

Uva Wellassa University

Policy name:	Policy on Conflict of Interest
Policy number:	UWU-P-025
Date of Approval:	28.02.2025
Supersedes:	
Approving Authority:	The Council, Uva Wellassa University
Administrative Responsibility:	All Officers of the University*, Directors of Centres, and All Administrative Officers
Monitoring responsibility:	The Council, Uva Wellassa University

Overview:

Uva Wellassa University (UWU) acknowledges the diverse activities that its staff members undertake in relation to their roles and academic disciplines. The University recognizes the significant value that staff engagement in external activities brings to the institution, as well as to the local and global communities. However, it is crucial to address instances where conflicts of interest may arise—when the personal or professional interests of staff members or external parties diverge from the University's core interests and primary obligations.

To promote transparency and ensure effective management of conflicts of interest, all individuals associated with UWU must take proactive measures to avoid or appropriately address any potential conflicts. The University places great trust in the professionalism, fairness, and loyalty of its staff, expecting them to uphold these values consistently. A failure to do so can have serious consequences for both the individuals involved and the University itself.

While UWU grants its staff the freedom necessary to perform their duties effectively, it is essential to implement safeguards that protect both the institution and its members from potential conflicts. This Conflict of Interest Policy defines UWU's official stance on conflicts of interest and provides a structured framework for managing them transparently and responsibly.

Scope and Application

1. Scope of the Policy

1. UWU recognizes that staff members may encounter situations involving conflicts of interest. All individuals are expected to identify, declare, and appropriately manage any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest in accordance with the University's guidelines.
2. The University acknowledges that certain situations and processes have a high likelihood of generating conflicts of interest. These include, but are not limited to:
 - Recruitment processes
 - Examination-related duties
 - Research supervision
 - Involvement in projects and activities that provide financial benefits to university staff members
 - Tender decisions and contract management

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- Appointments to executive or administrative positions
 - Legal decisions and proceedings
 - Policy-making, formulation of agreements, and partnerships
 - Research, development, and innovation activities
 - Donation provision or acceptance
 - Consultancy engagements
 - Preparation and adoption of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and contracts
 - Participation in significant decisions at meetings (boards, councils, etc.)
3. The policy provides a framework for the relevant authoritative bodies responsible for managing conflicts of interest, ensuring that such situations are handled in a manner that upholds the credibility of the University in the eyes of the public.
 4. This Policy is designed to reinforce the credibility of the University, thereby enhancing its potential to establish valuable collaborations and partnerships that benefit the institution, its community members, and the wider public.

2. Application

This Policy applies to the following individuals associated with UWU:

1. All permanent and contract/temporary staff members of all levels
2. External individuals who serve on different boards, management committees, and councils
3. External individuals who collaborate with university staff members
4. External consultants and any individuals or groups undertaking activities for or on behalf of the University

Key Policy Principles

1. The University emphasizes the importance of effectively and transparently managing conflicts of interest to maintain the credibility of both the institution and the individuals associated with it.
2. All individuals affiliated with UWU are expected to prioritize the public interest over personal interests when performing their official duties and responsibilities (in cases of actual conflicts of interest).
3. Individuals shall avoid situations where external interests could potentially conflict or appear to conflict with the University's interests (potential conflicts of interest).
4. Individuals shall consistently act in a manner that eliminates any suspicion of personal, financial, or other interests influencing their decisions as university-affiliated individuals (perceived conflicts of interest).
5. Staff members shall abstain from participating in, and be observed to abstain from, external activities that contravene the values and principles upheld by the University or compete with the University's activities.
6. All individuals shall adhere to a code of complete neutrality and professional integrity in all matters pertaining to the University.
7. All individuals shall bear the responsibility of actively avoiding conflicts of interest to the best of their ability. This includes promptly identifying, disclosing, and effectively managing any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

