



## **Conflict of Interest Procedure UB-HRD-PR-002/0**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this procedure is to provide a mechanism for identifying, managing, monitoring, reviewing, approving, and resolving conflicts of interest to maintain the integrity of the University.

### **2. Scope**

These procedures apply to all stakeholders of the University of Belize, including:

- University Board of Trustees members
- All employees
- Students
- Visiting research or teaching faculty
- Coordinators
- External members of the University, such as working groups and advisory committees, consultants of equivalent bodies
- Contractors and consultants engaged by the University's representatives
- Volunteers
- Interns
- Honorary appointees
- Any related party

Note: The inclusion of students is limited to situations where the student(s) hold positions that could create conflicts of interest (e.g., student workers, research assistants, or student government representatives).

### **3. Responsibilities**

#### **3.1. Office of Human Resources**

- 3.1.1. The Office of Human Resources is responsible for implementing and managing these procedures.

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### 3.2. Stakeholders

- 3.2.1. All University of Belize stakeholders are responsible for protecting the University from any type of conflicts of interest and adhering to the Conflict of Interest policy and procedures.
- 3.2.2. Stakeholders are responsible for declaring and disclosing conflicts of interest to the Office of the President or the Corporate Management Team (CMT) via the Office of Human Resources in writing at the earliest opportunity.

### 3.3. Administrators

- 3.3.1. All Administrators have the responsibility of understanding and implementing this procedure within the areas reporting to them. Administrators are also responsible for building general awareness of the Conflict of Interest policy and procedures, advising and directing employees to comply with their obligations under this procedure, and monitoring the work of employees to ensure that any conflict of interest is managed appropriately.

## 4. Terms and Definitions

Conflict of Interest	A conflict of interest exists when the commitment or duties owed by an employee or a stakeholder to the University is likely to influence with, or may possibly conflict with, a personal, financial or any other interest or inside/ outside activity that the employee holds and/or by the interests of someone who has a close personal connection to the employee. 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.
Disclosure	The action of an employee or a stakeholder declaring or disclosing information that shows or potentially shows that improper conduct has occurred, is occurring, or is likely to occur.
Employees	An "Employee" of the University of Belize is a person whom the University hires to perform a service for a wage or salary, in accordance with the Labour Laws of Belize and in accordance with the Mission and Vision of the University.

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Family	Includes parent, spouse, partner (de facto), sibling, children of sibling, second-degree relative(s), or those relations formed by marriage or a de facto relationship (e.g., “in-law” relationships).
Recusal	The process of an individual voluntarily abstaining from participating in discussions, decision-making, or actions concerning a particular issue where they have a conflict of interest.
Related Party	A related party refers to individuals or entities that have substantial connections to the University or its stakeholders through various relationships. This includes those with close personal or professional relationships, University affiliations, business partnerships, or significant financial or managerial interests in entities dealing with the University. These relationships require careful scrutiny to prevent conflicts of interest.
Stakeholders	Refer to the University’s Board of Trustees members, all employees, students, visiting research or teaching faculty, coordinators, volunteers, interns, honorary appointees, and external members of the University, such as working groups and advisory committees, consultants, or equivalent bodies, as well as any other related party.
Types of Conflicts of Interest	<p>Refers to the different types of conflicts of interest that may affect the University of Belize employees and their stakeholders. The different conflicts of interest are listed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Actual Conflict of Interest:</b> A definite and evident clash between an individual's personal, professional, or financial interests and their obligations to the University.</li>   <li>• <b>Financial Conflict of Interest:</b> Refers to a situation where there is a potential for an individual to personally benefit financially. It could involve a financial gain for someone who has a close personal relationship with an employee, or where it is reasonable for others to believe that financial</li> </ul>

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benefits might influence the person's actions.

Examples of such financial benefits include: payments, non-monetary perks, gifts, hospitality, or intellectual property rights.

