Conflict of Interest Policy - Examinations

1. **Introduction**

St Dominic's supports staff who work for Awarding Organisations (exam boards). Such work is professionally fulfilling, provides opportunities for career development, and helps ensure the high-quality operation of the public exams system on which thousands of candidates and schools depend for fair and accurate results. An in depth understanding of the marking process and nuances of mark schemes are of direct teaching and learning benefit to both teachers and students.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that St Dominic's manages conflicts of interest by informing the awarding bodies, before the published deadline for entries, of:

- any members of centre staff who are taking qualifications at their own centre which include internally assessed components/units.
- any members of centre staff who are teaching and preparing members of their family (which includes stepfamily, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g., son/daughter) for
- qualifications which include internally assessed components/units.

and maintains clear records of all instances where:

- exams office staff have members of their family (which includes stepfamily, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g., son/daughter) being entered for examinations and assessments either at the centre itself or other centres.
- centre staff are taking qualifications at their centre which do not include internally assessed components/units.
- centre staff are taking qualifications at other centres.

The Process for this is as follows.

- Contact all members of staff to ascertain any conflict of interest.
- Any confirmed cases are compiled into a written record and retained by the Exams Officer including steps taken to mitigate.
- Steps to mitigate will be shared with the relevant staff member to ensure they are aware of all actions in place and additional requirements which they must adhere to.
- The Exams Officer informs the JCQ and various awarding bodies of any relevant conflicts of interest.

2. **Categories of examination duty**

There are broadly four categories of examining duties.

A. Teachers involved in the preparation of exam papers (question setting, reviewing, vetting) – i.e. teachers who see question papers before an exam is sat.

B. Teachers who mark public exams but who only see question papers and scripts after the exam has been sat (e.g. assistant examiners).

C. Staff involved in checking examination material prior to the exam (e.g. exams officers, lab technicians for practicals, etc.).

D. Teachers involved in the marking and moderation of internally assessed coursework.

Teachers involved in category A and B work are required to register this work with the examinations officer, and through the Principal. Teachers who carry out category A work must obtain the express approval of the Principal who will meet with such teachers to discuss the starred items in section 4, below.

All staff involved in category A, B, C, and D public exam work must follow all centre, exam board, JCQ and regulator regulations in full. The integrity of the exam process is critical and no actions should be taken that either undermine, or appear to undermine, the fairness and integrity of public exam assessment. The centre and its staff must maintain the highest professional standards at all times.

3. Whistle blowing

Anyone concerned about the integrity of any aspect of the public exams process should raise these concerns with the relevant authority in the exam board / JCQ / regulator. Concerns about the conduct of exams at the school should be raised with St Dominic's' Head of Centre and Exams Officer. If a concern relates to the Head of Centre then the Chair of Governors should be contacted. Concerns should be addressed in a reasonable and timely fashion; if they are not, the concern should be escalated in accordance with the school's Whistleblowing Policy.

4. Category A work

Teachers who are involved in the production, review and checking of examination material prior to assessment undertake work that is essential to the smooth and accurate running of the public exams system. However, they also face conflicts of interest that require very careful management to preserve the integrity of the exams system and safeguard the professional standards and reputations of teachers and their schools or colleges. All category A work must be done in accordance with exam board / JCQ / regulator regulations. Where exam boards provide training for how to manage conflicts of interest, staff must complete this training to protect themselves and the integrity of the public exam system. Above and beyond the requirements of exam board / JCQ / regulators, category A teachers must follow the relevant starred practical measures below.

a* Do not inform pupils and parents of category A work. Keeping exam setting / checking work confidential (but notifying the school/college and appropriate colleagues of such work) safeguards against student and / or parent questioning / intrusion.

b* Always set past examination questions, or questions that are on publicly available sample papers. c* Always cover the whole specification (where appropriate); never question spot.

d* Never discuss future examinations with students, parents and / or colleagues.

e* All internal assessment papers should be set by a member of the department not involved in setting public exam papers.

f* Never give any indication of what is in a future paper, by suggesting what, or what not, to revise.

g* Where students write essays, ensure there is an explicit and transparent mechanism for the choice of essay, e.g. essays chosen by pupils or other department staff.

h* Do not use school/college IT resources for any category A work.

i* Never complete category A work in school/college.

j* Examination advice given to students should be based only on material which is available to all centres (e.g. examiners' reports, mark schemes, etc.).

k* Category A staff should withdraw from any discussion that could lead to a conflict of interest – for example the contents of a revision schedule.

l* Staff with any concerns about the integrity of their category A work, or conflicts of interest arising, should protect themselves and the exams system by raising such concerns with the exam board. If in doubt proactively report.

