in context may require further controls in the future.

Culturally Responsive Practice

Massey University acknowledges that traditional approaches to conflict of interest may not always align with Te Ao Māori values, such as whanaungatanga (relationships), manaakitanga (care), and kaupapa-based governance. These approaches recognise collective and intergenerational obligations that may be mischaracterised as personal conflicts in Western frameworks. Managers and staff should be mindful of these dynamics and, where appropriate, consult with the Office of the DVC Māori or the Director Governance and Assurance to ensure culturally respectful and equitable management strategies are applied.

If in doubt — disclose early, seek advice, and document any potential conflict. For guidance, contact your HR Advisor, the Director Governance and Assurance, or the Office of the DVC Māori.

Examples of Conflicts of Interest:

AREA OR FUNCTION	EXAMPLES
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A researcher provides consultancy for a company or entity that also funds their university research. • A researcher has a financial interest in the licensee (or proposed licensee) of university intellectual property. • A researcher holds a position (for example as a director) in an enterprise that has an interest in university research. • A researcher has developed proprietary equipment/software/technology and requires students to

	<p>procure this using research funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A researcher conducts research involving a product developed by a company which they own, or have an interest, or where they are related or have a close relationship with a person that has an interest in the company or product. • A member of staff participates in a committee/funding body which is to consider the allocation of funds to Massey University colleagues. <p><u>Notes:</u> Conflicts of interest need to be declared to avoid doubts being cast over the validity of research.</p>
Secondary employment or consultancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff member holds a position (for example as a consultant, director or advisor) in an entity that may also have a business interest with the University. • A staff member wishes to become partners or principals in commercial firms or partnerships, or to become a retained adviser to a commercial organisation, where that involvement has the potential to create or to be perceived to create a conflict of interest with the staff member's employment obligations or the University's wider interests.
Admission, supervision, academic progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff member has a close personal or familial relationship with a student or a student's family and may potentially be involved in decisions about that student's admission/supervision or academic progress/the award of benefits, prizes or grants to the student. • A staff member is a member of a panel making decisions about awarding scholarships and is also the supervisor of an applicant.
Recruitment and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff member is involved in a recruitment process and has a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant or otherwise holds a predetermined view about an applicant known to them. • A staff member participates in the appointment, hiring, promotion, supervision or evaluation of a person (or company) with whom they have a close personal relationship. • A staff member approves business expenses for another staff member with whom they have a close personal relationship. <p><u>Note:</u> It is undesirable that personal relationships should intrude or be perceived to intrude on or influence working practices and decisions.</p>
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff member is involved in a purchasing decision that involves a person with whom they have a close personal relationship. • A staff member is asked to approve invoices and/or payments for a company in which they have a direct or indirect financial interest, or where the company is owned or operated by a person with whom they have a close personal relationship. • A staff member with decision making powers in relation to a tender offered by the University accepts a gift or hospitality from a person associated with a company which is tendering the work from the University. • A staff member or a member of their immediate family has a direct or indirect financial interest, or holds directorship, in a company or other entity which supplies, or is likely to supply, goods and/or services to the University, or which operates in competition with the University. • A staff member takes part in assessing a tender application where he/she has, or has had, a personal relationship with a person or organisation that has submitted a tender application. • Selection as a University supplier by a staff member who has a personal or economic interest in that entity, this includes engaging a family member as an independent contractor, subcontractor or consultant.

For further assistance and good practice guidance please read:

[Managing conflicts of interest: A guide for the public sector.](#)

For some further examples of how conflicts of interest can arise everyday are detailed here:

<https://oag.parliament.nz/2020/conflicts/part7.htm>

For support and advice on Conflicts of Interest please contact the Director of Governance and Assurance.