

Self-Authored Learning Resources: Conflict of Interest - Disclosure Guidance Materials

Section 1 - Purpose

- (1) The Conflict of Interest Policy has recently been reviewed. One of the key improvements is expansion to include self-authored learning resources in course materials wherein the assigning staff member derives a financial benefit from their inclusion. The improvements ensure a balance between knowledge production from academic staff and the desire to adhere to good governance practice whilst upholding RMIT values.
- (2) The changes include a process to review submissions for use of self-authored learning resources at School level (Learning and Teaching Committee), endorsement by the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching at College level, and approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education centrally.
- (3) Submissions will need to make a case for the prescribed and recommended self-authored learning resources, in order to be included within course materials.
- (4) A conflict of interest declaration must also be completed and submitted to the declarant's line manager in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure](#).
- (5) For the purposes of this guide, a "declaration of conflict of interest" means completion of a conflict of interest declaration form (provided to a line manager), and a conflict of interest submission provided to a School Learning and Teaching Committee.

Section 2 - Scope

- (6) This process applies to all RMIT academic and teaching staff.

Section 3 - Authority

- (7) Authority for this document is established by the [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).

Section 4 - Guideline

In what circumstances is a declaration of conflict of interest required?

- (8) A declaration of conflict of interest is required where:
- a. the staff member responsible for assigning a learning resource within a course (appearing within the course guide) wishes to include a self-authored resource or part thereof (such as a chapter); and
 - b. the learning resource is required in order to support the teaching and assessment of course content; and
 - c. the staff member will derive a financial benefit from the assignment of the learning resource within a course.

(9) A single declaration of conflict of interest may be submitted by a staff member for use of resources in several courses during a teaching period. A new declaration is required for a subsequent teaching period.

Why is it important to have a process around this?

(10) University values require staff to carry out their responsibilities in a transparent and objective manner without personal benefit. To this end governance processes (such as the Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure) exist to enable staff to engage objectively and responsibly where the responsibilities of their role may conflict with personal or outside interests.

(11) The conflict of interest in the present context arises where a staff member obtains a financial advantage through students' purchase of learning resources where that staff member is responsible for prescribing or recommending the learning resource to be used in the teaching of a course.

(12) Whilst prescription or recommendation of self-authored learning materials is not prohibited, the proposed use must be objectively assessed in order to ensure the inclusion is appropriate.

What is the process for making a declaration of conflict of interest?

(13) The process is as follows:

- a. Conflict of Interest Declaration form completed and submitted to line manager
- b. Conflict Submission to School Learning & Teaching Committee
- c. Endorsement by College Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching
- d. Approval by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education
- e. Inclusion of Self-Authored Learning Resource within Course Guide

What should I include within a conflict of interest submission?

(14) The Learning and Teaching Committee, and the relevant Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching, respectively, will have regard to the following considerations when determining whether the prescription or recommendation of a self-authored learning resource within course materials should be permitted:

- a. whether the learning resource is used more broadly within similar courses at other institutions
- b. whether the learning resource will be available to students within the library's collection
- c. whether the learning resource aligns with the learning outcomes of the course
- d. whether the teaching team has been consulted on the selection of the learning resource
- e. the cost of the learning resource to students.

What will be the outcome?

(15) Where a declaration of conflict of interest submission is endorsed and approved, the resource will be included as either the prescribed or recommended learning resource within the relevant course guide.

(16) The Conflict of Interest Declaration Form provided to the staff member's line manager will be passed on to the relevant operational area to include the declaration within a central register in accordance with the [Conflict of Interest Declaration and Management Procedure](#).

(17) Where a submission is not approved, the self-authored learning resource will not be included within the relevant course guide.

Can a decision not to endorse or approve a submission be reviewed?

(18) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education will review all submissions that are not endorsed by the School Learning and Teaching Committee and/or the relevant Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching.

(19) The decision of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education is reviewable by the RMIT Ombuds.

Status and Details

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Policy Owner	Michael Vanderheide Chief Operating Officer
Policy Author	Connie Merlino Academic Registrar
Enquiries Contact	Academic Policy