Professional Conduct
Identifying and managing conflicts of interest

Personal views or private interests can, or have the potential to, influence a person's capacity to perform their duties and in turn compromise their integrity and that of the Department.

As a departmental employee, you must be objective and impartial, and be seen to be so. A conflict of interests can involve:

- pecuniary interests i.e. financial gain or loss or other material benefits
- non-pecuniary interests i.e. favours, personal relationships and associations.

It may not only be about your own interests. It may include:

- the interests of members of your immediate family or relatives (where these interests are known)
- the interests of your own business partners or associates, or those of your workplace
- the interests of your friends.

Hostility as well as friendship can also give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interests.

A conflict exists when a reasonably minded and informed person would form that view.

When faced with a situation in which conflict of interests may be present, you should:

- assess the situation and the surrounding circumstances that could affect any decisions or actions you may take in the matter (Ask yourself "What is my public duty?" and "What is my personal interest?")
- identify whether any conflicts of interests exist ("Could my personal interest influence my performance of the public duty?")
- determine the type of conflict of interests ("Is it actual, perceived or potential?" "Is it pecuniary or non-pecuniary?")
- report any conflict to your manager.
A key issue to consider in determining whether conflict of interests exists is what the perceptions of others might be.

Questions you might ask yourself would be:

- What assessment would a reasonable or fair-minded member of the public make of the circumstances?
- Could my involvement in this matter cast doubt on my integrity or on the Department's integrity?

You should also report situations where a superior or colleague who has an identified conflict is, or may be perceived as, unduly influencing your decision.

As a manager or supervisor, you are required to develop appropriate management strategies to deal with any conflicts of interests and document your decisions and actions.

Examples of Conflicts of Interests situations include:

- an employee taking part in the evaluation and selection of textbooks, reference books or learning materials which were written or edited by a relative or close friend, or published by a company in which they have a financial interest
- an employee taking part in the selection and appointment of a supplier or contractor who is a relative or a close friend, or owns a company in which they have a financial/business interest
- an employee supervising a relative or a close friend and determining their promotions or pay increases
- a teacher tutoring or coaching students from their school or workplace in return for payment
- a teacher referring their students to attend private tutorial sessions in which they have, or a relative or a close friend has, a financial/business interest.

Refer to the Conflict of Interests Factsheet in Resources for more detail.