

## Hospitality and gifts policy

### 1. Introduction

The College has a “no tolerance” policy towards bribery and corruption. We will never offer, pay, solicit or accept bribes in any form, directly or indirectly, including those transactions known as facilitation payments. This policy extends to all our business dealings and transactions, and may be given force by any training and/or monitoring programmes that we may choose to implement from time to time.

This policy applies to all College employees, honorary officers and Trustee Board members, and is equally applicable to individuals who are not employees of the College but who voluntarily undertake duties on behalf of the College and/or act as representatives of the College. For the purposes of this policy the term “Staff” is defined as including all persons listed in this paragraph.

The College requires all Staff to exercise considerable caution in all matters relating to offers and receipt of hospitality to and from third parties. All Staff must be aware of the risks and the perceptions which may arise in such circumstances, and must take all reasonable steps to minimise such risks.

Hospitality and gifts is an area where perception is almost always more important than fact. It follows from this that no matter that something may be accepted with selfless motives and solely in the interests of the College, if an external observer could put an adverse construction on a gift or hospitality, this is what is likely to happen. In accepting any gift or hospitality, therefore, Staff and, if applicable, his or her line manager, must exercise sound judgement about how acceptance might be perceived, recognising that what at first sight might appear to be reasonable might nevertheless become the subject of unreasonable comment or criticism by external parties. The judgement made therefore needs to consider whether such hospitality or gift is permissible under this policy, as well as to include an assessment as to whether the benefits gained by the College through the acceptance of a gift or hospitality might be outweighed by adverse third party criticism, even when that criticism may not be reasonable.

For the purpose of this policy “gift” and “hospitality” includes, but is not limited to, any free gift of goods or services or the acquisition of these services and goods not available to the public, or at a discount not available to the public. This definition would also apply to the offer of food, drink, accommodation, transport, entertainment or events.

### 2. Hospitality and gifts policy

#### 2.1 Provision of Hospitality

Hospitality should not normally be considered as part of the arrangements when conducting College business and should only be provided, or accepted, when proper and necessary. It is not justifiable to provide hospitality solely to reciprocate hospitality received on some previous occasion.

## 2.2 Meetings

Hospitality must be secondary to the purpose of the meeting. Working lunches should be considered only when a meeting takes place over the lunch-time period and when some of the people attending are from off-site and even then, should not be provided as a matter of course.

When considered essential, working lunches should, where practicable, be limited to sandwiches or a modest buffet type meal. The provision of alcoholic beverages is not permissible.

## 2.3 Acceptance of Hospitality

Modest hospitality may be accepted provided it is normal and reasonable in the circumstances e.g. lunches in the course of working visits or for legitimate College purposes may be accepted, though it should be similar to the scale of hospitality that the College as an organisation would be likely to offer.

Annual dinners, functions or equivalent for organisations with which employees or officers have day to day contact (such as other Medical Royal Colleges), often reciprocated by the College, would not be construed by an impartial observer as affecting the judgement of the person accepting the hospitality and may be accepted. This would also be the case for dinners or other events where the College should be officially represented. Such hospitality does not need to be notified.

Hospitality should not extend beyond those whose role makes it appropriate for them to attend the meeting/function. Staff must not allow themselves to be put in a position that might be deemed by others to have been influential in making a decision as a consequence of accepting hospitality.

Where hospitality at meetings is sponsored by external sources, the fact must be disclosed in papers relating to the meeting and in any published proceedings.

Staff are reminded of the risks in incurring obligations to suppliers at any stage of the contracting relationship.

## 2.4 Refusal of Hospitality

Hospitality of any kind which might reasonably be seen to compromise personal judgement or integrity and be viewed as exerting influence to obtain preferential consideration should be refused.

The level of hospitality offered by others must be appropriate and not out of proportion to the occasion.

**In no circumstances may hospitality or gifts be accepted from trainees, examination candidates or other applicants for College membership or College positions.**

## 2.5 Gifts by Way of Inducement or Reward

Staff are prohibited from soliciting any gift or consideration of any kind from contractors or their agents, or from any organisations, firms or individuals with whom they are brought into contact by reason of carrying on their official duties.

