

HBXL Anti-corruption and Bribery Policy



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Notes	Please also refer to HBXL's Staff Code of Conduct.

1. Policy statement

1.1 It is our policy to conduct all of our business in an honest and ethical manner. We take a zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption and are committed to acting professionally, fairly and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships wherever we operate and implementing and enforcing effective systems to counter bribery and corruption.

1.2 We will uphold all laws relevant to countering bribery and corruption in all the jurisdictions in which we operate. However, we remain bound by UK laws, including the Bribery Act 2010.

2. About this policy

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

(a) set out our responsibilities, and of those working for and on our behalf, in observing and upholding our position on bribery and corruption; and

(b) provide information and guidance to those working for and on our behalf on how to recognise and deal with bribery and corruption issues.

2.2 Bribery and corruption are punishable for individuals by up to ten years' imprisonment and, if we are found to have taken part in corruption, we could face an unlimited fine, be excluded from tendering for public contracts, and damage to our reputation. We therefore take our legal responsibilities very seriously.

2.3 In this policy, third party means any individual or organisation you come into contact with during the course of your work for us, and includes actual and potential clients, customers, suppliers, distributors, business contacts, agents, advisers, and government and public bodies, including their advisors, representatives and officials, politicians and political parties.

2.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

2.5 This policy is available to staff, subcontractors and third parties online via:
<https://skillsacademy.hbxl.co.uk/policies/>

3. Who must comply with this policy?

3.1 This policy applies to all persons working for us or any Group Company or on our behalf in any capacity, including employees at all levels, and grades, including senior managers, officers, directors, employees (whether permanent, fixed-term or temporary), consultants, contractors, trainees, seconded staff, homeworkers, casual workers and agency staff, volunteers, interns, agents,

third-party representatives sponsors, or any other person associated with us, or any of our subsidiaries or their employees, wherever located.

4. What is bribery?

4.1 A bribe is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided in order to gain any commercial, contractual, regulatory or tender process, if this could be perceived as intended or personal advantage.

Examples:

Offering a bribe: You offer a potential client tickets to a major sporting event, but only if they agree to do business with us.

This would be an offence as you are making the offer to gain a commercial and contractual advantage. We may also be found to have committed an offence because the offer has been made to obtain business for us. It may also be an offence for the potential client to accept your offer.

Receiving a bribe: A supplier gives your nephew a job, but makes it clear that in return they expect you to use your influence in our organisation to ensure we continue to do business with them.

It is an offence for a supplier to make such an offer. It would be an offence for you to accept the offer as you would be doing so to gain a personal advantage.

Bribing a foreign official: You arrange for the business to pay an additional "facilitation" payment to a foreign official to speed up an administrative process, such as clearing our goods through customs.

The offence of bribing a foreign public official is committed as soon as the offer is made. This is because it is made to gain a business advantage for us. We may also be found to have committed an offence.

5. Gifts and hospitality

5.1 This policy does not prohibit normal and appropriate hospitality (given and received) to or from third parties.

5.2 You are prohibited from accepting a gift from or giving a gift to a third party, if the following conditions are met:

- (a) it is not made with the intention of influencing a third party to obtain or retain business or a business advantage, or to reward the provision or retention of business or a business advantage, or in explicit or implicit exchange for favours or benefits;
- (b) it complies with local law;
- (c) it is given in our name, not in your name;
- (d) it does not include cash or a cash equivalent (such as gift certificates or vouchers);
- (e) it is appropriate in the circumstances. For example, in the UK it is customary for small gifts to be given at Christmas time;
- (f) taking into account the reason for the gift, it is of an appropriate type and value and given at an appropriate time;
- (g) it is given openly, not secretly; and
- (h) gifts should not be offered to, or accepted from, government officials or representatives, or politicians or political parties, without the prior approval of Joanna Mulgrew (our Managing Director).

5.3 We appreciate that the practice of giving business gifts varies between countries and regions and what may be normal and acceptable in one region may not be in another. The test to be applied is whether in all the circumstances the gift or hospitality is reasonable and justifiable. The intention behind the gift should always be considered.

