

ADVICE CENTRE CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Advice Centre Conflict of Interest Policy

Executive summary:

The Advice Centre aims to support all Bucks' students on an equal and impartial basis. Every effort is made to provide full access to the service. There are however certain circumstances where conflicts of interest exist and the way these conflicts are handled by the Advice Centre is detailed below.

Conflicts of interest arise when a member presents a complaint against Bucks Students' Union, or a case that involves any member of Students' Union staff or a trustee of the Union. In such instances the Advice Centre will not advise the member as it cannot be certain of providing impartial advice:

- The adviser will explain the conflict of interest and that under these circumstances they cannot offer impartial advice or advocate on the member's behalf for this issue
- If appropriate the adviser will inform the member of Bucks Students' Union Complaint Procedure
- For further support the adviser may signpost the member to another relevant agency, either within the University or externally as appropriate
- Members submitting a complaint to the Union are able to access advice and support from the Students' Union Advice Centre at Brunel University, contact details for whom are available from **brunelstudents.com**
- The adviser will inform the member that they are still able to advise them on matters where a conflict of interest does not exist.

The Advice Centre Manager should be informed of any conflict of interest arising from a case that involves the Union, its staff or a trustee, who will inform the Membership Services Manager. In the absence of the Advice Centre Manager the Membership Services Manager should be informed directly.

A conflict of interest may also present itself where a member's complaint concerns a close personal associate or family member of Union staff and/or trustees. In such instances the adviser will refer the matter to the Membership Services Manager, the CEO or the Human Resources Manager who shall determine whether a conflict of interest exists.

When two or more members are in dispute (for example this may be when one member has made a complaint against another member or both have been accused of collusion under the University's Academic misconduct regulations):

- Both parties will be informed that if they use the Advice Centre under these circumstances the opposing party will be told that they are also receiving help from the Advice Centre or will be offered help if they approach the Advice Centre
- Apart from informing both parties that the other party is receiving help, or may approach the Advice Centre for help, no other information will be passed from one party to the other without the express permission by the member or members - see Confidentiality Policy
- Both parties will be seen by different members of the Advice Centre staff.

When members of University staff, or external individuals or agencies approach the Advice Centre for advice:

- The Advice Centre's prime role is to provide information, advice and guidance to students at Bucks and also to prospective students
- Advice and guidance will not generally be given to any other individuals or agencies, however if appropriate and time permits, information and sign posting can be offered to University staff
- If an external agency that has contact with members seeks advice from the Advice Centre, for example landlords, the enquirer shall be informed that the Advice Centre exists to provide advice to students, and that as it puts the needs of students first, it is unable to assist with the enquiry
- The Advice Centre can offer information, advice and guidance to Bucks Union staff, but not if it is in relation to their employment at Bucks. If this is the case then the member of staff will be referred to their line manager or the Students' Union's Human Resources Manager.

Any other possible conflict of interest should be discussed with the Advice Centre Manager and/or the Membership Services Manager. This will then be recorded and appropriate action taken.