

# Conflict of Interest Policy

## Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy states Victoria University's (the University or VU's) position on conflict of interest, including the requirement of all staff to avoid conflicts of interest wherever possible, and to identify, declare and manage conflicts that cannot be avoided.

(2) If a conflict exists, staff must work with their manager/supervisor or People & Culture to develop and implement an appropriate conflict of interest management plan, which must be approved by their manager.

(3) This Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy](#) and [Delegations and Authorisations Policy](#).

## Section 2 - TEQSA/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(4) HESF: 6.1 Corporate Governance; 6.2 Corporate Monitoring and Accountability.

(5) Standards for RTOs (2015): Standard 7 & 8. National Vocational Education and Training Regulator (Outcome Standards for Registered Training Organisations) Instrument 2025: Standard 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4.

## Section 3 - Scope

(6) This Policy applies to:

- a. All staff, Council members, Committee members, contractors, volunteers, honorary and adjunct staff.
- b. All activities under the control or direction of Victoria University, whether conducted on or off University property or in a digital environment.

## Section 4 - Definitions

(7) Conflict of duty: A conflict of duty (sometimes called a conflict of role) is a type of conflict of interest. It is a conflict between a staff member's duties to Victoria University and duties to another organisation or group.

(8) Conflict of interest: A conflict of interest exists if an individual has a private interest that could influence, or reasonably be seen to influence, how they perform their university duties.

(9) Conflict of interest management plan: A plan that records the steps that will be taken to manage an identified conflict of interest under this Procedure.

(10) Conflict of interest register: A central register which records staff conflict of interest disclosure and management plans.

(11) Personal relationships : Relationships between personnel within the scope of this procedure and individuals or

people that extend outside of the University or University duties, or a relationship where a reasonable person may perceive that there could be some bias, either positive or negative, resulting from that relationship.

(12) Private interest: Private interests may be direct interests, such as an individual's own personal, family, professional or business interests, or indirect, such as another person or group that they are or were closely associated with, or have an ongoing interest in.

## Section 5 - Policy Statement

(13) The University is committed to fostering a culture of honesty, fairness and ethical behaviour and maintaining integrity in decision-making and research. At all times, staff are expected to perform their duties in the interests of achieving the University's mission and strategic objectives.

(14) All staff are expected to proactively identify, declare and appropriately manage actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest related to their role with the University in accordance with this Policy and the Conflict of Interest Procedure.

(15) A conflict of interest can be:

- a. Actual – there is a real conflict between a staff member's University duties and private interests.
- b. Potential – a staff member has private interests that could conflict with their university duties. This refers to circumstances where it is foreseeable that a conflict may arise in future and steps should be taken now to mitigate that future risk.
- c. Perceived – the public or a third party could form the view that a staff member's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions, now or in the future.

(16) When a conflict of interest is declared, a Conflict of Interest Management Plan will be prepared by the staff member in consultation with their manager/supervisor to eliminate, manage or resolve the conflict.

(17) The University accepts that pursuit of its strategic and operational objectives will necessarily expose staff to risks of actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest. VU recognises the importance of managing all perceived or actual conflicts ethically and transparently by creating a positive reporting culture.

(18) A conflict of interest may include the use of Victoria University resources or assets to advance a person's private interests or competing professional obligations, activities or interests. This includes the use of University premises, facilities (e.g. laboratory facilities), equipment, time and effort of University staff and graduate researchers, information technology, intellectual property, confidential information and any other University resources, whether tangible or intangible.

(19) Where a University body or committee has a specific policy instrument in place to address conflicts of interest, that requirement must be met in addition to the requirements under this Policy and the Conflict of Interest Procedure. Examples of specific policy instruments include the following:

- a. [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) and [Recruitment and Selection Procedure](#);
- b. [Purchasing Procedure](#);
- c. [University Council - Conduct of Council Business and Standing Orders Procedure](#);
- d. [Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure](#);
- e. [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour - Staff-Authored Texts Procedure](#); or
- f. Another policy instrument applying to a situation, body or committee that requires a conflict of interest disclosure.

(20) If staff are unsure about whether a conflict of interest exists, how to prepare a conflict of interest declaration or create a management plan, or otherwise how to manage a conflict of interest, they should seek advice from their supervisor, People and Culture or Risk and Compliance. If still in doubt, the person must make a declaration of the conflict of interest.

(21) A person who is advising on, considering or approving another person's management plan for a conflict of interest must themselves be free from conflict of interest in the matter. If they have a conflict of interest in relation to the matter, they must withdraw from exercising those responsibilities.

### **Concurrent ethical, legal and employment obligations**

(22) Disclosures made to VU under this Policy do not absolve staff of any third-party obligations with respect to conflicts of interest. For example, researchers may have concurrent obligations to disclose conflicts of interests to committees and to third parties (e.g., funding bodies such as the Australian Research Council). Likewise, compliance with external obligations does not replace obligations to the University under this Policy.

### **Disclosures made by employees of controlled entities**

(23) Where a person in a controlled entity is required under this policy to lodge a disclosure and management plan, they must send the disclosure and management plan in writing to the CEO or equivalent of the controlled entity, or their delegate(s). The CEO or equivalent, or their delegate(s), will then review the disclosure and management plan in accordance with the procedural principles below, or principles which are equivalent in all material respects.

### **Breaches**

(24) Breaches of this Policy may amount to misconduct or serious misconduct. A staff member in breach of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.

(25) Other potential consequences of a failure to manage a conflict of interest in accordance with this policy include:

- a. the unwinding of commercial agreements
- b. contractors being subject to contract renegotiation or termination of contract
- c. a person being required to step down from boards, University committees or other governance roles
- d. a graduate research supervisor's registration being revoked
- e. decisions, actions or appointments being invalidated, and
- f. conduct constituting corrupt conduct under the [Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission Act 2011 \(Vic\)](#).

## **Section 6 - Procedures**

(26) Conflict of Interest Procedure

(27) [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Procedure](#)

(28) [Staff-Authored Texts Procedure](#)

## **Section 7 - Supporting Documents and Information**

(29) [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy](#)

(30) [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour - Staff-Authored Texts Procedure](#)

- (31) [University Council - Conduct of Council Business and Standing Orders Procedure](#)
- (32) [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)
- (33) [Recruitment and Selection Procedure](#)
- (34) [Purchasing Procedure](#)
- (35) [Higher Education Academic Promotions Procedure](#)
- (36) [Delegations and Authorisations Policy](#)
- (37) [Higher Degrees by Research Procedure 9 Submission, Examination and Classification](#)
- (38) [Higher Degree by Research Supervision - Supervisor Registration and Professional Development Procedure](#)
- (39) [Higher Degree by Research Scholarships Procedure](#)
- (40) [Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality Procedure](#)
- (41) [ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for Disclosing and Managing Interests in Graduate Research](#)
- (42) [Disclosure of interests and management of conflicts of interest - A guide supporting the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#)

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Not Yet Approved
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<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Lisa Line Deputy Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Digital Lisa.Line@vu.edu.au
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Simone Wright Chief Human Resources Officer +61 3 9919 5447
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Eva Alexiou People & Culture Service Improvement Lead 9919 4613