

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

PREAMBLE

In their day-to-day work staff at the University are not routinely faced with situations in which personal interest conflicts with their duties. Occasionally, however, such situations do arise and staff might be uncertain about how to deal with them. This code of conduct sets out some principles to guide behaviour in this area. The purpose of the code is to forestall the conferring of unfair advantage or disadvantage on staff, students or other individuals resulting from particular forms of personal, familial or financial relationship. These may include friendships of different types where one party may be in a position to secure advantage for the other in areas such as recruitment, employment, contracts for services and academic life.

Although the committee system at Roehampton acts as a check on the individual abuse of power and privilege there remain circumstances in which, to avoid unnecessary suspicion, further procedures are required. These are identified within the code of conduct.

The operation of the code depends for its success upon trust and agreed procedure. It relies heavily upon staff taking responsibility themselves to declare potential or actual conflicts of interest or to seek the guidance of their superior when in doubt. The code is, therefore, largely self-policing but if it is found that a member of staff has failed to comply with its provisions, this will be investigated and could lead to disciplinary action. The University is entitled to expect that the professional conduct of all staff is of the highest standard.

CODE OF CONDUCT

1. The central principle of this code is that staff should not allow self-interest or personal factors to interfere with their commitment to their work and duties, and should ensure that their behaviour towards colleagues and students contributes to a positive working environment.
2. All staff are entitled to work within an environment characterised by a spirit of openness, in which information about the conditions of their work and the effective discharge of their duties is always available.
3. It is expected that staff will take every precaution to avoid situations where conflicts of interest or any suspicion of them would arise in the carrying out of their duties.
4. Staff should take care that financial, familial or personal relationships entered into on a consensual basis, do not disadvantage or unfairly advantage any member of staff, student or other individuals eg. applicants for jobs or service

providers.

- (a) Should such relationships occur staff are expected to inform their appropriate superior as soon as any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest arises to ensure that it can be minimised.
 - (b) The superior will treat these matters in confidence at all times and will, in consultation with the member of staff, find ways in which conflicts of interest might be avoided.
 - (c) If staff are working in the same department or section or are in a supervisory relationship and the actual or perceived conflict of interest cannot be resolved by other means and is interfering with the effectiveness of work, it may be necessary to explore the possibility of one party being moved to another area of work or work location.
 - (d) If staff have a close personal or familial relationship with an applicant for employment it will normally be necessary for the member of staff to avoid any involvement in the appointment process eg. membership of an appointment panel or acting as a referee.
 - (e) External and internal applicants for posts will be asked to declare any close personal or familial relationships on the application form for the post.
5. Staff must ensure the highest standards of behaviour in the accepting of gifts or rewards. Any gifts that might attract the suspicion of improper motives should be rejected and declared to their immediate supervisor.
6. Staff should not allow intellectual or personal differences to undermine the work of their departments or to impinge upon their relationships with students.

In such cases where significant personal differences between staff occur, it is the responsibility of all staff:

- (a) in the first instance, to seek clarification and resolution within the relationship in which the dispute occurred.
 - (b) Senior staff should be asked for assistance only when attempts to resolve the problem have been fully exhausted between the parties concerned.
7. If a member of staff is in any doubt about the application of this code to their personal situation, they have a duty to seek clarification from an appropriate senior manager, who may seek advice from a Pro Vice-Chancellor.

(amended July 2010)