Political Donation Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The University recognises the importance of maintaining integrity and public confidence in the University as a publicly funded institution with regard to its relationships with government.

(2) In alignment with the Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, the University is committed to the principle of academic freedom, including free and open discussion of political ideas and opinions, and acknowledges the right of University staff and Council members to participate as individuals in the political process.

(3) The University acknowledges that, in accordance with the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Cth), an amount paid as a student services and amenities fee to the University (or by the University to other persons or organisations, including student organisations), cannot be used to support political parties, or to support a person in a federal, state or local council election.

(4) Within this context, the purpose of this Policy is to set out the University's position in relation to political donations.

(5) This policy should be read in conjunction with the Student Code of Conduct and Staff Code of Conduct.

Section 2 - Application

(6) This Policy applies to all University staff, students and members of the University Council.

Section 3 - Policy Principles

(7) The University maintains a position of impartiality with respect to party politics, and does not endorse any political party or candidate at any level of government, whether in Australia or any other country.

(8) The University's policy is not to make political donations using University resources. This includes the use of resources that support direct fundraising for political parties, candidates and campaigns.

(9) For the purposes of this Policy, a political donation includes a gift made to, or for the benefit of, a political party, elected member, candidate, group of candidates, or other person or entity including an associated entity or third-party campaigner. It includes (but is not limited to):

a. a monetary gift;
b. a non-monetary gift;
c. the provision of a service at no charge, or at a discounted rate;
d. a contribution, entry free or other payment allowing a person to participate in, or benefit from, a fundraising venture or function where the amount paid is part of political proceeds, including luncheons and other events;
e. annual or other subscriptions paid to a political party by a member of a party, or by a person or entity for affiliation with the party.

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(10) The University does contribute to and support public policy debate on issues that affect the University and the higher education sector, and communities more broadly.

(11) The University respects the right of individuals to participate in the political process. This Policy does not restrict University staff, students or members of the University Council from having political views or associations (including membership of political parties, attendance at political events, or making political donations) in a personal capacity on their own time.

(12) University staff, students and members of the University Council participating in political activities (including making political donations) should do so in such a manner that makes it clear that they are not representing the University, and must not use University resources to engage in such activities.

(13) The University may allow governments and their representatives the use of University facilities for the conduct of meetings or functions where such functions are pertinent to the learning and/or business objectives of the University. No commercial or political fundraising benefit shall be afforded nor perceived to be afforded the University, the government or its representatives.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(14) All staff and students are to be familiar with this Policy and act in accordance with the Policy at all times. Staff, students and Council members may be subject to disciplinary action if they do not comply with this Policy.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	13th August 2025
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Responsible Executive	Alex Zelinsky Vice-Chancellor alex.zelinsky@newcastle.edu.au
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Political donation" - Includes a gift or payment made to, or for the benefit of: (a) a political party; (b) an elected member of Parliament or of a local council; or (c) a candidate or group of candidates in a federal, state or local council election. Examples of political donations include: (a) a donation of money; (b) a contribution, entry fee or other payment to participate in a fundraising event or function which is primarily a political fundraiser and payment forms part of the proceeds of the event; (c) gifts or prizes for a political fundraiser or purchasing items at a political fundraiser; and (d) use of University facilities at no cost or at a reduced fee to political parties or political candidates for the purpose of political fundraising.

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Council member" - A person who is a member of the University Council as described in Section 8B of the University of Newcastle Act, 1989.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Candidate" - With regard to Higher Degree by Research it has the same meaning as student. For all other instances it is a person considered for appointment to a position.

"Disciplinary action" - When used in relation to staff of the University, this is as defined in the applicable and current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, or the staff member's employment contract. When used in relation to students of the University, this refers to the range of penalties that may be applied under the Student Conduct Rule.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.