

Policy Title:	Conflict of Interest Policy
Policy Number:	2600

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and framework to identify, disclose and resolve real or perceived conflicts of interest at University of Niagara Falls Canada (UNF) promptly and appropriately.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all UNF employees including those hired on a on-going, fixed term or other contract basis. Behavior expected of members of the Board of Governors with regard to conflict of interest is addressed in the University Board of Governors Resolutions and Minutes.

3. Policy Statement

All UNF employees are expected to act with integrity in the University’s best interests, supporting the University’s mission and goals, and avoiding circumstances that may place their own interests in conflict with UNF’s.

Conflicts of interest threaten to damage the reputation of, or cause harm to, the persons involved and potentially undermine public confidence and trust in the University as a whole. The University and its employees shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise.

Conflict of interest exists in the following, or similar, circumstances:

- where the activities of a UNF employee have the intention or effect of advancing his/her own interests or those of a related party in a way that may be detrimental, or potentially detrimental, to the normal operations, the integrity, or the fundamental mission of the University;
- in any situation when an employee has a personal or private interest sufficient to cause a reasonable person to question whether the employee is, or could be, influenced in the objective exercise of his/her duties to the University;
- where outside interests and activities, whether financially compensated or not, are incompatible with the committed, efficient, and effective discharge of the employee’s responsibilities to the University and put the employee into conflict with his/her role as a University employee.

3.1. Employee Responsibilities

The principles underlying conflict of interest rules are impartiality and integrity; an employee cannot be perceived as being impartial and acting with integrity if s/he, or a related party, derives any personal advantage from his/her action or decision, or when his/her outside activities are incompatible with his/her obligations to UNF. Primary responsibility for avoiding conflict of interest rests with individual employees.

Some conflicts of interest can be managed while others cannot. Any employee in doubt about whether a situation constitutes a conflict of interest under this policy and/or how it could be

remedied and/or appropriately managed is encouraged to seek advice from any University official.

This policy requires an employee to notify his/her immediate supervisor or their senior administrator as early as possible of any situation which may put, or may be perceived as putting, himself or herself in a conflict of interest along with any recommendations to avoid or minimize the conflict of interest or remove the perception that a conflict exists. If the conflict of interest situation is deemed to be material, then a record of the conflict of interest situation and the remedial action taken must be signed and retained by the employee and his/her supervisor or their senior administrator and be included in the employee's personnel file.

University of Niagara Falls Canada encourages employees who believe that a conflict of interest exists and has gone unreported to report the situation causing concern to the appropriate supervisor or senior administrator, or designate, as quickly as possible.

3.2. Circumstances Leading to Conflict of Interest

Following are examples of circumstances in which a UNF employee would be deemed to have a conflict of interest; this list does not include all possible occasions of conflict of interest.

Personal Financial Interests: influencing any transaction or operating procedure of the University for personal advantage (e.g., selecting products and services for the University), and/or allowing a personal or business relationship to influence the employee's work, work situation, or status to the advantage or disadvantage of any of the persons involved in such relationship; and/or not disclosing when an employee, or related party, has a direct or indirect financial interest in a proposed contract or transaction with the University or is affiliated directly or indirectly with an entity which seeks to contract, transact or otherwise do business with the University; and/or giving preferential treatment to friends, related parties, or to organizations in which the employee or a related party or friends have an interest, financial or otherwise; and/or favoring outside business or professional interests for personal advantage.

Relationships with other employees: participating in the selection, appointment, employment supervision or evaluation of a person with whom employee has a personal relationship or which may result in the employee's personal advantage; and/or participating in or influencing admissions decisions concerning a person with whom the employee has a personal relationship, or which may result in the employee's personal advantage.

Relationships with students: allowing, or appearing to allow, the UNF employee's responsibility to advise, influence, instruct, and evaluate students in a fair, unbiased, and effective manner to be impeded or compromised by a personal consideration of any kind; and/or using the inherent power imbalance that exists between an employee and a student for personal advantage.

Research and community projects: allowing personal considerations to compromise, or appear to compromise, the employee's professional judgment in administering, conducting or reporting on research, and/or working with community groups and projects, and/or teaching, and/or carrying out administrative activities related to research or community projects.

Use of private and proprietary University information: using information, publications, documents, or records pertaining to the business or affairs of the University not in the public domain acquired by virtue of status as an employee for personal advantage or for any purpose unrelated to the business of the University, without first obtaining the University's written authorization.

