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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY FOR NUS STAFF

### 1. **Overall**

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all NUS staff<sup>1</sup>. A conflict of interest occurs when there is a divergence between an individual's private interests and his or her professional obligations to the University, such that an independent observer might reasonably question whether the individual's professional actions or decisions are determined by considerations of personal gain, financial or otherwise.
- 1.2 NUS is in a position of trust in relation to many external organizations. In addition, NUS staff have a responsibility to the government, donors, parents, students, and other sources of resources to use such resources prudently and ethically. Considerations for personal gain, financial or otherwise, must not influence the decisions or actions of individuals in carrying out their University responsibilities.
- 1.3 Accordingly, NUS staff should be sensitive to situations which could raise questions of potential or apparent conflicts between personal interests and the University's interests, should conduct their affairs so as to avoid or minimize such conflicts of interest, and must respond appropriately when conflicts of interest arise.

### 2. **Specific Prohibitions**

Without prejudice to the generality of Section 1 above and unless specific exceptions have been granted pursuant to Section 3 below, the following actions on the part of an individual NUS staff member are prohibited:

#### 2.1 **Personal Gain**

Transmitting to outsiders or otherwise using for personal gain University-funded or supported property, work products, results, materials, property records, or information.

#### 2.2 **Confidential or Privileged Information**

Using for personal gain or other unauthorized purposes, confidential or privileged information<sup>2</sup> acquired in connection with the individual's University-supported activities.

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<sup>1</sup> "NUS staff" refers to all faculty and other teaching and research, administrative and professional and non-academic staff members.

<sup>2</sup> "Confidential or privileged information" includes, but is not limited to, documents so designated, medical, personnel, or security records of individuals; anticipated material requirements or price actions; knowledge of possible new sites for University-supported operations; and knowledge of forthcoming programs or of selections of contractors or subcontractors in advance of official announcements.

## 2.3 **Negotiations and/or Approvals**

Participation in negotiating or giving final approval to the following:

- 2.3.1 Arrangements (contractual or otherwise, and including but not limited to purchases, gifts, and adoption of textbooks, software, and/or other teaching or learning materials) involving the University (or a subdivision thereof) and/or the students for personal gain; or
- 2.3.2 Arrangements (contractual or otherwise, and including but not limited to purchases, gifts, and adoption of textbooks, software, and/or other teaching or learning materials) involving: (a) the University (or a subdivision thereof) and/or the students, and (b) the individual or entities in which the individual or an immediate family member<sup>3</sup> has a financial relationship<sup>4</sup> or with which the individual or an immediate family member has an employment or consulting arrangement; or
- 2.3.3 Employment of relatives of the individual in the University (or a subdivision thereof).

NUS staff members involved in any stage of the University procurement (UP) process shall declare and disqualify themselves from handling UP in which they or their close relatives have any financial relationship or other interest which may give rise to a conflict of interest.

## 2.4 **Gratuities and Special Favours**

Acceptance of gratuities, gifts, or special favors from private or public organizations or individuals with which the University does or may conduct business; or extending gratuities or special favors to employees of any sponsoring organizations.

## 2.5 **University Resources**

Use of University resources, including facilities, personnel, equipment, or confidential information, except in a purely incidental way, for any purposes other than the performance of the individual's University employment.

## 2.6 **Business Relations**

Acceptance of employment, an official relationship, or a consulting arrangement with another organization which has business relations with the University.

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<sup>3</sup> The term "immediate family member" includes a spouse, child, parent, sibling, parent-in-law or domestic partner.

<sup>4</sup> "Financial Relationship" means a current or impending ownership interest in an entity. Shareholdings in publicly listed companies are excluded.

## 2.7 Commitment

Acceptance of employment, consulting, public service, or pro bono work which can result in conflicts with an individual's primary commitment of time and energy to the University.

In interpreting these provisions, common sense must prevail. If a reasonable person would question the action, it should be disclosed and an exception sought in accordance with Section 3 below.

