



GSD POLICY ON OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- *Excerpted from the GSD [Faculty Policies Handbook](#), pages 11-15, revised Spring 2021.*
- *In the case of a discrepancy between this document and the Handbook, the language in the Handbook shall override this document.*

Preamble

This policy applies to all faculty and researchers at the Graduate School of Design. Participation in professional activities outside the School and research undertaken at the School are valuable for the intellectual life of the faculty, students, and professional staff and for the stature of the School. Such activities advance the search for knowledge, bring fresh insights into the classroom, and further the University's broad interests in serving society.

There are, however, circumstances in which such activities may detract from a faculty member's work at the School and/or may not be consistent with the core values of the University. Briefly, a problem arises when one's outside professional activities conflict with one's obligations to students, faculty colleagues, or the University. The primary objective of this policy is to clarify expectations and provide guidelines for the identification and resolution of questions that may arise with respect to outside activities and conflicts of interest.

Members of the faculty are urged to read the "Statement on Outside Activities of Holders of Academic Appointments" adopted in June 2000 by the Corporation of Harvard University, which is appended at the end of this chapter. The Corporation's statement explains carefully the rationale for the University's policies, which apply to all Harvard faculties. The following GSD-specific policies provide additional guidance, describe some common situations and problems that arise in the GSD context, and set forth annual reporting requirements on outside activities. In addition, the School counts on faculty members to monitor their own activities. Whenever in their own good judgment they perceive that questions about outside activities or conflicts of interest might arise, they are expected to disclose the relevant facts to the Dean of the Faculty, the Executive Dean, or their department Chair and seek guidance. If the issues are significant, the dean should be included in the consultations.

OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES

Guidelines and Definition of Outside Activities

Outside activities include all "consulting and related outside professional activities," except the following:

- For junior faculty members, creative work in scholarship, design, or professional practice suitable for use to demonstrate progress toward academic promotion or becoming viable candidates for tenured positions in major U.S. colleges or universities.
- For senior faculty members, creative work in scholarship, design, or professional practice of the sort intended to be recognized by peers as a significant contribution to the field."
- *Overall Limit on Outside Activities.* In keeping with the *Harvard Corporation Statement on Outside Activities*, full-time faculty members are expected to devote no more than 20 percent of their total professional effort to outside activities during the academic year.
- *Part-time Faculty.* The 20 percent limit on outside activities applies only to faculty members who have appointments that are more than half-time (i.e., 51 percent or more). Faculty

members who are more than half-time and less than full-time should adhere to the 20 percent rule appropriately adjusted for their part-time status. For example, a faculty member holding a 75 percent appointment may devote up to 40 percent of his or her total professional effort to outside activities.

- *Teaching and Research at Other Academic Institutions.* A faculty member who is full time and/or who holds the rank of Professor, Professor in Practice, Non-Tenured Professor in Practice, or Associate Professor in Practice may not accept an academic appointment or teach any substantial portion of a course at another institution unless approved in advance by the dean and, where required, by the Corporation. This policy applies whether the activity is conducted in person or as part of a distance education program. When teaching at or for another institution is expressly approved on a temporary basis, the limited nature of the association should be clearly indicated, normally by including “visiting” in the Harvard faculty member’s title (as in “visiting professor” or “visiting instructor”).
- Visiting faculty will normally hold academic appointments at the institutions from which they are visiting. Those with multi-year GSD appointments may not accept additional outside academic appointments, however, except as approved in advance by the dean. Visiting faculty with annual appointments do not require such permission. In all cases, however, the sum of the appointments held by a visiting member of the faculty may not exceed the equivalent of one full-time position.
- *Research:* Research projects on which a Harvard academic appointee with a multi-year or fulltime appointment serves as a principal investigator or in an analogous role should be administered through the University unless the dean has specifically granted an exception. More generally, such faculty may accept research appointments at another University or academic institution only with the dean’s advance permission.
- *Schedules for Teaching, Advising and Other Meetings.* Both full and part-time faculty members should adhere to the normal academic schedule for teaching and student advising. Classes should meet regularly during normally scheduled hours, except in the event of illness of the instructor. It is understood that on occasion instructors may have to reschedule classes because of other pressing professional commitments, but every effort should be made to avoid such changes and they should be very rare. Alterations in class schedules or cancellations for reasons other than illness must be approved in advance by the department chair and, if extending over a period of more than a week, by the dean. Similarly, each faculty member should take care to fulfill his or her committee and other administrative responsibilities and to participate in department and other faculty meetings consistent with his or her appointment.
- *Executive or Professional Position in a Firm.* Because the professional and academic accomplishments of some GSD faculty members are established primarily through excellence in design and to establish authorship and control of designs more clearly, such faculty members (both full and part-time) are allowed to hold professional or executive positions in a firm in their field. Faculty who hold such positions must exert special care, however, to ensure that their obligations and activities at the firm do not interfere with their obligations to the University. In addition to the obligations highlighted in the previous bullet, this means that full-time faculty members should not undertake management roles so demanding as to compete for priority with their responsibilities as faculty members. Time devoted to management activities, moreover, except as incidental to the faculty member’s own creative work, should be reported (to a fair approximation) under the rubric of Outside Activities.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

General Principles

A faculty member has a conflict of interest when he or she has an existing or potential financial or other interest that might impair the faculty member's independence of judgment in the discharge responsibilities to the University or when he or she may receive a financial or other benefit from knowledge of information confidential to the University or any administrative unit within it.