- **Non-Financial Conflict of Interest:** Encompasses any benefit or advantage, either direct or indirect, that can contribute to the advancement (or enhancement) of an individual's career or education, or that can be seen as advantageous to an individual with a connection to them.
- **Personal Conflict of Interest:** Occurs when an individual's personal interests or obligations may interfere with their ability to make impartial decisions or act in the best interest of others. It arises when there is a potential clash between an individual's personal interests and their professional or fiduciary responsibilities.
- **Perceived Conflict of Interest:** A situation in which an individual's actions or decisions could reasonably be perceived as being influenced by personal interests, even if there is no actual conflict of interest or improper conduct. A perceived conflict of interest can arise when there is a potential for bias or when the

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circumstances create doubts about an individual's ability to act impartially. It is based on the perception or appearance of a conflict rather than an actual conflict of interest.

- **Potential Conflict of Interest:** 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.

### 5. Procedural Steps

All University of Belize stakeholders are expected to fulfill their responsibilities to the best of their abilities and maintain the highest standards of integrity and ethics in their dealings and interactions, both within the University and externally. They should exhibit the highest ethical standards in their personal and professional behavior, avoiding any conflicts of interest or compromising situations, and embrace the principles of good governance, such as accountability, fairness, and transparency in their actions and decision-making.

In identifying conflicts of interest, all University of Belize stakeholders should promptly identify and effectively manage any conflicts of interest that may arise between their personal, financial, or private interests, relationships, or activities, and their obligations. A conflict of interest may arise if a stakeholder could be influenced or appear to be influenced by a private interest or conflict when carrying out their duties and responsibilities. The examples given below describe various situations guiding in understanding and interpreting conflicts of interest, however, these examples are not intended to be limited in the application of the principles.

Examples where conflict of interest situations may arise include, but are not limited to:

- ***Procurement/Purchasing Conflicts***
  - The procurement or purchase of goods or services from businesses in which the employee or their family has a financial interest, or as a result of such purchase, may directly benefit.
  - The selection of a supplier for the University when having a personal or financial stake in that entity, including hiring a family member as an independent contractor, subcontractor, or consultant.
  - Negotiating or entering into contracts on behalf of the University with an entity in which the individual or a relative has a vested interest.

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- ***Research and Grant Conflicts***

- Receipt of a research grant whereby an employee who has been awarded wishes to authorize private payments to themselves from funds under the University's control, to use a company to provide services for the research in which the employee has an interest, or to employ a family member on the grant using grant funding.
- Receipt of significant compensation for a position in a company for consulting with a company, or holding significant equity in a company, that supports the research of the faculty member.

- ***Gifts, Compensation, and Hospitality Conflicts***

- Receipt of gifts, gratuities, loans, or special favors (including trips or speaker's fees).
- Acceptance of accommodations or hospitality in connection with the University's business.

- ***Use of University Resources***

- The misuse of university resources such as laboratories, equipment, or human resources for personal gain, benefiting family or personal connections, or for purposes unrelated to the university's best interests.

- ***Outside Activities and Interests***

- Accepting any form of employment or holding any external business with a competing university, including serving as an officer, director, shareholder, partner, or any other capacity.
- The undertaking of consulting activities or an outside professional activity of a private nature should be undertaken by the University.
- The holding of a business ownership, investment, or office by the employee or the employee's family member, with which the business has a relationship with the University.
- The holding of significant equity, royalty, or debt instrument interest by the employee, or the employee's family, in any entity providing to the University financial support, including research or other support or services, when such support will benefit the employee or persons supervised, directly or indirectly, by the employee.

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- Exploitation of one's connection or association with the University of Belize for personal gain.
  - Membership or serving multiple official roles on boards of directors, committees, advisory groups (of similar bodies) of governmental, for-profit, or not-for-profit entities, political organizations, or foreign governments.
  - Engaging in professional, political, business, or other associations or activities that may create conflicts with the Vision, Goals, Mission, and Strategies of the University of Belize.
  - Holding external employment or consulting arrangements that cause conflicts with the individual's primary professional role or organization. Performing external work or engaging in external employment during the University's regular working hours, or that distracts an employee from or competes with their job responsibilities.
- ***Personal Relationships***
    - The teaching, assessing, or supervision of students where a personal relationship exists or develops.
    - Where a Board Member's interests, those of an Immediate Family Member, or a related party could impact their ability to fulfill their duties and responsibilities regarding the University, or give rise to a perceived conflict of interest.
    - Where a Board Member's actions create the perception that they are using their position for personal gain or the benefit of their family member, or a related party.
    - Members of committees, working parties, or other decision-making groups involved in decisions regarding the selection, appointment, transfer, promotion, disciplinary action, or other personnel decisions where there is a close personal relationship with an applicant.
    - The administration of student results, where an employee advises a student, who is a close friend, of their results in advance of the time when such academic results are scheduled to be notified and/or published.
    - Selecting, appointing, promoting, evaluating, supervising, or participating in a decision, directly or indirectly, involving a family member, close friend, or personal associate. Including involvement in a romantic or sexual (consensual) relationship.
  - ***Financial Interests***
    - When an individual or a company has a financial interest or potential financial gain from a decision they are part of.