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8. If individuals are uncertain whether an activity may present a conflict of interest, they shall disclose any relevant situations, positions, or circumstances before undertaking the activity.
9. Individuals are primarily responsible for identifying and declaring any potential conflict of interest. They must promptly disclose the relevant information to their immediate superior and seek their opinion on whether a conflict exists. If unresolved, the matter should be escalated within the management structure.
10. UWU recognizes that complete disclosure of any conflict of interest, coupled with credible and effective management, is crucial in preventing and resolving conflicts. Full disclosure is seen as an act of good faith and is essential to protecting the reputation of both the individual and the University.
11. The declaration of a conflict of interest does not automatically restrict or prevent participation in the relevant activity. Disclosure and thorough analysis will help resolve uncertainties, and the activity may be deemed permissible based on this analysis.
12. Individuals are required to periodically assess the connection between their personal interests and their responsibilities within the University to identify any changes relevant to conflicts of interest.
13. UWU will adopt a proactive approach to evaluating and managing risks associated with conflicts of interest. The University will establish additional guidelines for engaging in high-risk activities and will fully adhere to and enforce applicable laws, rules, and regulations.
14. The University will confidentially accept declarations of conflicts of interest. Both the declaration and the decision will be securely archived by the designated officer (Deputy Registrar, Senior Assistant Registrar/Assistant Registrar) for Faculties/Institutes, or by an officer appointed by the Registrar for other Divisions/Units/Centres of the University.
15. In managing conflicts of interest, individuals shall employ one or more of the following mitigation strategies:
 - Relinquishing the private interests involved
 - Restricting participation in the relevant activity
 - Engaging a neutral third party to oversee the activity
 - Removing the individual from involvement in the activity
16. The University will institute a mechanism and procedures for disclosing conflicts of interest, evaluating the gravity of declared conflicts, and managing high-risk activities. Employees and partners of the University must declare any conflicts of interest, and a comprehensive plan will be outlined for managing these situations as per the policy.
17. When entering into MoUs, agreements, and contracts, the University will thoroughly analyze and document the interests of all individuals involved. In cases of uncertainty, the matter will be referred to the Legal Officer for resolution based on legal provisions. The decision will be fair to all parties and minimize potential damages or losses.
18. Upon appointment, all University officers, including Directors, Heads of Departments, and Administrative and Financial Officers, will sign a conflict-of-interest declaration form. They will review the accuracy and validity of their declarations annually.
19. If reports are received concerning conflicts of interest, failure to manage conflicts, or complaints regarding potential breaches, the University will address these matters

transparently and collaboratively. Relevant individuals will be engaged through appropriate channels within the University's governance structure.

20. In the event of a dispute related to a conflict of interest, parties shall seek clarification from the Registrar. If unresolved, the Vice-Chancellor will appoint a review panel to assess the situation. The review panel's report will be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor or the University Council, which will take appropriate actions based on applicable legal provisions.
21. The University is committed to promoting awareness of conflict-of-interest policies and procedures. Initiatives will be implemented to educate and inform University members about the nature of conflicts of interest and the established processes for addressing and managing such conflicts.

Definitions

1. **Conflicts of Interest:** Situations where a public official or fiduciary, bound by a duty to act solely for the benefit of the public or a designated individual, exploits their position for personal gain, often in financial terms.
2. **Types of Conflicts of Interest:**
 - **Actual Conflict of Interest:** A situation where an individual's university duties/commitments directly conflict with private interests.
 - **Potential Conflict of Interest:** A situation where an individual's private interests could conflict with their university duties/commitments in the future, requiring preemptive action to mitigate risks.
 - **Perceived Conflict of Interest:** A situation where the public or a third party believes that an individual's private interests could improperly influence their decisions or actions in their university role.
 - **Conflict of Duty:** A situation where a person is required to fulfill multiple roles that may conflict with each other.
3. **Private Interests:** Anything that can influence an individual, including direct interests (e.g., personal, family, professional, or business interests) and indirect interests arising from personal, family, professional, or business relationships. These interests may be pecuniary (financial) or non-pecuniary (e.g., personal relationships, social activities).

This document outlines the comprehensive policy framework for identifying, disclosing, and managing conflicts of interest at Uva Wellassa University, ensuring integrity, transparency, and fairness in all university activities and decisions.

Related policies if any:

Code of conduct/ for academic staff in the Uva Wellassa University

Related Acts, Rules, Regulations, Key Circulars (if any available):

Establishment Code Chapter – XXI, Section 1:5

END

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