Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy



**Acknowledgement**

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority proudly acknowledges and pays respect to Victoria’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their rich and enduring cultures.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia’s first peoples and as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters on which we rely. We pay respect to Elders past and present of the lands where we conduct our work and recognise their ongoing contributions as the first educators on the land now known as Victoria.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
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1. Overview

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), strongly advocates that employees abstain from both giving and receiving gifts, regardless of their monetary worth. This approach reflects a commitment to fairness, transparency, and ethical behaviour in all organisational interactions. By abstaining from gift exchanges, employees actively contribute to preventing potential conflicts of interest and biases, thereby upholding the integrity of the organisation.

The gifts, benefits, and hospitality policy sets clear guidelines to prevent conflicts of interest, maintain organisational integrity, and uphold trust with stakeholders.

This policy applies to all employees within the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA). For the purposes of this policy, the term 'employees' encompasses VCAA employees of the direct workforce, as well as any individuals or groups undertaking an activity for or on behalf of the VCAA, including:

* all employees (fixed term, casual, sessional) employed under Ministerial Order No. 1451 – Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority employees (Employment Conditions, Salaries, Allowances, Selection and Conduct) Order 2023 (referred to as ‘The MO’)
* Board members.
1. Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

* **management of conflicts of interest:** minimise actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest concerning the giving or receiving of gifts, benefits, and hospitality
* **maintenance of high standards:** preserve and uphold standards of integrity and public trust within the VCAA; ensuring that actions and decisions made by the VCAA align with these high standards
* **adherence to VCAA values (our values):** align with the VCAA's values of integrity and impartiality.
1. Principles
	1. Transparency

Transparency and openness in declaring and recording offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality.

* 1. Accountability

Employees are expected to make informed decisions when receiving and declining offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality. They must declare and record all offers, acting in a responsible and accountable manner.

* 1. Impartiality

Offers of gifts, benefits, and hospitality should not influence decisions or actions taken by employees in their roles.

* 1. Public trust

Actions made should preserve the public's organisational trust.

1. Roles and responsibilities
	1. The employer

The responsibilities of the employer include:

* communicating the gifts, benefits and hospitality policy to the organisation, including the consequences of breaching the policy
* reporting criminal or corrupt conduct to Victoria Police or the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission
* declaring all offers through the Department’s gifts, benefits and hospitality register within 24 hours
* monitoring employee compliance with this policy, offering guidance when needed.
	1. Employees
* employees must not, in their capacity as VCAA employees, seek, give or accept any gifts, benefits, and hospitality, including the following:
* money, items resembling money, or items that easily converted to money i.e. gift cards, vouchers, cash back or discount offers
* a bribe or inducement (employees must report inducements and bribery attempts to their manager or authorised delegate).
* rejecting bribes and report bribe attempts to a manager or an authorised delegate
* declaring all offers to a manager or authorised delegate within 24 hours.
1. Expectations

5.1. Prohibition on gifts

All gifts, benefits and hospitality are prohibited.

All VCAA employees, in their capacity as a VCAA employee, must decline all gifts, benefits, or hospitality, valued at any amount, for themselves or any other individual, including declining any gifts of appreciation from students, parents and/or carers. All employees must also not solicit any gifts, benefits or hospitality for themselves or others.

5.2. Declaring offers of gifts, benefits and hospitality

Employees must declare all declined offers to a manager or authorised delegate within 24 hours of the offer. The manager or authorised delegate must then declare the offer on behalf of the employee through the Department’s online gifts, benefits and hospitality form.

5.3. Breach of this policy

Disciplinary action consistent with the relevant industrial instrument and legislation, including dismissal, may be taken where an employee fails to adhere to this policy. This includes where an employee fails to appropriately identify, declare, and manage, a conflict of interest related to gifts, benefits, and hospitality in accordance with this policy and the VCAA’s conflict of interest policy.

1. Managing this policy

6.1 Authorisation

This policy is issued under the authority of the Chief Executive Officer.

6.2 Accountability for the policy

The owner for this policy is VCAA Human Resources. The owner reports to the Chief Executive Officer on the management of this policy.

The owner is responsible for:

* development and regular review of this policy
* development of protocols, processes and guidelines to support implementation
* monitoring compliance of applicable employees, organisational units, and/or locations.

6.3 Important dates

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| Date of adoption: | July 2024 |
| Date of last amendment: | July 2024 |
| Date of next review: | July 2026 |

1. Related documents
* VCAA conflict of interest policy