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- When an individual holds a substantial financial stake in vendors offering services to the University of Belize or has a financial or personal relationship with a vendor, contractor, competitor, or supplier that could compromise fair and objective decision-making regarding procurement or contracts.
- ***Misuse of Information***
  - Use or disclose information received as a university employee for personal benefit or for the benefit of individuals or institutions with whom one has a close personal relationship or external business connection.
  - The application of tender where a stakeholder has, or has had, a personal relationship with a person or organization that has submitted a tender application. Also, where an employee informs a close friend, associate, or related party of specific information, otherwise not available to the public, about the anticipated price sought by the University of Belize for a tender in which the stakeholder's close friend or associate has expressed an interest.
  - Accessing non-public or confidential information and using it for personal gain or advantage.

The examples given guide in understanding, interpreting, and identifying conflicts of interest. However, it is important to note that those examples are not intended to be limited in the application of the principles.

All stakeholders should ensure that any conflicts of interest between their personal or private interests and their university duties are promptly identified, declared, disclosed, and managed using the appropriate procedural steps outlined below:

### 5.1. Identifying Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1.1. Stakeholders identify any conflict of interest that may arise between their personal, financial, or private interests, relationships, or activities, and their obligations. In identifying conflicts of interest, an employee or stakeholder is guided by the examples provided above; however, those examples are not intended to be limiting in the application of the principles.
- 5.1.2. Stakeholders effectively manage any conflicts of interest identified by declaring the conflict of interest and seeking clarification.

### 5.2. Declaring Conflicts of Interest

- 5.2.1. Stakeholders disclose any external or financial interests, commitments, or personal relationships where there is a perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest at the time of hiring, appointment, or engagement with the University and continuously

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throughout the duration of the stakeholder's position or involvement with the University as soon as any new conflict of interest arises.

- 5.2.2. Stakeholders have a primary commitment to the University and must ensure that all employment, trade, ownership, or partnership in the ownership of any enterprise, or public office where there is a perceived or actual conflict of interest, are disclosed in writing to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) via the Office of Human Resources.
- 5.2.3. Stakeholders must formally disclose any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest by submitting the University's Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form.

### 5.3. Seeking Clarification

- 5.3.1. If any stakeholder encounters situations that are ambiguous or lacking clear guidelines, they are required to seek guidance from the Human Resource Director regarding the appropriateness of their conduct or business relationships.

### 5.4. Reviewing and Managing Conflicts of Interest

- 5.4.1. The Corporate Management Team (CMT), comprised of the President, Vice President of Academics, Vice President of Finance and Administration, all Deans of Faculty, and the University's Registrar, reviews and determines the management of conflicts of interest.
- 5.4.2. The CMT reviews and manages all conflicts of interest identified and disclosed by the stakeholders.
- 5.4.3. The President approves the matters reviewed by the CMT that reveal no conflict of interest. However, based on the nature, likelihood, and severity of a conflict of interest, the CMT may decide on one or more strategies to manage the conflict of interest, including but not limited to the following:
  - 5.4.3.1. Recusal of the individual from participating in discussions of certain matters or activities where conflict arises.
  - 5.4.3.2. Recusal of the individual from making decisions related to certain matters where conflict arises.
  - 5.4.3.3. Reassignment of the individual's duties.
  - 5.4.3.4. Reassignment of family members or individuals to another unit, classroom, or faculty due to close personal relationships.
  - 5.4.3.5. Placement of limitations on the individual's involvement.

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- 5.4.3.6. Referral of specific matters to others for decision-making.
- 5.4.3.7. Resolution not to act as a particular individual's supervisor.
- 5.4.3.8. Renunciation from involvement in a particular activity.
- 5.4.3.9. Removal from the area or role where conflict arises.
- 5.4.3.10. Requirement of additional oversight or monitoring.

