

# Acceptance of Donations Policy

<b>Policy Name – Acceptance of Donations Policy</b>	
<b>Version number: 1</b>	
<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Policy Author/Reviewer</b>
Professor Malachy O Neill Interim Director of Development and Alumni Relations Office	Alison Snookes Head of Development Operations
<b>Approving body</b>	<b>Date of approval</b>
Senior Leadership Team	08 October 2024
	<b>Equality Screened</b>
	Yes
	<b>Next Review date</b>
	October 2027
Queries relating to this document should be directed to the Policy Owner – Professor Malachy O Neill, <a href="mailto:mf.oneill@ulster.ac.uk">mf.oneill@ulster.ac.uk</a>	
This document can be made available on request, in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those who are not fluent in English.	

### 1. Context and purpose of this policy

Ulster University (the University) actively seeks and encourages philanthropic donations) from a range of sources including individuals, companies, charitable trusts and foundations, alumni and other friends of the University, from across the world. Donations may be proposed for a number of purposes, including in support of scholarships, awards or bursaries for students at the University.

For the purposes of this policy, donations are defined as:

- income received from funders where full or partial ownership of a deliverable (e.g. intellectual property) or receipt of any substantial benefit are not conferred on the funder; and
- non-financial donations of a philanthropic nature, including Gifts-In-Kind<sup>1</sup>.

This policy does *not* relate to gifts, gratuities or hospitality provided to University employees. Gifts, gratuities and hospitality are dealt with by a separate policy<sup>2</sup>. Neither does this policy cover sponsorship i.e. when a commercial contract has been put in place between a funder and the University whereby a material benefit is conferred on the funder.

The University will undertake all reasonable measures in order to:

- ascertain the source of philanthropic donations; and
- ensure that such donations are made for purposes consistent with the University's values; and
- support the University's mission, vision and strategic priorities; and
- ensure that no legal or reputational issues are raised by the acceptance of such donations.

Under the new Delegated Authority Framework, approved by Council in May 2022, consideration and approval of the University's Acceptance of Donations Policy is formally delegated to the Audit and Risk Committee. In order to ensure that all proposed donations are in the best interests of the University, proposed donations will only be accepted following a proportionate review, within the reasonable capacity of the organisation to conduct this review. Responsibility for the review of proposed donations sits with the University's Development & Alumni Relations Office, reporting to the Director of Development & Alumni Relations, and with senior colleagues as specified within the University's Delegated Authority Framework<sup>3</sup>, the relevant section of which is shown at Table 1 on the next page.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gifts-in-Kind may include the provision of time / expertise or an item of equipment.

<sup>2</sup> [Gifts, Gratuities and Hospitality Policy](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ulster University's Delegated Authority Framework (section 1.19) can be viewed at:

[https://www.ulster.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/1236143/1-Governance,-Management-and-Control.pdf](https://www.ulster.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1236143/1-Governance,-Management-and-Control.pdf)

Table 1: Section 1.19 from Ulster University's Delegated Authority Framework

	TASK	FINAL AUTHORITY / APPROVAL	SCRUTINY / RECOMMENDATION	SLT LEAD OFFICER	CONTEXT, PROCESS AND DELIVERY
1.19	Gifts, donations and endowments received in the name of the University	Director of Development and Alumni Relations	Director of Development and Alumni Relations	University Provost	Director of Development and Alumni Relations to review gifts, donations and endowments (and refunds of gifts, donations and endowments) received in the name of the University up to £10k.  The University Provost to review those received in the name of the University between £10k and £100k.
		Vice-Chancellor	University Provost	University Provost	Vice-Chancellor to review gifts (and refund of gifts, donations and endowments) received in the name of the University above £100k, informed by a comprehensive due diligence report.
		Audit and Risk Committee	Audit and Risk Committee	University Provost	Audit and Risk Committee to receive assurances, through reporting and Internal Audit reviews, on the robustness of the University's arrangements for philanthropy and fundraising, to include a summary of the level and range of gifts, donations and endowments received.

This Policy is intended for both prospective donors and for University staff members. This Policy should be read in conjunction with all other relevant University policies including<sup>4</sup>:

- [Financial Regulations](#)
- [Procurement Policy](#)
- [Anti-Money Laundering Policy](#)
- [Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#)
- [Anti-Bribery Guidance](#)
- [Gifts, Gratuities and Hospitality Policy](#)
- [Policy on the Naming of Buildings and Spaces](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Privacy Policy for Ulster University's Development & Alumni Relations Office](#)

Ulster University is registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (NIC100166) and will at all times observe the requirements of charity law and other relevant legislation as well as the provisions of its own Charter, Statutes and Ordinances in relation to the receipt and expenditure of funds. The University is also registered with the Fundraising Regulator<sup>5</sup>.

The University reserves the right to refuse or refund any donations thought not to meet the requirements set out in the Policy. If, following the acceptance of a donation, subsequent events or additional information give rise to ethical or other concerns about the donor, the University will undertake a thorough investigation and may choose to return the donation (see Section 4).