## 3. Procedures for Exceptions

- 3.1 As it may be in the interest of the University to grant exceptions to the prohibitions prescribed in section 2 above, the following procedure is established:

### **Ad Hoc Disclosure and Request for Exceptions**

- 3.2 Whenever an individual is in a situation where he or she may be potentially in violation of a prohibition, that individual should make full disclosure of the details of the situation on the on-line form for Ad-hoc Declaration of External Commitments, Close Relationships & Gifts/Gains which may be requested from myNUS Staff Portal-> eServices-> Declaration of External Commitments, Close Relationships & Gifts/Gains-> Staff Member-> Request Ad-hoc form. Once he/she completes and submits the on-line ad-hoc declaration form to request for an exception, it would be routed to the relevant Head of Department. If an individual is in a current situation where he or she may be in violation of a prohibition, that individual should *immediately* make full disclosure of the details of the situation (on the same Form), to the relevant Head of Department and request an exception.
- 3.3 Appointment holders shall address their disclosures and requests for exceptions as follows:

<u>Appointment:</u>	<u>Address to:</u>
Head of an academic department	Dean
Head of administrative department	Reporting Officer
Dean	Provost
Director of RI/RC	Reporting Officer
Academic staff holding appointment in central administration	Reporting Officer

- 3.4 Heads of Departments, Faculty Deans and reporting officers who receive requests for exception shall review the situation and examine all facts thoroughly for apparent conflicts. Heads of academic departments may consult their Faculty Deans when reviewing the requests. If a Head of Department, Faculty Dean or reporting officer determines that the University would best be served by the granting of the requested exception, he or she may do so in writing with justification for the granting and delineating any conditions placed on the approval. Faculty Deans, Heads of Departments and reporting officers who receive requests for and grant exceptions to the prohibitions shall, at the end of each year<sup>5</sup>, provide a listing of such exceptions granted to the Provost, Deputy President or other designated officer.

4. **Oversight Committee**

An Oversight Committee shall be appointed by the President. The Oversight Committee may include NUS staff members and/or individuals not otherwise affiliated with the University, as long as none of them has vested interests in the outcome of the proposed action. The Oversight Committee shall adjudicate: (a) situations in which an individual NUS staff member wishes to appeal a decision of a Faculty Dean, Head of Department or reporting officer; and (b) conflict of interest situations referred by the President. The decision of the Oversight Committee shall be final and binding.

5. **Related Policies**

This Policy shall apply without prejudice to the following University policies related to conflicts of commitment and interest, as amended from time to time (the "Related Policies"). The Related Policies include, but are not limited to the following: Code of Conduct, Consultation Work Scheme, Policies Relating To University Intellectual Property and other rules and guidelines in the Faculty/Staff Handbooks. Unless otherwise indicated, in the event of any conflict or inconsistency between this Policy and the Related Policies, this Policy shall prevail. Individual Faculties and administrative departments may also impose additional conflict of interest policies on their staff members and those who use their services provided that such policies do not conflict with this Policy and/or the Related Policies.

6. **Responsibility**

The responsibility for avoiding conflict of interest or commitment rests, in the first instance, with the individual. However, Deans, Heads of Department and supervisors shall be alert to situations or work arrangements that create or may create conflict of interest or commitment and ensure that any apparent conflict of interest or commitment is addressed.

7. **Annual Certification and Disclosure**

To protect the University and its staff and students against allegations relating to conflicts of interest, NUS staff must certify annually to their Deans, Heads of Department or reporting officer their compliance with this Policy and the Related

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<sup>5</sup> Defined as academic year for academic staff and calendar year for administrative and professional and non-academic staff.

Policies and make the relevant disclosures on the on-line form on the Annual Declaration of External Commitments, Close Relationships & Gifts/Gains. For each Exercise on the Annual Declaration of External Commitments, Close Relationships & Gifts/Gains, staff members will receive an email notification to log on to [https://my.intranet.nus.edu.sg/irj/portal/CI\\_stf\\_subm](https://my.intranet.nus.edu.sg/irj/portal/CI_stf_subm) to submit their declaration on-line.

8. **Review**

- 8.1 The University may revise this Policy from time to time in its absolute discretion.
- 8.2 The University shall be entitled to make and issue additional guidelines with respect to this Policy from time to time and to revise or amend such as it deems fit. All such guidelines shall be deemed to be a part of the Policy.

Updated 15 April 2015