



# Gift Acceptance and Returns Policy

<b>Publication:</b>	External (public)
<b>Date approved:</b>	26 February 2026
<b>Approving body:</b>	Finance Committee
<b>Date of next review:</b>	February 2029
<b>Review frequency:</b>	Every 3 years
<b>Policy/Regulation Owner:</b>	Debbie Graver – <i>Head of Data, Research and Finance</i> Development, Alumni and Campaigns Office

## **1. Overview and Purpose**

**1.1** The University is required to follow the legal requirements set of by the Charity Commission and, in addition, to follow the Code of Fundraising Practice when soliciting or accepting donations.

**1.2** In 2024, the Charity Commission published new guidance to help charities when deciding whether to accept, refuse or return a donation. This guidance makes it clear that the University should start from a position of accepting donations. However, there could be occasions when UEA may need to decide whether to refuse or return a donation and this guidance is designed to help when UEA are faced with this decision.

**1.3** The Code of Fundraising Practice was updated in 2025, and section 2.2 advises that donations should be refused or returned in exceptional circumstances and that all decisions must be documented appropriately.

**1.4** As a University we must also comply with the following laws which require UEA to ensure that donations are not linked to unlawful activity, inappropriate influence or reputational risk:

**1.4.1** UK Bribery Act 2010

**1.4.2** Proceeds of Crime Act 2002

**1.4.3** Terrorism Act 2000

**1.4.4** Money Laundering Regulations 2007

**1.5** UEA is also a member of CASE (Council for Advancement and Support in Education) and as such recognises the relevant guidance laid down in the Ethical Principles behind the Acceptance of Gifts in Europe.

**1.6** This Gift Acceptance Policy has been developed taking the above guidance into account and is intended to lay out the circumstances when donations could be rejected or returned. Specifically, the policy will lay out:

**1.6.1** Circumstances when consideration should be given to refusing a gift

**1.6.2** Circumstances when a gift could or should be returned

**1.7** This policy is supported by specific guidance and training materials. This policy should be read in conjunction with other related policies and the University's privacy notices. Specific relevant policies are:

**1.7.1** Gift Acceptance Policy

**1.8** Any queries about this policy should be directed to the Head of Data, Research and Finance or Director of Development, Alumni and Campaigns at [rad.dac@uea.ac.uk](mailto:rad.dac@uea.ac.uk)

## 2. Scope

**2.1** This policy applies to the following:

**2.1.1** Philanthropic donations which are being solicited or have been received by the University.

**2.1.2** Gifts in Kind which are offered to the University by a donor.

**2.2** Donors can be an individual, partnership, trust, foundation, institution, charity or business.

Adherence to approved policy and regulations is fundamental to the effective operation of the university. This policy has been developed in alignment with sector best practice to promote consistency, accountability, and compliance with relevant standards. Observing the policy ensures that decisions and actions are informed, equitable, and aligned with institutional values.

## 3. Definitions

Term	Definition
Philanthropic Donation	A philanthropic donation is a voluntary financial gift intended to support the public good and is given without any financial benefit or control for the donor. This could include gifts of shares, artwork, property or other non-monetary donations.
Donor	Any individual or other legal entity who has or intends to give philanthropic gifts to the University.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

**4.1** Development Managers and those soliciting gifts or managing relationships are responsible for the identification of circumstances where due diligence is required or potential concerns about the gift need to be raised and for highlighting this at as early stage as possible. If there is a plan to solicit a significant gift, then due diligence should be considered prior to the solicitation.

**4.2** The Research and Data team are responsible for initiating and carrying out due diligence and for also raising any circumstances where the refusal of a gift should be considered to the Head of Data, Research and Finance.

**4.3** The Head of Data, Research and Finance will consult with the Director of Development, Alumni and Campaigns when circumstances are identified which may necessitate refusal of a gift.

**4.4** The Chief Financial Officer and Vice Chancellor must be consulted when the recommendation is that a gift should be refused.

**4.4** If circumstances arise where consideration is being made to returning a gift for any reason other than listed in 5.2.4 then legal advice should be sought, the Chief Financial Officer and Vice Chancellor consulted, and the matter referred to Council.

## **5. Policy Statement**

**5.1** Legal requirements state that we should start from the position that donations should always be accepted. However, all donations should be considered on a case-by-case basis, and the University will consider refusing donations where in the University's opinion:

- 5.1.1** The donation results from unlawful activities including but not limited to unlawful discrimination, violation of human rights, fraud, tax evasion, money laundering or terrorist activities in the UK or overseas.
- 5.1.2** Acceptance of the donation would create significant reputational risk with students, staff, alumni or the public.
- 5.1.3** The donation has been made anonymously, and the donor cannot be identified
- 5.1.4** The donation is not consistent with the charitable educational purpose of the University or the university's commitment to academic freedom.
- 5.1.5** The source of funding for the gift is not clear or it is not clear that the donor owns the property they are planning to donate.
- 5.1.6** The gift would place an unacceptable burden on the University which would outweigh its benefits.
- 5.1.7** The donation risks harming the University's relationship with other donors or inhibits unreasonably the University's ability to seek donations from other sources.
- 5.1.8** There is concern that the donor lacks capacity to make an informed decision about the donation.
- 5.1.9** The University would not be able to comply with donor requirements or conditions relating to purpose of the gift or a gift in kind would be unusable.

**5.1.10** Acceptance of the gift would create a conflict of interest relating to an applicant, student, staff member or alum.

**5.2** There are very limited circumstances in which consideration should be made to a donation being returned and the potential circumstances in which this could happen are listed below:

**5.2.1** Due diligence is conducted after receipt of the gift, and the findings indicate that the funds should not have been accepted due to any of the reasons listed in 5.1.

**5.2.2** New information comes to light which shows that the donor is linked to criminal activity, human rights abuses, political extremism or a major public scandal. In this case consideration needs to be paid to whether the circumstances should be reported to the authorities prior to returning the donation.

**5.2.3** The original purpose of the donation cannot be fulfilled, and the University is unable to reach an agreement with the donor for an alternative use of the funds.

**5.2.4** The appeal for which the gift was given does not reach its minimum target amount and the funds cannot be redirected to another cause under the same restriction.

**5.2.5** The donation was made in error e.g. a direct debit was duplicated or donation via a form was submitted twice.

## **6. Compliance and Monitoring**

**6.1** The University undertakes regular and routine monitoring of compliance with this policy.

**6.2** Clear documentation must be maintained to support all due diligence decisions made.

## **7. Related Documents**

**7.1** Due Diligence policy

**7.2** Gift acceptance and returns process documentation.

## **8. Revision History**

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Approval date</b>	<b>Approval mechanism</b>	<b>Details of change</b>
1.0	26/02/26	Finance Committee	First version