



Gifts and hospitality policy

Including rewards and prizes, political and charitable donations, sponsorship and speaking fees

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1. Policy statement

1.1 Gifts and hospitality can be an appropriate part of a working relationship but any acceptance must not improperly influence, or be seen to be improperly influence, any decisions or create a feeling of obligation.

1.2 This policy covers gifts (which includes gifts, rewards and prizes, donations and sponsorship and speaking fees) and hospitality.

1.3 This policy is consistent with our values:

- We act with integrity
- We pursue excellence
- We respect other people and ideas
- We show empathy
- We behave fairly
- We are agile and responsive to change.

2. Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on:

- what is and is not acceptable in relation to gifts and hospitality
- how and when you should make a declaration
- what you should do if you need to report a concern and how that concern will be investigated.

3. Scope

3.1 This policy applies to:

- employees (whether permanent or temporary) and workers¹
- members²
- partners, spouses and close family relatives³ of all Council and Senior Management Team (SMT)⁴ members for the purposes of auditing related party transactions.

3.2 Compliance with this policy is mandatory. Non-compliance for employees may be considered to be gross misconduct (and could result in summary dismissal). Non-compliance for members is a breach of the terms of appointment which could result in removal from office.

3.3 Responsibility lies with the employee, member or worker to make such declarations in accordance with this policy. We encourage all employees, members and workers to seek

¹ Workers are appointed under a contract of employment by the Executive. This will commonly apply where work is ad-hoc and semi-regular.

² Members are appointed by the Privy Council (in the case of Council Members) or via the Council's appointment processes for committee members. This will commonly apply where individuals are a member of a committee or Council.

³ Parents, siblings and adult children

⁴ The Senior Management Team includes the Chief Executive and Registrar, the Director of Change, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Regulatory Operations and Director of Regulatory Strategy

consent and further guidance if you are in any doubt about your responsibilities under this policy. This will enable us to establish precedents; it will protect individuals from concerns being raised; and it will ensure transparency. If you require further advice and guidance, you should contact the Governance team at governance@optical.org

4. Gifts and hospitality register

4.1 A register of all gifts, hospitality, donations, sponsorship and fees declared in accordance with this policy will be maintained for the purposes of internal auditing. The register will include the following details:

- the gift, hospitality, award or prize or fee received
- the known or estimated value
- the date of acceptance or refusal
- the person or organisation who gave the gift, provided the hospitality, made the charitable donation or paid the speaker fee
- the name of the GOC employee, member or worker in receipt
- the reason for acceptance or refusal.

4.2 The register will be considered by the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee (ARC) annually and then published on the GOC website.

4.3 Governance will also maintain a record of all requests for advice and guidance on this policy, in order to establish trends and precedents and to assist when this policy is due for review. This record will be reviewed by ARC annually.

5. Review of this policy

5.1 Governance will be responsible for reviewing this policy every three years, considering new or changes to legislation and regulations as well as best practice before presenting it for consideration by ARC.

6. Gifts

6.1 A 'gift' is an item given without the expectation of payment or reciprocity.

6.2 The table at 6.5 explains what is and is not acceptable when being offered a gift and what action you need to take. It is not intended to cover every eventuality and employees, members and workers are encouraged to seek further advice and guidance from the Governance team where necessary at governance@optical.org

6.3 If you need to make a declaration, please complete the form at Annex A: Declaration form for gifts, hospitality and fees within seven working days of receipt and return it to Governance.

