



Managing conflicts of interest Policy

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Policy Category (Please Indicate)	1	Academy to implement without amendment
	2	Academy specific appendices
	3	Academy personalisation required (in highlighted fields)



Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Updates
V4	October 2023	A Hibbitt	No Changes to content of the policy, just put onto new policy format

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1. Legal framework

This policy takes its legal framework from the following legislative and statutory guidance

- Companies Act 2006
- Conflicts of interests: A guide for charitable trustees (Charity Commission)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Academy Trust Handbook (Education and Skills Funding Agency)
- Articles of Association
- Schemes of Delegation
- Terms of Reference
- Code of Conduct

This document consists of:

- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Template for Annual Conflicts of Interest Acknowledgement Statement (Annex 1)
- Template for Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests Form for completion by each Relevant Individual (Annex 2).

2. Definition of a Conflict of Interest

Exceed Learning Partnership adopts the guidance of the Charity Commission, which advises that a conflict of interest is **any situation in which a relevant individual's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent them from making a decision only in the best interests of the Trust.**

Conflicts of interest usually arise where either:

- there is a potential financial or measurable benefit directly to a relevant individual, or indirectly through a connected person; or
- A relevant individual's duty to the Trust may compete with a duty or loyalty they owe to another person or organisation.
- An example of a conflict of interest would be where a Director or Governor (or a close relation of such) is a sole proprietor or partner in a supplier from which a Trust academy could make purchases and the Director or Governor is involve with the selection of suppliers.

To avoid repetition, the phrase 'relevant individuals' is used to include all Members, Directors, Governors, Staff in the central trust and senior staff in each academy. Reference to 'Trust' should be interpreted as including all academies within the trust.



3. Background and statement of intent

- Exceed Learning Partnership Members, Directors, Governors and Staff have an obligation under both company and charity law to act in the best interests of the Trust and in accordance with its regulatory documents.
- In addition, the Trust is subject to rules and regulations in relation to transactions with connected parties (Related Party Transactions). In general terms, connected parties include family, relatives or business partners of a Relevant Individual as well as businesses in which a Relevant Individual has an interest through ownership or influence.
- Situations may arise where personal, private or family business and pecuniary interests' conflict with those of the Trust. This may create tensions, inhibit free and open discussion and result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the Trust.
- It is vital that the decision-making processes, decisions and the application of decisions at the Trust and its academies are, and are seen to be, free from personal or other bias such that the Trust is not laid open to criticism, challenge or reputational damage. In spending public money, it is imperative that Relevant Individuals do not benefit personally from the decisions that they make.
- To this end, all Relevant Individuals are required to declare any business and pecuniary interest which leads to, or may potentially lead to, a conflict of interest and, wherever possible, to avoid situations in which there is or may be a conflict of interest. Declarations of business and pecuniary interests are recorded in a Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests.
- Any financial transactions between the Trust and related parties are required by legislation to be disclosed in the Trust's published audited accounts each year. Any Related Party Transactions need to be notified to the CFO in advance of any agreement commencing so that the required reporting to the ESFA can take place
- The Trust seeks to identify conflicts of interest and take appropriate action to prevent them from affecting any decisions made, such that the best interests of the Trust are safeguarded.
- This policy sets out the framework for ensuring that decisions are made in the best interests of the Trust, free from personal or other bias and do not unfairly favour any individual or organisation connected with the Trust, in line with its legislative context.

It intends to:

- Ensure that every Relevant Individual understands what the Trust considers to constitute a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest
- Ensure that every Relevant Individual understands that they have a responsibility to identify and declare any business or pecuniary interest that might arise;
- Ensure that every Relevant Individual formally records in the Trust's Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests the interest and their responsibility to take any necessary actions to ensure that the interest does not affect the decision-making of the Trust.

4. Register of business and pecuniary interests

- The Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests is maintained by the Governance Professional to the Directors (in the case of Members, Directors and Governors), by the DCEO/COO (in the case of central Trust Staff) and by the Academy Business Manager at each academy (in the case of relevant Senior Staff). The Register is kept by the DCEO/COO.



- In the case of Members, Directors and Governors, the Register is also published on the Trust website in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Trust Handbook.