## **2.6 Casual gifts**

Offers of one-off gifts should be politely but firmly declined. If pressed, the recipient should inform their line manager and the Chief Executive. Articles of low intrinsic value such as calendars, diaries, flowers or chocolates need not be regarded as subject to this rule. In cases of doubt, the line manager, any member of the Senior Management Team or the Chief Executive should be consulted (see also 3.1).

## **2.7 Internal gifts**

This policy is not intended to cover gifts between employees or between officers and employees for occasions such as birthdays or Christmas, or as a general thank you. Such gifts can be accepted and do not need to be notified.

## **2.8 Financial gifts**

Gifts in the form of a donation of money to the College or bequests to individual staff (i.e. from grateful clients) should be directed to the Chief Executive for advice as to whether or not it can be accepted.

## **2.9 Travel and accommodation**

All travel and overnight accommodation for employees requires prior approval from your line manager. In the case where someone other than the College is paying part or all of this cost, approval must be obtained from the Chief Executive or any member of the Senior Management Team for employees and from the President or the Trustee Board for officers and the Chief Executive, prior to accepting such an offer.

# **3. Implementation**

## **3.1 Declaration of Hospitality and Gifts**

Any hospitality or gift deemed to be in excess of £25.00 per person should be declared unless a specific exemption applies as detailed above. A declaration of the receipt of hospitality or gifts form can be found at Appendix 1.

Officers whose employer is an organisation other than the College do not have to declare to the College hospitality or gifts resulting from that employment. However, if the hospitality or gift results from their College role or could be viewed by an outsider as influencing them in their College duties then they should declare such hospitality or gifts in accordance with this policy.

Every employee or officer is responsible for not allowing themselves to be put in a position that might be deemed by others as inappropriate in terms of accepting hospitality or gifts. All managers are responsible for implementing this policy.

## **3.2 Hospitality and Gift Register**

The Chief Executive will maintain a register of declared hospitality and gifts which will be made available for inspection by the Trustee Board and the auditors at least once a year. The Register for the previous financial year will be inspected by the Trustee Board once a year.

### **3.3 Reporting**

If you report a suspicion, you will be protected from recrimination from your colleagues. The College will ensure that your report is treated in a confidential manner. You will not suffer demotion, penalty, or other consequence for refusing to pay or receive bribes even if it may result in the College losing business.

### **3.4 Compliance**

It is your sole responsibility to comply with the requirements of this policy. If you fail to comply with any of the above and are found to have committed bribery, the College may be liable for unlimited fines and you may face criminal prosecution potentially leading to imprisonment of up to 10 years.

Furthermore, if you are found to be in breach of this policy, the College will take disciplinary action against you, which may include a sanction up to and including dismissal for employees and removal of office for officers.

## **4 Glossary**

Throughout this document, and for the purposes of this policy only, the following definitions apply:

Employee	Any person directly employed by the College or self employed under a contract and working for the College.
Officer	Any honorary officer, Trustee Board or Council member, individual who acts in some form of voluntary capacity on behalf of the College or an individual other than an employee who acts as a representative of the College.
Staff	An employee or an officer

## Appendix 1

### Declaration of the Receipt of Hospitality or Gifts

**NAME (PLEASE PRINT)** \_\_\_\_\_

**JOB TITLE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEPARTMENT** \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with the College's policy on hospitality and gifts, I wish to declare that I am in receipt of the following hospitality/sponsorship/gift:-

**Date Received** \_\_\_\_\_

**Received From (Name of supplier or provider)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature and purpose of hospitality or gift received** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Estimated Value** \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the above information will be recorded in the Hospitality Register, which will be available for inspection upon request by the members of the Trustee Board.

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Upon completion, this form should be returned to the Chief Executive. If in doubt as to whether an item should be recorded or not, you are advised to record it.**