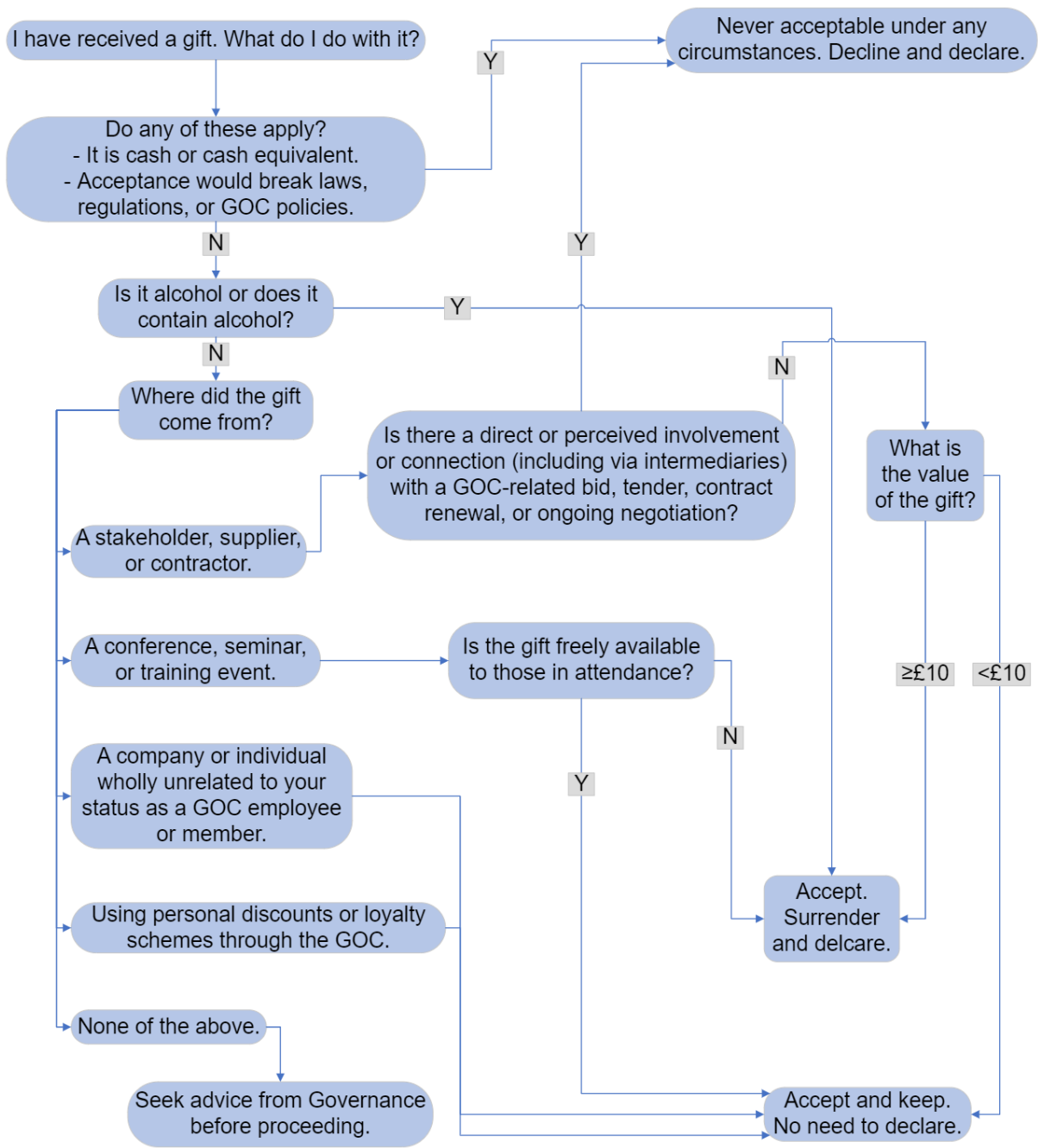
6.4 In cases where gifts need to be surrendered but where the recipient wishes to keep it, the Head of Governance will determine the monetary value of the gift and provide an opportunity for the employee, member or worker to either donate the value of the gift to a GOC nominated charity and keep the gift; or choose for it to be raffled amongst employees,

members and workers. Any donations collected from gifts or proceeds from a raffle will be recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

6.5 Gift decision flowchart

It is rarely appropriate to accept gifts. Before accepting or declining, consider whether:

- the business relationship will be altered (or could be perceived to be altered)
- there is an expectation that the gift will influence (or be perceived to influence) a decision or the speed at which a decision is made
- the gift could give rise to a conflict (or be perceived to give rise to a conflict) of interest
- a fellow regulator, stakeholder, or the press, would consider the gift to be reasonable, appropriate, and/or proportionate
- it would be more than the GOC would offer in similar circumstances.