## 2. The due diligence process

Whilst the Development & Alumni Relations Office is primarily responsible for the solicitation of donations, it is recognised that staff members across the University have relationships with individuals and organisations who / which may wish to donate to the University. All staff at the University have a responsibility to notify the Development & Alumni Relations Office of the proposed receipt of any donations to the University at the earliest possible opportunity. When a proposed donation has a value of less than £10,000, due diligence checks will be undertaken by the University staff member(s) involved in soliciting / receiving the proposed donation acting on guidance received from the Development & Alumni Relations Office regarding what to consider in

<sup>4</sup> Ulster University's policies can be viewed at: <https://www.ulster.ac.uk/about/governance/policies>

<sup>5</sup> The Fundraising Regulator: <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/>

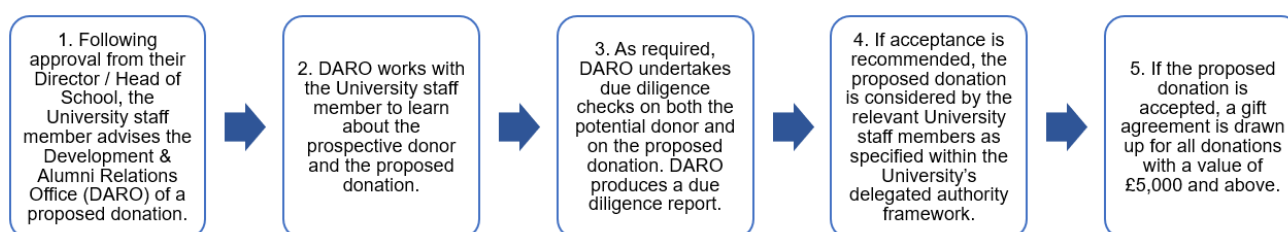
terms of the proposed donation. The Development & Alumni Relations Office will undertake due diligence on proposed donations when:

- the proposed donation has a total value of £10,000 or more; or
- the source of the proposed donation is new to the University or the source is unclear; or
- the proposed donation relates to the naming of a University building or space.

If the proposed donation is in support of research or involves the valuation of intellectual property, the Research & Impact Office must be contacted<sup>6</sup>.

Due diligence checks will be undertaken by the Development & Alumni Relations Office on potential donations according to the process outlined at Table 2 (below). Note: steps 3-5 from Table 2 will be undertaken when the proposed donation has been solicited by a member of the Development & Alumni Relations Office.

Table 2: the due diligence process



The University will not accept donations whereby a judgement has been made that it would:

- limit freedom of enquiry or encroaches on any aspect of academic freedom; or
- lead to a conflict of interest with the ethics, principles and values of the University; or
- pose legal, ethical, reputational or other causes for concern e.g. over the product / service the prospective donor provides; or
- require an action or actions on behalf of the University or its staff which are deemed to be illegal; or
- are too difficult or expensive to administer or have the potential to create unacceptable liability or future expense; or
- constitute any form of bribery, including any procurement contracts present or future; or
- intend to influence the application of the University's selection criteria for admissions; or
- intend to affect the academic record of any current or future students or has bearing on any dispute between a student and the University about the outcome of their programme of study; or
- intend to influence the conferral of any academic or non-academic privilege, benefit or undue advantage upon any currently registered or future student; or
- pose any other areas of concern not noted above.

In undertaking due diligence to assess the acceptability of a potential donation the University will consider the rights of prospective donors and will seek to distinguish between rumour or speculation and matters of confirmed fact or legal finding. The outcome of the due diligence process is a due diligence report<sup>7</sup>, which identifies any potential issues relating to the donor and the proposed donation.

<sup>6</sup> For proposed projects in support of research, the Deputy Director of Research to be contacted. For proposed projects, involving the valuation of intellectual property, the Head of Innovation & Impact to be contacted.

<sup>7</sup> A due diligence report is created using a proforma which has been developed for use within the University.

In cases where any type of issue / potential issue has been identified during the due diligence process, for example an ethical one, DARO will escalate this to the Director of DARO in the first instance, then if deemed necessary, onwards to the University Provost and ultimately to the Vice-Chancellor.

### **3. Responsibility for the acceptance of donations**

The Director of Development & Alumni Relations, working with senior colleagues as specified within the University's Delegated Authority Framework, is responsible for the acceptance of donations. Where a Department / Faculty is involved in securing a proposed donation, the proposed donation will be considered and approved by that Department / Faculty prior to acceptance, typically by the Director or Head of School. The University member of staff who approves the donation should not be the staff member who is the key contact / lead fundraiser for any donor on whom a due diligence report has been compiled.

In all cases where the total value of a proposed donation exceeds £5,000 a gift agreement between the University and the donor will be drawn up by the Development & Alumni Relations Office.

### **4. Returning of donations that have been previously accepted**

The University will not normally return a donation which has been accepted in good faith in compliance with this Policy. Exceptionally, subsequent events or the subsequent availability of additional information may give rise to the need to review a previous decision to accept a donation. A decision to return a donation shall always be a matter for the Vice-Chancellor, on the recommendation of the University Provost, informed by a report from the Director of Development & Alumni Relations.

### **5. Recording and reporting**

The University will record and report on all philanthropic income in accordance with appropriate legislation and with internal reporting requirements.