5. Identifying conflicts of interest

- Relevant Individuals are expected and required to identify and declare formally all interests that might conflict with the interests of the Trust. Those failing to identify and declare any conflicts of interest will fail to comply with their personal legal responsibility to avoid conflicts of interest and act only in the best interests of the Trust.
- Examples of interests which should be declared include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Being an employee, director, advisor or partner of another business or organisation;
 - Holding another public office;
 - Trusteeships and governorships at other institutions and charities;
 - Significant shareholdings;
 - Owning a debt to someone/an organisation;
 - Appointments of influence or control within a business or organisation;
 - Being a member of a club, society, group, collective, co-operative or association whether business, professional, recreational, sporting, political, religious or social;
 - Having received a gift, hospitality or other benefit from someone/an organisation;
 - Having a professional, legal or moral obligation to someone else;
 - Holding or expressing political, religious or personal views that may indicate prejudice or predetermination for or against a person, group or issue;
 - Being a spouse, partner, relative or close friend, or business or private associate of someone who has one of these interests.
- A relative is defined as a close member of family or a member of the same household, who may be expected to influence, or be influenced by, the Relevant Individual. This includes, but is not limited to, a child, grandchild, parent, sibling, spouse, civil partner or cohabitee.
- Having a professional, legal or moral obligation to someone else would include, but is not limited to, disclosure of close family relationships between Relevant Individuals and between Relevant Individuals and other Trust.
- Significant shareholdings include companies in which the Relevant Individual or relative of the Relevant Individual (taken separately or together) holds more than 20% of the share capital or is entitled to exercise more than 20% of the voting power at any general meeting of that company. However, in the case of a company which has shares listed on a recognised stock exchange, an interest must be declared where a Relevant Individual holds more than 1% of the issued capital.
- An organisation is influenced or controlled by the Relevant Individual or relative of the Relevant Individual (taken separately or together) if that individual is able to secure that the affairs of the body are conducted in accordance with the individual's wishes.
- It is only expected that such interests would be declared if they might conflict with the interests of the Trust e.g. links with firms or organisations from which the Trust may wish to buy goods or services; the ownership of shares in or the owing of a debt to a company that does, or might, supply goods and services to the Trust.



6. Declaring a conflict of interest

- It is expected that conflicts of interest are identified and declared at an early stage. If an interest is not declared immediately for any reason, there is a legal and moral obligation to declare such an interest at a later date as soon as the Relevant Individual becomes aware that it has become an interest that might conflict with the interests of the Trust and/or might influence their involvement in and/or the conduct of and/or outcome of discussions or decisions being made by the Trust.
- All Relevant Individuals are required to keep an updated entry record of any conflicts or potential conflicts of interest in the Trust's Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests.
- The Register shall be circulated to all Relevant Individuals annually or more frequently on request. In the case of Members, Directors and Governors, the Register is also published on the Trust website in accordance with the requirements of the Academies Trust Handbook. All Relevant Individuals undertake to review the Register and to draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest which they consider have been omitted or overlooked by any Relevant Individual. If in doubt about whether or not there is a conflict of interest, there should be a presumption to include it on the Register.
- All Relevant Individuals are obliged to complete and sign a declaration of their business and pecuniary interests even if their declaration is 'None'.
- All formal meetings of the Trust have a standard agenda item at the beginning of each meeting to enable any actual or potential conflicts of interest to be declared. Relevant Individuals are required to declare any interest which they have in an item to be discussed at the earliest opportunity and before any discussion of the item itself.
- If a Relevant Individual is uncertain whether or not they have a conflict of interest, they should declare the issue and discuss it with the meeting.
- If an individual is aware, or becomes aware, of an undeclared conflict of interest affecting themselves or any other Relevant Individual, they should notify the meeting immediately.

7. Managing conflicts of interest

- All Relevant Individuals must consider their conflicts of interest such that any potential effect on decision-making is eliminated and must follow the legal or governing document requirements on how conflicts of interest must be handled.

Articles of Association

Article 97 of the Articles of Association states that "Any Director who has or can have any direct or indirect duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest) which conflicts or may conflict with his duties as a Director shall disclose that fact to the Directors as soon as he becomes aware of it. A Director must absent himself from any discussions of the Directors in which it is possible that a conflict will arise between his duty to act solely in the interests of the Company and any duty or personal interest (including but not limited to any Personal Financial Interest)."

Articles 6.2 – 6.9 of the Articles of Association detail the circumstances in which the Trust may or may not authorise a transaction with, or benefit to, a Member or Director of the Trust (or a connected party) and the procedures to follow to ensure that legal authority is assured.

- In serious cases, Relevant Individuals may decide that removing the conflict of interest itself is the most effective way of preventing it from affecting decision-making. Serious conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to, those which:
 - are so acute and extensive that the individual is unable to contribute to a decision in the best interests of the Trust, or could be seen to be unable to do so
 - Are present in significant or high-risk decisions of the Trust.
 - Mean that effective decision-making is regularly undermined or cannot be managed in accordance with the required or best practice approach.
 - Are associated with inappropriate personal gain or benefit.

8. The decision-making process

- Charity law states that Directors can only benefit from the Trust where there is an explicit authority obtained in advance. Authority is required where there is the possibility of benefit, therefore it is imperative that there is proper authority for any situation where a Director could benefit, irrespective of whether there is any actual benefit to the Director. The Trust seeks to ensure that proper procedures are in place to authorise benefits or potential benefits to all Relevant Individuals.
- Where there is a proposed financial transaction between the Trust and a Relevant Individual, or any transaction or arrangement which confers a benefit to the Relevant Individual, which does not contravene the Trust's governing documents:
- The benefit must be authorised in advance by the Directors. If there is no Directors meeting planned within the time frame of authorisation required, then the Chair of Directors and one other member of the Board can be contacted to authorise the benefit.

