

GIFTS & HOSPITALITY POLICY

September 2023

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The latest version of this document is always to be found at:

<http://policies.docstore.port.ac.uk/policy-093.pdf>

Summary

What is this document about?

The purpose of this Policy is to help to ensure that staff and governors do not place themselves in a position where their professionalism, integrity, impartiality and honesty might be questioned or where the activities of the University are brought into disrepute.

Who is this for?

Members of staff and governors of the University of Portsmouth.

How does the University check this is followed?

The Executive Director of Corporate Governance will record all disclosures in a central register and will produce a summary of all disclosures on a quarterly basis for review by the Executive Director of Finance, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Board of Governors.

Who can you contact if you have any queries about this document?

Claire Dunning, Executive Director of Corporate Governance at claire.dunning@port.ac.uk.

Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University expects all staff and governors to behave with integrity, impartiality and honesty and to maintain high standards of propriety and professionalism at all times.
- 1.2. Staff and governors must avoid placing themselves in a position where they may be suspected of impropriety or where their actions may create perceptions of a conflict of interest between their professional duty and their private interest. Staff and governors should be aware that acceptance of offers of hospitality and gifts, made by contractors, suppliers, service providers, students and others, might place them in a vulnerable position in regard to perceptions of their professional integrity. Even when offered and accepted in innocence, other people or organisations may misconstrue the intention behind such hospitality or gifts.
- 1.3. Some staff and governors may necessarily spend time with other organisations, where it is normal business practice or social convention to offer personal gifts or hospitality. Offers of this kind can place staff and governors in a difficult position as to refuse may cause misunderstanding or offence but to accept may give rise to questions of personal impropriety or conflict of interest.
- 1.4. The purpose of this Policy is to help to ensure that staff and governors do not place themselves in a position where their professionalism, integrity, impartiality and honesty might be questioned or where the activities of the University are brought into disrepute.

2. Guiding Principles

- 2.1. Although it is an accepted convention in some parts of the private sector, and in other countries, for business people to exchange expensive hospitality and gifts, this is not considered to be a normal practice by the University for any business conducted on its behalf, unless previously agreed by the University Executive Board or within the parameters outlined in Section 8 of this Policy.
- 2.2. The guiding principles that underpin this Policy are:
 - The conduct of an individual member of staff or governor should not create suspicion of any conflict of interest between their professional duty and their private interest.
 - The professional actions of staff or governors should not give the impression to any third party or to any colleague, that they may have been influenced by a benefit to show favour or disfavour to any person or organisation.
- 2.3. It is a disciplinary offence for any member of staff or governor to accept any benefit as an inducement or reward that leads them in a professional capacity to:
 - take any action, or not to take action; or,
 - show favour, or disfavour, to any person or any organisation.
- 2.4. The University's Financial Regulations state, 'No member of staff or governor shall be in receipt of gifts, excessive hospitality or any other inducement from a supplier of goods, materials or services to the University'.

3. Disclosure and Recording of Hospitality and Gifts

- 3.1. Members of staff and governors must disclose (in advance if possible) their acceptance of any corporate hospitality and/or gifts in accordance with the disclosure requirements detailed below.

- 3.2. Disclosures must be made to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance using the [disclosure form](#) on the Hornbill system.
- 3.3. The Executive Director of Corporate Governance will record all disclosures in a central register and will produce a summary of all disclosures on a quarterly basis for review by the University Executive Board. A summary of disclosures for senior post holders will also be provided to governors every six months.

4. Receiving Hospitality

- 4.1. Staff and governors may sometimes be offered hospitality by external organisations or external individuals as a consequence of their role within the University. Receipt of such hospitality would be acceptable in the following circumstances:
 - demonstrations of products or services of interest to the University
 - ceremonies such as the opening of buildings or the launch of a new initiative
 - dinners or functions held by learned and professional societies or business associations
 - functions or ceremonies at other academic institutions or partner organisations
 - business meetings and networking events.
- 4.2. It is permissible to accept travel, accommodation and subsistence costs from third parties if these are consistent with the duties of a member of staff or governor and reflect reasonable and actual costs incurred. Examples of such professional duties would include external examining, speaking at conferences or serving on editorial boards. Staff or governors must not accept offers of accommodation or travel at the expense of a third party for purposes that cannot be reconciled with their professional duties.
- 4.3. The following forms of hospitality, in particular, must be avoided:
 - substantial hospitality offered in substitution for fees for broadcasts, speeches, lectures or other work undertaken
 - inducements that could lead to a contractual position between the University and a supplier, contractor or consultant
 - repeated acceptance of hospitality from the same source where the cumulative value of the hospitality would exceed £150 in any annual year.
- 4.4. Attendance of staff and governors at sporting, social and cultural events at the invitation of external organisations or external individuals where entrance tickets and hospitality are provided is not normally permitted. However, in circumstances where attendance at such events would be beneficial for achieving the business objectives of the University then prior approval for attendance is required from the University Executive Board member with responsibility for the area in which the member of staff concerned works. If it is agreed that there are circumstances that justify exceeding the normal level of hospitality received then this should be recorded in the central register held by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance.