- If you require guidance, ask a member of Governance.
- Not sure of the value of your gift? Ask Governance for advice.
- You should make your declaration within seven working days of receipt of the gift.
- Use the declaration form (Annex A) at the back of this policy.

7. Hospitality

7.1 Hospitality can be in many forms – meeting refreshments, lunches, post-conferences buffets, invitations to stakeholder events, gala dinners and overnight accommodation.

7.2 It is important that employees, members and workers are, and are seen to be, independent and not influenced by the acceptance of hospitality.

7.3 The guidance on the next page explains what to do if you are offered hospitality. It is not intended to cover every eventuality and employees, members and workers are encouraged to seek further advice and guidance from Governance where necessary at governance@optical.org

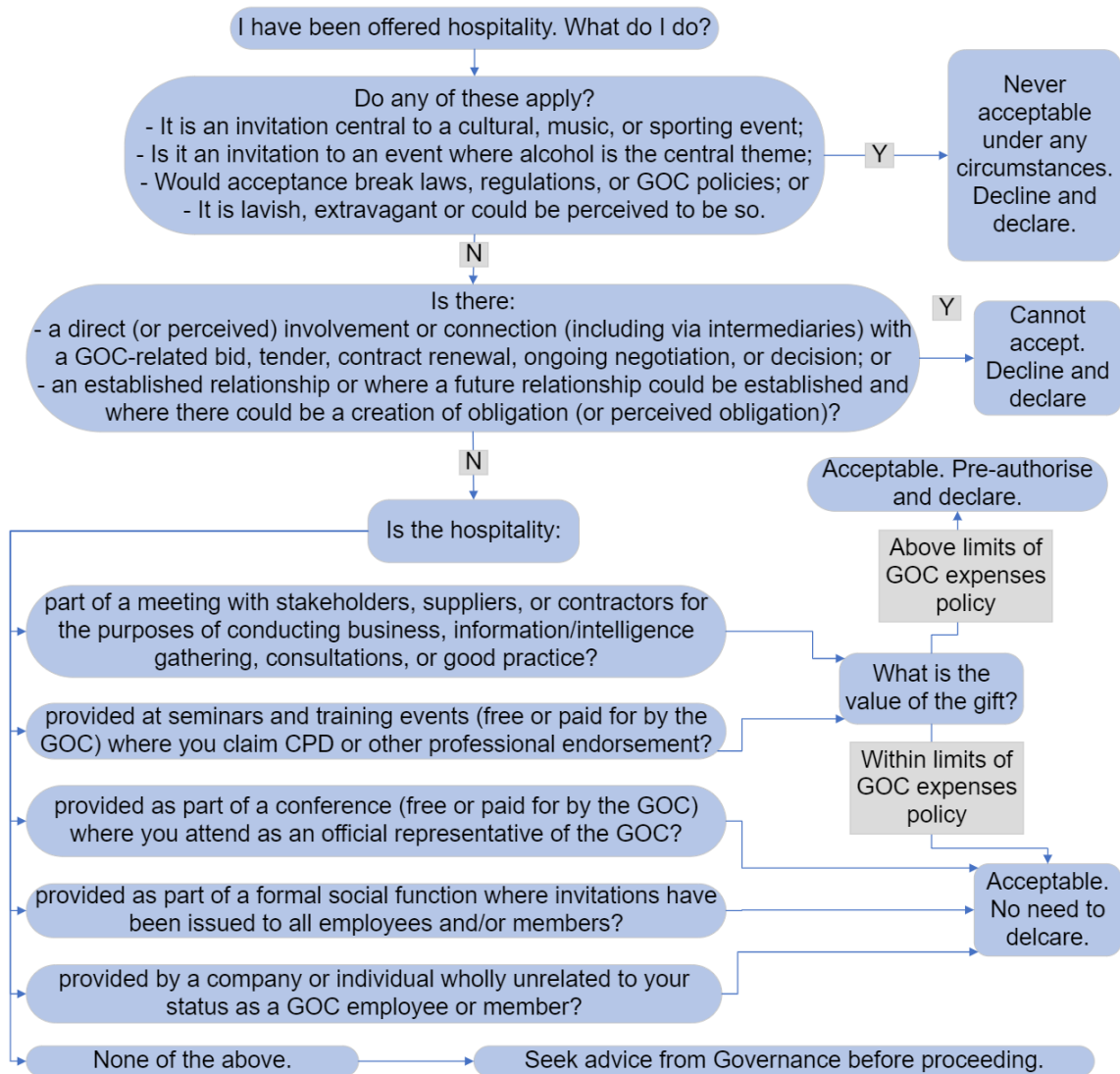
7.4 If you need to make a declaration, please complete the form at Annex A: Declaration form for gifts, hospitality and fees within seven working days of being invited and return it to Governance.