Where the Relevant Individual is the Chair of Directors, then two other Directors must authorise the benefit.

- Where the Relevant Individual is a Director, it may be necessary to obtain the prior written approval of the Charity Commission in accordance with Article 6.6 depending on the nature of the benefit e.g. property transactions.
 - The Relevant Individual must absent him/herself from any part of the meeting in which the issue is discussed or decided.
 - The Relevant Individual must not vote or be counted as part of the quorum for the matter.
- Where there is a conflict of loyalty and the Relevant Individual does not stand to gain any benefit and the Trust's governing documents do not specify how the conflict of loyalty must be handled, the Relevant Individual should declare the interest which should be duly registered and the rest of the meeting must then decide the acceptable level of participation of the Relevant Individual.



The options may include, but are not limited to, the decision to:

- allow the Relevant Individual to participate in the decision;
 - allow the Relevant Individual to remain in the meeting where the decision is discussed but not participate;
 - Require the Relevant Individual to absent him/herself from the part of the meeting in which the issue is discussed or decided.
- When deciding which course of action to take regarding the conflict of loyalty, the following must be borne in mind:
- the decision must be made only in the best interests of the Trust and be demonstrably so;
 - the conflict must pose no risk or low risk to the decision-making being made in the best interests of the Trust;
 - due regard to the protection of the Trust's reputation must be paid and the impression given to those outside the Trust;
 - The presence of a conflicted individual could affect trust between participants of the meeting and inhibit free discussion or influence decision-making.

9. Records of proceedings

Minutes should record details of any and all discussions on potential conflicts of interest and the decisions made.

10. Confidentiality

Relevant individuals must not use information obtained directly or indirectly at or from the Trust for their own benefit (financial or otherwise) or the benefit of another individual, entity or organisation. All information obtained shall be deemed to have been obtained in confidence.

11. Monitoring and enforcement

- The Trust's Audit Committee will monitor proceedings to ensure that any conflicts of interest are identified and mitigated as soon as possible.
- Any Relevant Individual who fails to declare an interest and is found to be acting not in the best interests of the Trust will be required to explain the reasons for their omission and may face appropriate disciplinary action.

12. Policy Circulation



- This policy will be circulated to every Relevant Individual who shall annually sign a statement which affirms that they have:
 - Received a copy of the policy;
 - Read and understood the policy;
 - Agreed to comply with the policy.
- The Conflict of Interests Policy will be published on the Trust's website and be reviewed in accordance with the Policy Approval Schedule.

Policy Reviewed: October 2023

Signed CEO:

B.A. Nixon

Signed: Chair of Directors:

J.H. Klemm

Policy to be reviewed in September 2024



13. Appendix 1 Annual conflicts of interest acknowledgement statement

In accordance with the Exceed Learning Partnership's Conflicts of Interest Policy

("the Policy"), I, the undersigned, hereby attest and affirm that I have:

1. Received a copy of the Policy
2. Read and understood the Policy
3. Agree to comply with the Policy.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

Examples of interests where declarations will need to be declared include where an employee, their family or household members:

- Hold a directorship or shareholdings in a company that either deal with Exceed Learning Partnership or operate within the boroughs in which the Academies/schools are located.
- Have relationships in a private/domestic capacity with Trust colleagues, students, contractors or tenderers (see sections misuse of position and contractors and suppliers).
- Receive direct or grant-aided services from the Trust which the employer is in a position to influence (beyond universal services such as education).
- Have any significant family or other relationship with Directors, governors, clients, contractors or staff working at or with the Trust or its partners (see sections misuse of position and contractors and suppliers).
- Have membership of outside groups in the borough or groups receiving aid from the Council (see membership of other bodies).
- Have membership of any organisation or body which is or could be regarded as a secret society or discriminatory.
- Have a non-financial interest within the borough such as a school governor or membership of an NHS trust board.
- Have an interest in planning or licensing applications; either in terms of submitting an application or in relation to an application for an adjoining or nearby property which they have the potential to influence.



14. Appendix 2 EXCEED LEARNING PARTNERSHIP TRUST/ACADEMIES: REGISTER OF BUSINESS OR PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Name of Director / Governor or Member of Staff:

Date of Resignation/

Date of Appointment to Trust / Governing Body:

Retirement:

Name of Business	Nature of Business	Nature of Interest	Date of Appointment or Acquisition	Date of Cessation of Interest	Signature of Governor or Member of Staff

I certify that I have declared all beneficial interests which I or any person closely connected with me have with business or other organisations which may have dealings with the Trust. I have also declared all pecuniary interests.

Record of Review

Date of review	Reviewed by	Signature		Date of review	Reviewed by	Signature