

# Managing Conflicts of Interest



Student  
Resource

For the purpose of this document, "committee" refers to any governance or decision-making body with membership from both students and staff. This may include, but is not limited to: working groups, steering groups, councils, and boards.

A conflict of interest may arise where the direct or indirect personal interests of a committee member are competing against their obligations to the committee.

A real or perceived conflict of interest should be avoided where possible and always declared. If you are unsure on whether you have a conflict of interest on a particular item, it is worth clarifying with the Chair of the committee in advance of the meeting commencing.

## The three types of conflicts of interest:

- **Actual:** where you would immediately stand to benefit from a decision.
- **Potential:** where you may stand to benefit from a decision in the future due to personal interests.
- **Perceived:** where it could appear to a reasonable person that your personal interests could influence your responsibilities (whether or not they actually do).

## Declaring a conflict of interest

- The best practice to avoiding any conflict of interest is to notify the Chair immediately. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to read the committee papers prior to the meeting taking place.
- To ensure your conflict of interest does not sway other members of the committee, any informal discussions on the item beforehand should be treated with caution.
- When it comes time to discussion or voting, remind the committee again of your conflict of interest so that they can determine whether any steps should be taken.

## Examples:

- If you personally stand to financially benefit from a decision made.
- If an item will benefit a direct connection to you, e.g. the committee decides to hire a vendor for an event and your uncle owns the business.
- If you are voting on whether the committee should support a government initiative, you have an affiliation with a political party or activist group.
- If you are working for a rival institution or provider (e.g., working at Flinders University but studying and sitting on a committee at UniSA).