5. Receiving Gifts

- 5.1. Staff and governors may sometimes be offered gifts by external organisations or external individuals as a consequence of their role within the University. Receipt of such gifts is acceptable provided that they do not have an intrinsic financial value greater than £50 and they are:
 - token or promotional in nature and are given to a wide range of people and not exclusively to the staff member or governor (e.g. pens, calendars, diaries or memory sticks etc.).

- given collectively to teams within the University to mark events such as Christmas or other festivities (e.g. confectionary or cakes etc.).
- 5.2. Staff or governors may receive a gift from an external organisation or external individual that may have cost more than £50 to produce but has no intrinsic financial value. Examples might include commemorative plaques or ornaments that have been engraved with the recipient's name. The individual may retain the gift if it has no intrinsic financial value.
 - 5.3. Staff or governors should decline repeated offers of gifts from the same source that may cumulatively exceed £150 within a period of 12 months.
 - 5.4. If staff or governors are sent a gift without forewarning (for example through the postal system) by an external organisation or external individual that does not fall within the categories cited in section 5.2, then the gift must be delivered for storage to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance. The Executive Director of Corporate Governance will determine the action to be taken regarding the use, return or disposal of the gift and this will be recorded in the central register.
 - 5.5. It is accepted that in certain contexts the refusal of a gift with an intrinsic financial value in excess of £50 may sometimes cause offence. If a member of staff or governor is unable to seek guidance beforehand and is obliged to accept this gift as they do not wish to cause offence then the matter must be reported to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance as soon as practically possible. All gifts accepted under these circumstances are deemed to be the property of the University. If it is not possible to use the gift to support the University's work, its retention by the individual may be authorised by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance, or, in the case of the Vice-Chancellor or a governor, by the Chair of the Board of Governors. In permitting the retention of the gift, it may be recommended that the recipient makes a cash bequest to a charity or a nominated good cause. Alternatively, if neither the University nor the individual wish to retain the gift then the Executive Director of Corporate Governance will arrange for it to be donated to a charity or other good cause and a receipt obtained.
 - 5.6. Any gifts with an intrinsic financial value in excess of £50 accepted by the University must be recorded in the register maintained by the Executive Director of Corporate Governance. Any cash bequests made to charities or other good causes associated with the retention of a gift will also be included in the register. Any queries about the contents of the register should be directed to the Executive Director of Corporate Governance.

6. Hospitality and Gifts from Students

- 6.1. Staff and governors must not accept hospitality from students or students' relatives. Gifts from individual students may be accepted only if refusal would cause offence but the intrinsic financial value of such a gift should never exceed £50 and staff must take great care to ensure that acceptance would not place them in a position of compromise.

7. Declining Hospitality and Gifts

- 7.1. If it is necessary to decline offers of hospitality and gifts then this should be done politely and discretely. It should then be explained that this is not permitted by University policy.

8. Presenting Gifts and/or Providing Hospitality

- 8.1. There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for staff or governors to provide gifts or hospitality to third parties that exceed accepted norms. Where this is deemed necessary, prior approval should be obtained from the Executive Director of Corporate Governance for any gift or hospitality to an individual that exceeds a cost of £100. There is no requirement to seek approval from the Executive Director of Corporate Governance if the hospitality or gifts to be provided have been agreed by the University Executive Board as part of a corporate activity or if gifts are provided from the [University's list of corporate merchandise](#).

9. Prizes and Awards

- 9.1. Staff may accept prizes that accompany awards that are made in recognition of academic or professional standing or achievement

10. Awareness and Compliance with this Procedure

- 10.1. To ensure maximum awareness of this procedure the Executive Director of Corporate Governance or a delegated officer will annually ensure that all the University's major contractors and suppliers are reminded of the University's Conditions of Contract which state:
'In connection with this or any other Contract between You and Us, You shall not give, provide, or offer to our staff and agents any loan, fee, reward, gift or any emolument or advantage whatsoever. In the event of any breach of this Condition, We shall, without prejudice to any other rights We may possess, be at liberty forthwith to terminate this and any other Contract and to recover from You any loss or damage resulting from such termination'
- 10.2. Staff and governors will be required to complete an annual declaration of interests of contracts and shareholdings in any company, which is likely to conflict with the interests of the University. Please refer to the University's Declaration of Interests Policy for further information.
- 10.3. Staff who contravene this Policy will be subject to disciplinary action and may also risk criminal charges and prosecution under bribery and corruption legislation. The best safeguard against impropriety or suspicion of impropriety is therefore complete openness.

11. Further Information

- 11.1. If a member of staff or governor is uncertain about whether to accept an offer of hospitality or a gift, then they should consult the Executive Director of Corporate Governance.

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