



10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH

Tel. 020 7969 5203; Fax. 020 7969 5401; e-mail bips@thebritishacademy.ac.uk

Conflict of Interest Policy

Purpose

Trustees have a legal obligation to act in the best interests of the BIPS, and in accordance with our governing document, and to avoid situations where there may be a potential conflict of interest. Staff have similar obligations.

Conflicts of interests may arise where an individual's personal or family interests and/or loyalties conflict with those of the charity. Such conflicts may create problems; they can:

- inhibit free discussion
- result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of BIPS
- risk the impression that BIPS has acted improperly.

The aim of this policy is to protect both the organisation and the individuals involved from any appearance of impropriety.

Scope

This policy applies to trustees and staff.

Policy

The trustees, co-opted members of the Council and staff should record their interests in any BIPS transaction or activity that could give rise to conflict of interest from relationships, loyalty to other institutions (e.g. employing universities), and financial conflicts that involve a benefit to the trustees, co-opted members of the Council and staff in a register maintained by the Executive.

A declaration of interests form is provided for this purpose, listing the types of interest you should declare. To be effective, the declaration of interests needs to be updated at least annually, and when any material changes occur.

There should also be a declaration of interest at the beginning of any committee or council meeting, which is recorded in the minutes.

If you are not sure what to declare, or whether/when your declaration needs to be updated, please err on the side of caution. If you would like to discuss this issue, please contact the President or in his/her absence the Hon Secretary or the Hon Treasurer (or their equivalent) for confidential guidance.

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BIPS has a Gift policy (whether paid or received) as set out below:

1. gifts and hospitality should be declined or returned as a rule
2. nominal gifts and hospitality up to a financial value of £30 are acceptable
3. reasonable, proportionate gifts and hospitality made in good faith and that are not lavish are acceptable subject to the approval procedure noted in point 4 below
4. all gifts and hospitality must be approved by the President, or Honorary Secretary or Honorary Treasurer, and must be recorded in a register of Gifts.

Data protection

The information provided will be processed in accordance with data protection principles as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998. Data will be processed only to ensure that trustees and staff act in the best interests of the BIPS. The information provided will not be used for any other purpose.

What to do if you face a conflict of interest

If you believe you have a perceived or real conflict of interest, you should: declare the interest at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from discussions and decisions relating to the conflict.

The BIPS President should take special care to ensure that minutes or other documents relating to the item presenting a conflict are appropriately redacted of sensitive information for the person facing the conflict. A balance needs to be made to ensure that the person still receives sufficient information about the activities of the charity generally without disclosing such sensitive information that could place the individual in an untenable position.

You should declare your interest at the earliest opportunity and withdraw from any subsequent discussion, unless expressly invited to remain in order to provide information. In this case you may not participate in, or influence, the decision or any vote on the matter. You will not be counted in the quorum for that part of the meeting and must withdraw from the meeting during any vote on the conflicted item. There are situations where you may participate in discussions from which you could indirectly benefit, for example where the benefits are universal to all users, or where your benefit is minimal. This action will be agreed by the chair and minuted accordingly.

If you fail to declare an interest that is known to the other trustees, other trustees with the knowledge of the conflict should declare that interest.

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Decisions taken where a trustee or member of staff has an interest

In the event of the board having to decide upon a question in which a trustee or member of staff has an interest, all decisions will be made by vote, with a simple majority required. A quorum must be present for the discussion and decision; interested parties will not be counted when deciding whether the meeting is quorate. Interested board members should not vote on matters affecting their own interests.

All decisions under a conflict of interest will be recorded by the President or chair and reported in the minutes of the meeting. The report will record:

- the nature and extent of the conflict
- an outline of the discussion
- the actions taken to manage the conflict.

Where a trustee benefits financially from the decision, this will be reported in the annual report and accounts in accordance with the current Charities SORP. All payments or benefits in kind to trustees will be reported in the charity's accounts and annual report, with amounts for each trustee listed for the year in question.

Clause 68(b) of the Articles of Association (2014) states that 'Subject to Clause 68 (a), the Council may from time to time make awards of funding or other support to projects with which members of Council are associated, in accordance with the purposes of the Institute as provided in the Memorandum of Association'.

For the sake of clarity and the avoidance of doubt, this Clause was inserted in 2010 to enable payments to Trustees who may assume the role of Editor of the journal *Iran* and/or become Research Programme Directors. It also allowed the occasional payment to be made to Council Trustees entrusted with projects in line with the Institute's aims and purposes. All such payments are strictly regulated and restricted and do not exceed £3000 in any given year. This Clause was clarified with, and approved by both the British Academy and the Charity Commission on the basis that pool of available expertise in the field of Persian studies within the UK is limited. It operates strictly within the framework of the Charity Commission guidance.

All reasonable expenses, as outlined in the Charity Commission Guidance, may be reimbursed subject to approval by the Council.

Where a member of the BIPS's staff is connected to a party involved in the supply of a service or product to BIPS, this information will be fully disclosed in the annual report and accounts.

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Independent external moderation will be used where conflicts cannot be resolved through the usual procedures.

Managing contracts

If you have a conflict of interest, you must not be involved in managing or monitoring a contract in which you have an interest. Monitoring arrangements for such contracts will include provisions for an independent challenge of bills and invoices, and termination of the contract if the relationship is unsatisfactory.