



Frequently Asked Questions Complying with Conflict of Commitment - Staff SMU Policy 1.24

Conflicts of Commitment – Definitions, Purpose, and Application

Q1. To whom does the Conflict of Commitment Policy apply?

A1. This Policy applies to all University staff.

Q2. What is a Conflict of Commitment for purposes of this Policy?

A2. A Conflict of Commitment¹ arises when Activities interfere with the ability of a staff member to fulfill the duties of the staff member's position expectations. In evaluating a Conflict of Commitment, staff must not compromise University interests and must treat those interests as paramount to all other professional interests.

Q3. Why does SMU have a Conflict of Commitment Policy for staff?

A3. The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to staff on Activities that may create a Conflict of Commitment. Although there are opportunities for professional interactions and development that may benefit both the University community and individual staff members, such Activities must not interfere with position expectations. All decisions and actions involving a Conflict of Commitment must be made in a manner consistent with this Policy.

Q4. What is expected of staff members under this Policy?

A4. The University expects staff to commit their professional skills, work effort, and University resources primarily to the fulfillment of their Position Expectations.

Q5. What are "Activities" under this Policy?

A5. "Activity" means any commitment a staff member undertakes for compensation that is not part of Position Expectations and that occurs during the regularly scheduled work hours. This is not intended to apply to professional development activities, campus events, or organizational activities that staff participate in but for which there is no compensation.

Required Approval and Advance Disclosure of Activities

Q6. What must be disclosed under this Policy?

A6. Staff must disclose any proposed Activity, arrangement, or set of circumstances giving rise to a Conflict of Commitment. No such Activity, arrangement, or set of circumstances is permitted without prior approval.

Q7. Who must approve a Conflict of Commitment?

A8. A proposed Conflict of Commitment must be approved in advance by the staff member's direct supervisor, Dean, and the appropriate Vice President or Senior Vice President.

¹ Capitalized terms used in this FAQ are defined in the Conflict of Commitment – Staff Policy

Q8. May staff engage in Activities during their regularly scheduled work hours?

A8. University staff should not engage in Activities during their regularly scheduled work hours. However, if staff do engage in Activities, whether paid or unpaid, during their regularly scheduled work hours, they must disclose the Activity in advance and use either vacation time or unpaid leave when engaging in the approved Activity.

Q9. When must disclosure and approval occur?

A9. Disclosure and approval must occur prior to the Activity, arrangement, or set of circumstances giving rise to the potential Conflict of Commitment.

Q10. Must staff submit a Conflict of Commitment Disclosure Form on a recurring basis?

A10. Yes. A Potential/Proposed Conflict of Commitment Disclosure Form must be submitted on an annual basis and whenever new Activities arise.

Handling Conflict of Commitment Disclosures

Q11. What should I do if I become aware of an actual or potential Conflict of Commitment?

A11. You should promptly submit a Potential/Proposed Conflict of Commitment Disclosure Form to your direct supervisor, Dean, and Vice President/Senior Vice President.

Q12. How is a proposed Conflict of Commitment handled if it is permitted?

A12. If a proposed Conflict of Commitment is approved, the University may impose such terms and conditions as it deems appropriate to manage the Conflict of Commitment.

Q13. What if I have additional questions about this Policy or its implementation?

A13. You should contact the General Counsel of the University to discuss questions or concerns regarding this Policy or its implementation.

Q14. What are the consequences for violation of the Conflict of Commitment Policy?

A14. The University may review and investigate suspected violations of this Policy. If the University determines that a violation has occurred, it may take such action as it deems appropriate under applicable University policies and procedures.

Examples of Particular Staff Conflict Situations

Q15. Am I automatically prohibited from having employment or Activities outside the University?

A16. No. Staff are not automatically prohibited from engaging in employment or other Activities outside the University. However, such Activities may create a Conflict of Commitment if they interfere with the staff member's position expectations or require the staff member to engage in such Activities during regularly scheduled work hours.

Q16. May I engage in outside consulting or other paid work during my regularly scheduled work hours?

A16. No. University staff should not engage in outside consulting or other paid work during their regularly scheduled work hours. If a staff member proposes to do so, the Activity must be disclosed and approved in advance, and the staff member must use vacation time or unpaid leave when engaging in the approved Activity.

Q17. If I volunteer or engage in unpaid Activities outside the University, must I disclose them?

A17. Unpaid Activities are not automatically required to be disclosed. If the Activity will interfere with position expectations or occur during regularly scheduled work hours, the Activity must be disclosed and approved in advance in accordance with this Policy.