The specific management approach will be determined by the CMT in consultation with stakeholders.

- 5.4.4. A CMT member does not participate in the review process of a potential or alleged conflict of interest whenever they are named or are a part of the potential or alleged conflict.

### 5.5. Documenting and Reporting Conflicts of Interest

- 5.5.1. The Office of Human Resources documents all reported conflicts of interest declared and disclosed to the CMT, as well as the implementation of measures to manage them.
- 5.5.2. The CMT, via the Office of the President, provides the Board of Trustees with a summary report of all conflicts of interest regularly.

### 5.6. Monitoring Conflicts of Interest

- 5.6.1. Stakeholder review and comply with the Conflict of Interest policy and procedures by promptly taking necessary actions to avoid, eliminate, remediate, or manage actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest.
- 5.6.2. Stakeholders give notice of any changes to their conflicts of interest using the *Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form* at the earliest opportunity. Disclosing conflicts of interest is a continuous process, as conflict situations may change over time.
- 5.6.3. Stakeholders immediately declare any relationship that creates a conflict of interest, and the relevant authority establishes alternative supervisory or study arrangements.
- 5.6.4. The Office of Human Resources, in collaboration with Administrators, communicates the Conflict of Interest policy and procedure to all stakeholders to ensure awareness and compliance.

### 5.7. Failure to Declare a Conflict of Interest

- 5.7.1. The CMT investigates conflict of interest cases where the University has justifiable grounds to suspect that an individual has not disclosed conflicts of interest, or becomes aware of a potential or alleged conflict of interest.
- 5.7.2. If the investigation determines that a conflict exists, the individual in question appears before the CMT, explains the failure to disclose, and responds to questions/queries.
- 5.7.3. Within reason, the CMT may call upon individual(s) to provide information or clarification of the potential or alleged conflict of interest.
  - 5.7.3.1. The Office of Human Resources may discipline the individual if they refuse to appear before the CMT, in accordance with the University's established *Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures*.
- 5.7.4. Transparency is important. Stakeholders who fail to disclose conflicts of interest or commitments, and where conflicts are confirmed as violations after investigation, may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the University's established *Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures*.

### 5.8. Violations of Conflicts of Interest

- 5.8.1. Stakeholders are expected to fully comply with the Conflict of Interests policy and procedures, as well as with any conflict management measures implemented by the University.
- 5.8.2. Stakeholders who violate the Conflict of Interest policy and procedures may result in disciplinary action following the University's established *Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures*.
- 5.8.3. Stakeholders may appeal the decisions of the CMT to the Board of Trustees within five (5) days of receiving the decision. The decision of the Board of Trustees is final.

### 5.9. Abuse of Policy and Retaliation

- 5.9.1. The University of Belize safeguards the rights of both the accused and the individual who makes any reports under this procedure by treating all declared and disclosed conflicts of interest with utmost confidentiality, while also allowing for proper evaluation and management.
- 5.9.2. The University of Belize prohibits retaliation against individuals who make good-faith disclosures of conflicts of interest. Any individual who threatens or engages

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in any retaliatory act is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

5.9.2.1. Consequently, the Office of Human Resources may consider disciplinary action against or termination of employment for any individual who attempts to discredit others by misusing or abusing this policy inappropriately or in bad faith.

### 5.10. Privacy and Confidentiality

5.10.1. The Office of Human Resources, the CMT, and all others involved maintain confidentiality with all information presented and/or received in the review of conflict of interest disclosures.

## 6. Reference Documents

University of Belize’s Faculty and Staff Handbook

University of Belize’s Ethics and Responsibility Policy (2011)

## 7. Documentation required for Implementation

Conflict of Interest Policy

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form

Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

## 8. Records

8.1. The Office of Human Resources is the Conflict of Interest Policy owner and is responsible for overseeing the implementation, administration, and interpretation of the Conflict of Interest Procedure.

8.2. Records for the Conflict of Interest Procedure are managed by the Office of Human Resources.

## 9. Amendment History

Revision #	Description of changes	Reason(s) for the change	Date of revisions
0	Initial Release	Not Applicable	Same as Initial Release