



Conflict of Interest

Policy

This policy sets out the obligations for all school staff, including principals, to address integrity risks created by conflicts of interest that may arise between a school staff member's private interests and their public duties.

Summary

- All school staff must ensure that their personal interests do not influence the performance of their public duties.
- Where possible, school staff must take action to avoid conflicts of interest in the first instance. Where a conflict of interest is unavoidable, steps must be taken to effectively identify, declare and manage the conflict of interest in eduPay (staff login required).
- School staff can access detailed information on their conflict of interest obligations, including examples, in the Guidance tab. This includes information about how to identify, declare and manage conflicts of interest, and what best practice conflict of interest management looks like in common conflict of interest scenarios for school staff.
- Principals are required to complete an annual Declaration of private interests (DOPI) form, available via eduPay under the 'My Declarations' tile, to assess whether any private interests they hold would create an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest with their duties.
- School staff acting in a principal role for more than 5 days, and school staff directed to do so by their principal, are also expected to complete a DOPI form.

Details

Conflicts of interest are a part of life and can arise at any time during the performance of public duties at the department, in Victorian government schools, and in early learning and childcare settings. However, where an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest exists, it creates an integrity risk which must be managed appropriately to ensure that:

- the public interest and trust in the department is maintained and protected
- school staff are transparent and accountable in managing the influences of personal interests on public sector duties
- public sector values of integrity and impartiality are upheld
- a strong integrity culture that demonstrates effective integrity risk management exists.

This policy sets out the obligations for school staff and their managers in addressing the integrity risks created by conflicts of interest. For school staff, a school principal is their manager. For principals, their manager is the area executive director and then the regional director.

This policy provides a clear process to support positive action to either avoid the conflict in the first instance or effectively declare and manage the conflict of interest to bring confidence to decision-making and actions undertaken in the course of carrying out public duties.

Policy obligations are informed by the following principles, consistent with the department's Integrity Framework (staff login required):

- School staff have an individual responsibility for managing integrity risks in the course of their duties and demonstrating integrity and impartiality.
- Clarity of relevant policy obligations, guidance and system supports promotes capability, confidence and compliance.
- Principals who model good practice and accountability promote a positive integrity culture.

This policy applies to all school staff, meaning all:

- Victorian government school staff
- school council employees (also known as 'school local payroll' employees).

Key accountabilities

All school staff are required to perform their public duties in a manner that is consistent with the Public Administration Act 2004 (Vic) and the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees.

School staff are also required to perform their official duties in a manner consistent with the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic) and applicable ministerial orders.

School staff

School staff must ensure that their personal interests do not influence the performance of their public duties.

Where possible, school staff must take action to avoid conflicts of interest in the first instance.

Where a conflict of interest is unavoidable, school staff must:

1. identify the conflict of interest and associated risks, in collaboration with their principal or manager
2. declare the conflict of interest in eduPay (staff login required)
3. develop a conflict of interest management plan in consultation with their principal or manager and act in accordance with the relevant strategies outlined in the plan
4. monitor the conflict of interest and ensure any changes in circumstances or risks are reflected in the declaration and management plan
5. seek advice from their manager or Conduct and Integrity Division when unsure. Conduct and Integrity Division can be reached at 03 7022 5400 or via email Integrity.enquiries@education.vic.gov.au

For detailed information about identifying, declaring, managing and monitoring conflicts of interest, refer to the Guidance tab.

Principals and managers

Principals and managers support school staff to adhere to their obligations by:

1. being aware of the conflict of interest risks inherent in the public duties of their staff
2. supporting school staff to identify conflicts of interest in their work and make declarations where necessary

3. collaborating with school staff to develop effective conflict of interest management plans that appropriately and proportionately address the risks identified
4. providing oversight of the conflict of interest management plans implemented by school staff and holding staff accountable to their plans
5. promoting awareness and capability in identifying and managing conflicts of interest.

Declaration of private interests

In addition to their obligations under this policy to identify, declare and manage conflicts of interest, certain school staff must also complete the Declaration of private interests (DOPI) form on eduPay (staff login required).

The following school staff must complete a DOPI:

- school principals
- school staff directed to do so by their manager in recognition of a high conflict of interest risk due to a private interest they hold, or a work duty they perform
- school staff acting in any of the above positions for longer than 5 days.

These designated school staff must complete a DOPI:

- upon appointment to their position (or upon commencing acting duties)
- annually, following their appointment
- if there is a change to their private interests, within 5 working days.

School staff completing DOPI are required to assess whether any declared private interests would create an actual, potential or perceived conflict with their public duties. Principals must review an employee's DOPI to support them to identify any possible conflicts of interest. A principal's DOPI may be reviewed by an area executive director.

If a conflict of interest is identified from a DOPI:

- the principal or manager must note this on the school staff member's DOPI form in eduPay
- the school staff member must also complete a conflict of interest declaration in eduPay for their manager's approval
- the conflict of interest must be managed in accordance with this policy.

For more information refer to Declaration of private interests in the Guidance tab of this policy.

Definitions

School staff

School staff means all:

- Victorian government school staff
- school council employees (also known as 'school local payroll' employees).

Manager

In this policy, 'manager' is used to refer to:

- principals – as the line manager of a school staff member
- area executive directors – as the first line manager of a principal.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is where a school staff member has a private interest that could influence, or be reasonably perceived to influence, the performance of a public duty.

Conflicts of interest are categorised as either:

- actual – there is an intersection between a private interest you have and your public duties
- potential – you have a private interest that could foreseeably intersect with your public duties
- perceived – it is reasonable for another person to believe that your private interest intersects with your public duties, irrespective of whether it actually does.

Private interests

Private interests are any interests a school staff member has in their personal life. They can be:

- financial or non-financial
- direct (relating to the school staff member) or indirect (relating to the interests of another person or group that the school staff member is or was recently closely associated with, or has an enduring interest in)
- positive (could influence school staff to act in their favour) or negative (could influence school staff to act against their favour).

Everybody has private interests. A private interest only needs to be declared as a conflict of interest if it could influence, or reasonably be seen to influence, school staff's public duties. More detailed examples of private interests are available in the Guidance tab.

Related policies

- Code of Conduct
- Fraud and Corruption Control
- Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality
- Grievances – Teaching Service
- Intellectual Property and Copyright
- Managing Conduct and Unsatisfactory Performance in the Teaching Service
- Other Employment
- Procurement – Schools
- Recruitment in Schools
- Values – Department and VPS Values for School Employees

Relevant legislation

- Public Administration Act 2

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the school's three-year review cycle.

Last ratified by School Council in March 2025