

Policy Name:	Gifts, Recognition and Donations (University Funded)
Originating/Responsible Department:	Financial Services
Approval Authority:	Senior Management Committee (SMC)
Date of Original Policy:	November 2019
Last Updated:	March 2023
Mandatory Revision Date:	March 2028
Contact:	Associate Vice-President (Financial Services)

Policy Statement:

Departments may provide employees, students, or visitors, gifts recognizing a milestone or event. Departments may also wish to provide employees with recognition for a specific performance related achievement.

Gifts and recognition may be charged to University funds provided the appropriate approval has been acquired, and they are administered in accordance with Canada Revenue Agency rules governing gifts and rewards. More detail on the CRA rules can be found here: [Gifts, awards, and long-service awards](#)

CRA guidelines and tax laws are subject to change. This policy provides general direction only, and may not always reflect the most up-to-date rules. Any gifts, recognition or donations must also comply with any University financial and legal requirements including but not limited to any funding and charitable requirements.

Purpose:

While University employees are encouraged to contribute to gifts that mark milestones or events associated with a co-worker, it is understood that, on occasion, it is appropriate to use University funds for this purpose. The University may wish to provide an employee with recognition for specific achievement related to their performance. It may also be appropriate for the University to fund a gift to students or visitors in recognition of a contribution towards a specific activity of the University (e.g. guest speaker). The policy sets out the circumstances under which gifts maybe made and the treatment of gifts for taxation purposes.

Scope:

The policy applies to all gifts, recognition, and donations funded by any source of funds. Specific funding agency rules will take precedence over this policy.

Procedure:

Gifts to Employees:

“Gifts” to employees must relate to a specific event such as a wedding, sympathy, birth of a child, or retirement, and be approved by the Department Head (e.g. Chair, Academic or Administrative Director, etc.). The value per gift must not exceed \$200. Amounts exceeding \$200 require prior approval in writing from the appropriate Vice-President or the President.

Low value non-cash items may be given as a gift and are excluded when calculating the total value of gifts and awards given in the year. E.g., University branded pens, mugs, t-shirts and plaques.

Cash or near-cash (e.g. campus card contributions) gifts to an employee are taxable benefits and must be included in the individual's income for the year. Due to the administrative burden of tracking and reporting these gifts as taxable benefits, the University prohibits cash or near-cash gifts to employees.

Non-cash gifts to employees are exempt from tax so long as the aggregate annual value (on a calendar year basis) does not exceed \$500. Any amount in excess of \$500 must be included in the employee's income. Non-cash gifts may include gift cards only if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The gift card comes with money on it and can only be used to purchase goods or services from a single retailer or a group of retailers as identified on the card, and
2. The terms and conditions of the gift card clearly state that amounts loaded to the card cannot be converted to cash, and
3. Backup is provided to Accounts Payable containing all of the following information:
 - a. Name of employee
 - b. Date the gift card provided to the employee
 - c. Reason for providing the gift card
 - d. Type (e.g. e-card versus physical card)
 - e. Amount of the gift card
 - f. Name of the retailer(s) where it can be used

Donations may be made in lieu of a gift as a sympathy gesture, to a maximum of \$200.

Donations cannot be made in lieu of an agreed upon payment to an individual (e.g. overtime work).

Recognition to Employees:

"Recognition" is performance-related and recognizes an employee's achievements, such as completing a project ahead of schedule or exceptional performance and must be approved by the Department Head (e.g. Chair, Academic or Administrative Director, etc.). The value per recognition must not exceed \$200. Amounts exceeding \$200 require prior approval in writing from the appropriate Vice-President or the President.

All payments to an employee, whether cash, near-cash, or non-cash, related to recognition are subject to income tax as per CRA.

Low value non-cash items may be given as recognition and are excluded when calculating the total value of gifts and awards given in the year. E.g., University branded pens, mugs, t-shirts and plaques.

Due to the tax implications for the employee, please contact Accounts Payable prior to initiating any recognition referred to in this policy.

Gifts to Non-Employees:

Gifts to non-employees should be a token gesture of appreciation in recognition of a voluntary contribution to the University, such as a guest speaker or a student volunteer. The value of such a gift

must not exceed \$200. Amounts exceeding \$200 require prior approval in writing from a Vice-President or the President.

Cash or near cash gifts (including gift cards) to a non-employee are considered taxable by CRA. The individual initiating the gift must provide Accounts Payable with the recipient's name, address and social insurance number.

The University can donate up to \$200 to a registered charity on behalf of a non-employee, as a token of appreciation for their contribution.

Donations cannot be made in lieu of an agreed upon payment to an individual or to any individual through any crowdfunding platforms.

Donations to Registered Charities:

Donations up to \$200 can be made to a registered charity:

- a. In lieu of flowers for sympathy for an employee, or
- b. as a token of appreciation for a voluntary contribution to the University for a non-employee.

Any other donation cannot be made unless approved by a Vice-President or the President and the Chief Advancement Officer.

Donations cannot be made to or through any crowdfunding platforms.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Financial Services:

Financial Services is responsible for reviewing purchases made in relation to gifts, recognition and/or donations to ensure they are in accordance with university policy and CRA guidelines and that appropriate supporting documentation has been received.

Department/Claimant:

The department/claimant is responsible for ensuring that purchases made in relation to gifts, recognition and/or donations are in accordance with University policy and that all required supporting document is submitted with the payment/reimbursement request.

Contacts:

AVP Financial Services, Director Business Operations

Links to related Policies:

[Hospitality and Working Meal Expenses](#)

[Payments to Individuals and Business Entities](#)

[Procurement Policy](#)

[Travel and Related Expenses](#)