Use of University property: using, or allowing the use of, University property, facilities, supplies, and services for personal advantage or for any purpose other than University business without first obtaining the University's written authorization.

Use of position as UNF employee: influencing other parties for the employee's, or a related party's personal advantage of any kind; and/or using the employee's University position to create an inappropriate advantage for a related party; and/or influencing students or subordinates to use business or professional services and/or participate in research or community projects that result in the employee's personal advantage; and/or explicitly or implicitly allowing the perception that the employee's activities or statements have been authorized by the University or reflect UNF's positions or policy when this is not the case.

Gifts, favors, and other complimentary items: demanding or accepting, either directly or indirectly, gifts, favors, services or other complimentary items from any individual, organization or corporation that would not have been offered if not for the employee's position at the University, or where receiving the complimentary item could reasonably be seen as compromising the employee's objectivity, other than:

- the normal exchange of hospitality between persons doing business together;
- token exchanges as part of protocol;
- the normal presentation of gifts to persons participating in public functions;
- the normal exchange of gifts or hospitality between friends.

Before accepting any gift, favor, service or other complimentary item that has a value of greater than \$200, an employee must seek authorization from his/her supervisor or the appropriate senior administrator. In normal circumstances such gifts will become the property of the University. Gifts of cash, negotiable securities, personal loans, airline tickets or use of a vacation property, or multiple gifts from the same source over a short period of time may not be accepted.

Other circumstances: any situation where a UNF employee is, or appears to be, under an obligation to a person who might benefit or seek to gain special consideration and/or taking payment, in cash or in kind, from an outside source for work that is part of a UNF employee's regular duties and responsibilities.

3.3. Outside Activities

University of Niagara Falls Canada encourages its employees to engage in professional, technical and other activities to enhance their professional growth and to participate in community service; employees are free to engage in political, professional, and other interest groups and charitable activities. The University recognizes that employees may also have alternate employment, participate in businesses, or receive financial remuneration for activities outside of their employment at University of Niagara Falls Canada.

Recognizing the benefits that can result, UNF generally supports such outside activities and interests provided that the activity does not impede the efficient and/or independent performance of the employee's University duties:

- UNF employee's professional obligations to students, colleagues, and to the University must be fully discharged;
- the activity must not conflict with regular UNF operations;
- the activity must not represent an actual or perceived conflict of interest;
- the activity is not performed in such a way as to appear to be an official act of the University, or imply University support for the outside organization or its initiatives;
- the activity must not negatively impact upon the University's reputation or bring UNF into disrepute;
- the activity must not impose a financial or other burden on the University;
- the activity is not, or does not create the perception of being, in direct competition with UNF activities.

This policy requires that employees notify their immediate supervisor or their senior administrator as quickly as possible of their involvement in any outside activities which potentially compromise or diminish the employee's ability to fulfill his/her employment obligations to the University as outlined above.

3.4. University Responsibilities

Conflict of interest situations, actual, perceived, or potential, shall be dealt with in a fair, impartial, and timely manner with due consideration for the protection and confidentiality of the employee involved and those of any person bringing the alleged conflict of interest situation to the attention of the University.

After receiving a report from an employee, or determining on its own initiative, that an actual or potential conflict of interest has arisen, or may arise, the University will consult with the affected employee and his/her supervisor to address the situation as quickly as possible. Appropriate steps to eliminate, reduce, or remedy such conflict of interest, and/or remove the suspicion that a conflict exists will be determined by the supervisor or senior administrator. Details of the conflict of interest situation and the steps taken to manage it will be recorded by the employee and his/her supervisor or their senior administrator.

In instances where the University determines that an employee is currently or potentially engaged in outside activities that prevent or would prevent or impede the due discharge of the employee's responsibilities to the University, University approval for continued involvement must be obtained or an unpaid leave or an appropriate reduction in responsibilities and compensation must be arranged. Details of the situation impeding the due discharge of the employee's responsibilities and the steps taken to manage it will be recorded by the employee and his/her supervisor or their senior administrator.

Where the University determines that an employee has concealed, or has unreasonably failed to disclose or remedy, a conflict of interest, the University may take disciplinary action up to and including termination as appropriate.

POLICY



The University President will arbitrate any review of a decision regarding the existence of a conflict of interest, or its remedy.

4. Definitions

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

Word/Term	Definition
Senior Administrator	A member of the Senior Management Team or a Vice-President, Director, or the President of the University.

5. Responsibility

The President has executive responsibility for the administration of the Conflict of Interest Policy.