

## Aston Student Advice (The Advice and Representation Centre)

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

This policy sets out what is meant by a conflict of interest and how Aston Student Advice manages situations where a conflict of interest occurs.

A conflict of interest occurs when a situation or circumstances mean that Aston Student Advice could not act independently or impartially in all of the circumstances.

It is the duty of all Aston Student Advice staff to be alert to potential conflicts of interest and to take appropriate action as outlined within this policy.

#### **Common situations where a conflict of interest will occur:**

- **When a client has a complaint about Aston Students' Union or any employees, officers or trustees of Aston Students' Union.**

Aston Student Advice will inform the client that it is not possible to act independently and impartially on their behalf as there is a conflict of interest.

Aston Student Advice will direct the client to the relevant Complaints Procedure.

Aston Students Advice will offer to refer the client to Birmingham City Students' Union Advice Service, an independent external service.

- **Where two or more clients approach Aston Student Advice and the situation means that the clients may have a dispute.**

This situation commonly occurs when two students are accused of the academic offence of collusion. Another situation is where one student makes a complaint about the conduct of another student.

Where both clients contact Aston Student Advice together they will both be told that there is a potential conflict of interest and that the service cannot act for both clients.

Aston Students Advice will offer to refer one client to Birmingham City Students' Union Advice Service, an independent external service.

Where clients contact Aston Student Advice separately, Aston Student Advice advise and act for the client who made contact with the service first. Clients who make contact subsequently will be advised that Aston Student Advice cannot advise them or act on their behalf.

Aston Students Advice will offer to refer these clients to Birmingham City Students' Union Advice Service, an independent external service.

Aston Student Advice will inform the first client that a potential breach of confidentiality has occurred by highlighting the conflict of interest to the subsequent clients.

- **Where Aston Student Advice is contacted by external individuals or organisations such as Aston University, parents or accommodation providers.**

The external organisations or individuals will be told that Aston Student Advice cannot give any advice or support to them. They may be directed to generic information or signposted to other services.

### **When a conflict of interest situation is identified late such as when Aston Student Advice has already begun action for more than client.**

The Advice and Support Manager and/or the Membership Services Manager should be informed as soon as possible. Aston Student Advice must take appropriate action to bring the conflict of interest to an end.