The starred practical guidance can limit a teacher's ability to discharge his / her teaching and departmental duties. This is especially so if the category A worker is a head of department or works in a smaller department where there may not be sufficient other colleagues to fill workload gaps created by a 'conflicted' member of staff. In such circumstances it may not be possible for a teacher to carry out category A work; they may instead carry out category B roles. This will be discussed with the Head of Centre/Headteacher as part of the approval process. A Declaration of Personal Interest Form is included in Appendix A. This must be completed each academic year. A Conflicts of Interest log will be maintained to record any potential conflicts of interest and will be kept by the Exams officer.

5. Attending examiner meetings / completing examination work (Category A and B work)

Whilst we actively encourage and support teachers who undertake public exam work, it is important that this additional 'private' work does not compromise teaching, pastoral, administrative and extra-curricular duties. Teachers must endeavour to minimise their time out of school for examiners' meetings and ensure there is minimal disruption to their work for the school.

6. Category C and Category D work

Any member of staff involved in these processes must adhere to the JCQ procedures and follow all instructions provided by the Examination Boards and JCQ precisely. If one of these members of staff has a relation in a relevant year group who is sitting the examination, whether at St Dominic's or any other School, a conflict of interest must be recorded. A Declaration of Personal Interest Form is included in Appendix A. This must be completed each academic year. A Conflicts of Interest log will be maintained to record any potential conflicts of interest and will kept by the Exams officer.

7. Familial conflicts of interest

Should any member of school staff involved with the preparation for or delivery of examinations have a close relative who is in a relevant year group who is sitting the examination, a conflict of interest must be declared. Each year, the Exams officer will send an email to all staff to declare any conflict of interest via return email or completion of the Declaration of Personal Interest Form (included in Appendix A). This action must be completed each academic year. A Conflicts of Interest log will be maintained to record any potential conflicts of interest and will be kept by the Exams officer.

8. Centre staff sitting examinations

Any centre staff who are sitting examinations, either at this centre or another, must complete the Declaration of Personal Interest Form that is included in Appendix A. This must be completed each academic year. A Conflicts of Interest log will be maintained to record any potential conflicts of interest and will be kept by the Exams officer.

Appendix A - Declaration of Personal Interest form

Confirm your understanding: (Please tick the box to confirm a statement)

- ☐ I understand that a personal interest relates to a candidate who is a member of my family (which includes stepfamily, foster family and similar close relationships) or close friends and their immediate family (e.g., son/daughter)
- ☐ I also understand that a personal interest may also relate to any member of centre staff (who has been entered for a qualification at this centre as a last resort where the member of centre staff is unable to find another centre) for whom a teacher assessed grade will be determined.

You must declare all statements that apply to you: (Please tick the box to confirm a statement)

- ☐ I have no personal interest in a candidate to declare
- ☐ I declare a personal interest in a candidate who is part of a class or cohort for whom I will be:
- ☐ Head of Department/Faculty
- ☐ SLT
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Classroom Assistant
- ☐ Head of Centre
- ☐ Exams officer
- ☐ Assistant Exams Officer
- ☐ Data manager
- ☐ SEN department – involved in Access Arrangements
- ☐ Administrator – please state role: _____
- ☐ Invigilator

- ☐ I declare a personal interest in a private candidate who has been entered for a qualification at this centre
- ☐ I declare a personal interest in a candidate who is sitting examinations at another examination centre

(Where more than one related person, please complete a separate form)

Name of related person (the candidate)			
Candidate number (if known)		Relationship to me	
School (examination centre) the candidate attends.			
Do you work for an exam board? If so, which one?			
What is your role for the exam board?			

Signature: _____Date_____

You will be informed of any additional controls put in place that directly affect you/your role to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of the examination process, results download or post-results reviews and appeals.

This record will be retained until the published deadline for appeals has passed or until any on-going appeal, malpractice investigation or other results enquiry has been completed, whichever is later.

This completed form must be returned to the Exams officer (either on paper in person or electronically attached to an email to ccauley192@c2kni.net) by MONDAY 1ST NOVEMBER.