7.5 The proposal to offer hospitality at the GOC's expense is set out in the GOC Expenses policy. Further advice and guidance on this policy can be sought from the Director of Corporate Services.

7.6 Hospitality flowchart

When considering whether to accept or decline, consideration should be given to:

- the perceived value and not just the actual cost
- the frequency of the hospitality – repeated or overly frequent invitations should be avoided
- the context – are you being invited or offered as a representative of the GOC or as an individual
- the nature of the relationship between the GOC and the provider host. For example, where there is an established relationship or where a future relationship could be established i.e. suppliers and contractors, hospitality should be avoided unless it is clear that there is no creation or obligation or perceived obligation. Hospitality from stakeholders which relates to information gathering and the sharing of good practice is acceptable
- where the hospitality might be intended to deliberately influence you or the GOC
- whether a fellow regulator, stakeholder or the press, would consider the hospitality to be reasonable, appropriate and/or proportionate
- whether it would be more than the GOC would offer in similar circumstances.



- If you require guidance, ask a member of Governance.
- Pre-authorization is obtained as follows: Directors and Chair of Council = Chief Executive & Registrar; Employees below SMT = your director; Chief Executive & Registrar = Chair of Council; Members = Chair of Council.
- Where an individual is attending more than one event that needs to be pre-authorized and declared during any 30-day period, it will be acceptable to complete one declaration form together with a separate list of all events attended.
- You should make your declaration within seven working days of being invited to the event using the declaration form (Annex A) at the back of the Gifts and hospitality policy.

8. External awards and prizes

8.1 There may be occasions where a member or employee might receive an offer of an award or prize from an outside organisation in connection with their official duties with the GOC such as a recognition of long service. Such awards or prizes can be retained and do not need to be declared if it is of a token nature i.e. not lavish or extravagant, offered in recognition of personal achievement and there is no risk that it could be perceived as either a gift or an inducement.

8.2 Employees, members and workers may enter competitions offered by individuals or organisations which have direct involvement with the GOC (such an organisation the GOC has regulatory oversight of, or one that it contracts services from). Such prizes must not be retained by individuals and be surrendered to the Head of Governance, who will determine the monetary value of the prize and provide an opportunity for the employee, member or worker to either donate the value of the gift to a GOC nominated charity and keep the gift or choose for it to be raffled amongst employees, members and workers. Any donations collected from prizes or proceeds from a raffle will be recorded on the gifts and hospitality register.

8.3 Members and employees may also enter competitions offered by individuals or organisations which have no direct involvement with the GOC, even if the employee, member or worker is at an event to represent the GOC. Prizes can be retained by individuals and do not need to be declared.

9. Political donations

9.1 The GOC as an organisation will not donate funds from income or reserves to political parties. If you are asked to make a donation to a political party on behalf of the GOC, please refer to the request to your relevant director or the Chair.

10. Charitable donations or sponsorships

10.1 A charitable donation might be a cash contribution or it could be the giving of 'in kind' support such as the supply of kit or employee volunteering.