Conflicts of interest can also arise if the financial interest or other gain benefits one of the faculty member's family or associates. Family members are parents, spouses, partners or children and an associate is another person engaged in a common enterprise with the faculty member. When potential conflicts exist, the faculty member should consult with his or her department chair or the dean to ascertain whether the putative conflict requires a change in the faculty member's course of conduct.

Guidelines

The following are examples of potential conflicts of interest:

- *Research-related Enterprises.* The risk of conflict of interest, or appearance of conflict, can arise when a faculty member, family member, or associate (as defined above) has a significant financial interest in an external enterprise engaged in activities closely related to the faculty member's line of university research. The existence of such an interest does not automatically constitute a conflict. Where there are such interests, however, the faculty member is obligated to provide full and current disclosure and to seek the advice of his or her department chair and the dean.
- *Student Research.* The risk of conflict of interest arises when a faculty member directs students into a research area from which the faculty member, family member, or associate is likely to realize financial or other personal gain. The criterion for the selection and oversight of student research should be the educational benefit and interests of the student. When supervising student research, whether for academic credit or compensation, faculty should avoid the fact or appearance of exploitation or favoritism.
- *Studio or Course Topics.* The risk of conflict of interest arises if a faculty member designs a course or studio around topics from which that faculty member, family member, or associate is likely to realize financial or other personal gain. As with research, the concern in the design of a course or a studio should be the educational interests of the students. Faculty members should disclose to their department chair in advance any relationship that might raise questions of a conflict of interest about a course or studio. If the department chair perceives an actual conflict or significant potential for conflict, the dean should be consulted as well.
- *Employing Students.* Employing students in projects outside the School can be problematic. This is a particular concern when the faculty member involved may have responsibilities at the School that could pose a conflict of interest over such personnel. Work experience is valuable, but it is essential that the professional role and the academic relation be independent. For these reasons, a faculty member may not hire a student to work outside the school while the student is an advisee, or is enrolled in that faculty member's course.
- *Student Pay:* Faculty employing students under any circumstances, within or outside the School, must pay them in accordance with applicable laws.
- *Employing Other Faculty.* There is a risk of conflict of interest when faculty employ GSD colleagues of unequal rank in their firms, or when employees of such firms are candidates for recruitment to teach at the School. When a person in such a relationship is being considered for recruitment, renewal, or promotion, both the employing and employed faculty members have a responsibility to ensure that the review committee is informed at the beginning of the

process. The senior faculty member in such a relationship should recuse himself or herself from all deliberations regarding this personnel action.

- *Work for a Student.* Because of the risk of conflict of interest, a faculty member may not work as a consultant for a student (currently enrolled or on a leave of absence with the expectation of returning), or for an organization in which a student has significant influence or decision-making authority.
- *Use of School Resources.* The risk of conflict of interest arises when a faculty member uses the School's facilities or equipment for outside activities beyond a one-time incidental basis. For additional guidance, faculty members should consult the section on "Use of School Resources" in this handbook.
- *Intellectual Credit.* The risk of conflict of interest arises when a faculty member publishes work that includes significant intellectual or other contributions of students or faculty colleagues. Contributions of students or other faculty should be used only with their permission. The one exception to this rule is that, in cases where the contributions were made by students or colleagues in an employee capacity, either as part of a Harvard project or externally, the supervising faculty member is entitled to use the work. In all cases, including those where the contributions were made in an employee capacity, the faculty member should be sure to give appropriate credit—either for the specific contributions or for co-authorship of the work as a whole.
- *Disclosure and Recusal.* Where there is a risk of conflict of interest in an appointment, promotion, grading, award, grant or other University decision, the faculty member involved should disclose that risk. If there is a concern or risk that the faculty member could not be objective, the faculty member should recuse him or herself from the deliberations and decision.
- *Use of University Identification.* Members of the University are expected to take individual responsibility for their participation in any outside activity, and use their best efforts to avoid false or misleading suggestions by others that the activity is an undertaking of Harvard or any of its units. In general, all members should observe the University's policy on the use of the Harvard name, and limit their identification with Harvard to listing their formal titles as appropriate. The University and School name and stationery should never be used in promotional materials or in any other way for outside activities.
- *Reporting Procedures.* Every year each faculty member shall report, in such format as the dean may request, with copies to the appropriate department chair, on his or her outside activities.

See Appendix: Corporation Statement on Outside Activities