10.2 Employees, members and workers must not offer or make a charitable donation using GOC resources or engage in sponsorship discussions which could lead to GOC resources being used to pay for sponsorship. Such decisions can only be made by the Director of Corporate Services in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Registrar and Chair of Council if it is considered in the best interests of the GOC.

10.3 As the GOC is a charity it is possible that we may receive charitable donations from individuals or organisations to help us further our charitable aims. If you receive a charitable donation for this purpose, you must contact the Director of Corporate Services immediately who will make a decision, in conjunction with the Chief Executive and Registrar, as to whether it can be accepted and how it will be used.

11. Speaker fees

11.1 Employees, members and workers may be asked to speak at conferences or other events on subjects which relate directly to the GOC remit, for example attending university 'fresher' events to meet with students regarding their registration, explaining changes at seminars regarding continuing professional development (CPD) and speeches at national or internal conferences. Sometimes the host may wish to pay a 'fee' for this service.

11.2 Any fees for speaking engagements on behalf of the GOC are acceptable but must not be retained by the individual. In order to be transparent any such fees must be pre-authorized and declared using the form Annex A and returned to the Governance team within seven working days. Such declarations will be included on the register. Connected food, accommodation and/or travel is acceptable and should be declared at the same time as seeking authorisation for the fee.

11.3 Authorisation for employees below SMT should be gained from your relevant director. Authorisation for directors and the Chair of Council should be gained from the Chief Executive and Registrar. Authorisation for the Chief Executive and Registrar should be gained from the Chair of Council. Authorisation for members should be gained from the Chair of Council. You should also inform the Communications team at communications@optical.org

12. Gifts between members, workers and employees

12.1 There will be occasions when gifts and hospitality are offered between members, workers or employees. When doing so, it is important to recognise the context in which the gift is offered and how this could be perceived by others. You should consult with the Head of Governance if you intend to offer a gift, or receive an offer of a gift, from another member, worker or employee. The expectation is that this policy will be applied in most circumstances. The exception to this rule would be leaving gifts for members, workers and employees, though any collection taken should be proportionate and voluntary, and any gift given should be appropriate. Misuse of funds gathered by collection for the purpose of a leaving gift is a serious matter and could result in disciplinary action being taken.

13. Reporting concerns

13.1 If you suspect that a member, worker or employee has breached this policy **you should** report your concerns to the GOC via the speaking up policy. Contact the champion at speakingup@optical.org

13.2 It would be helpful if you could provide as much detail as possible i.e. which area of the policy your concern relates to, any relevant details such as dates, times, places, names of those involved etc.

13.3 All allegations made under this policy will be reported to ARC, irrelevant of whether they are founded or not. The identity of the person who raised the concern will be kept confidential.

14. Investigation

14.1 All allegations of non-compliance with this policy will be investigated in accordance with our Speaking Up policy and procedure.

14.2 If the allegations are sufficiently serious, we may inform the relevant authorities (for example, the police) before we initiate our own investigation.

Annex A: Declaration form for gifts, hospitality and fees

Please use the form on the next page for any declarations and send to governance@optical.org

A electronic version of this form is available for use on IRIS [link to follow] if you prefer.

Declaration form for gifts, hospitality and fees

Name:

Job title/position:

Department/Committee

I wish to declare the following which I understand will be held on the Register of Gifts and Hospitality, reported to the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee and published on the GOC website.

Gift Refused/returned		Hospitality Accepted and authorised		Speaker fee Member and pre-authorised	
Gift/prize Accepted and surrendered		Hospitality Accepted and preauthorised		Speaker fee Employee and preauthorised	
Gift Accepted to avoid offence and surrendered		Hospitality Refused			

Pre-authorisation:

Name:	Position:
Signature:	Date:

Date Gift/Hospitality/Fee received/declined

Description of Gift/Hospitality/Fee received/declined:

Value (please specify whether the value is known or estimated):

Gifts/Prizes only: retention decision:

Where donated to charity:

Name of charity	Value

Signed:

Date:

For Governance team only	
Form received by	
Date	
Date added to register	