6. What is not acceptable?

6.1 It is not acceptable for you (or someone on your behalf) to:

- (a) give promise to give, or offer, a payment, gift or hospitality to a government official, agent or representative to “facilitate” or expedite a routine procedure;
- (b) accept payment from a third party that you know or suspect is offered with the expectation that it will obtain a business advantage for them;
- (c) accept a gift or hospitality from a third party if you know or suspect that it is offered or provided with an expectation that a business advantage will be provided by us in return;
- (d) threaten or retaliate against another worker who has refused to commit a bribery offence or who has raised concerns under this policy; or
- (e) engage in any activity that might lead to a breach of this policy.

7. Facilitation payments and kickbacks

7.1 We do not make, and will not accept, facilitation payments or “kickbacks” of any kind. Facilitation payments are typically small, unofficial payments made to secure or expedite a routine government action by a government official. If you are requested to make a facilitation payment, you must refuse and report the request to the Managing Director immediately.

7.2 If you are asked to make a payment on our behalf, you should always be mindful of what the payment is for and whether the amount requested is proportionate to the goods or services provided. You should always ask for a receipt which details the reason for the payment. If you have any suspicions, concerns or queries regarding a payment, you should raise these with the Managing Director. Kickbacks are typically payments made in return for a business favour or advantage. All workers must avoid any activity that might lead to, or suggest, that a facilitation payment or kickback will be made or accepted by us.

8. Donations

8.1 We do not make contributions to political parties.

8.2 We only make charitable donations that are legal and ethical under local laws and practices. No donation must be offered or made without the prior approval of the Managing Director.

9. Record-keeping

9.1 We must keep financial records and have appropriate internal controls in place which will evidence the business reason for making payments to third parties.

9.2 You must declare and keep a written record of all hospitality or gifts given or received over £25, within 5 working days of the offer, giving, or receipt. The gift or hospitality will be subject to managerial review (see Appendix 1).

9.3 You must submit all expenses claims relating to hospitality, gifts or payments to third parties in accordance with our expenses policy and record the reason for expenditure.

9.4 All accounts, invoices, and other records relating to dealings with third parties including suppliers and customers should be prepared with strict accuracy and completeness. Accounts must not be kept "off-book" to facilitate or conceal improper payments.

10. Your responsibilities

10.1 You must ensure that you read, understand and comply with this policy.

10.2 The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for us or under our control. You are required to avoid any activity that might lead to, or suggest, a breach of this policy.

10.3 You must notify the Managing Director as soon as possible if you believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred, or may occur in the future. For example, if a client or potential client offers you something to gain a business advantage with us, or indicates to you that a gift or payment is required to secure their business. Further "red flags" that may indicate bribery or corruption are set out in clause 16.

10.4 Any employee who breaches this policy will face disciplinary action, which could result in dismissal for gross misconduct. We reserve our right to terminate our contractual relationship with other workers if they breach this policy.

11. How to raise a concern

11.1 You are encouraged to raise concerns about any issue or suspicion of malpractice at the earliest possible stage.

11.2 If you are unsure whether a particular act constitutes bribery or corruption, or if you have any other queries, these should be raised with the Managing Director.

11.3 Concerns may be raised under HBXL's Complaints, Appeals and Whistleblowing Policy, which provides additional protection for disclosures made in good faith under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

12. Protection

12.1 Workers who refuse to accept or offer a bribe, or those who raise concerns or report another's wrongdoing, are sometimes worried about possible repercussions. We aim to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises genuine concerns in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

12.2 We are committed to ensuring no one suffers any detrimental treatment as a result of refusing to take part in bribery or corruption, or because of reporting in good faith their suspicion that an actual or potential bribery or other corruption offence has taken place, or may take place in the future. Detrimental treatment includes dismissal, disciplinary action, threats or other unfavourable treatment connected with raising a concern. If you believe that you have suffered any such treatment, you should inform the Managing Director immediately. If the matter is not remedied, and you are an employee, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure.

13. Training and communication

13.1 Training on this policy forms part of the induction process for all new workers.

13.2 All employees must complete refresher training on anti-bribery and corruption at least every two years.

14. Due diligence and third-party relationships

14.1 Our zero-tolerance approach to bribery and corruption must be communicated to all suppliers, contractors and business partners at the outset of our business relationship with them and as appropriate thereafter.

14.2 HBXL will undertake proportionate due diligence on all subcontractors, suppliers and other third parties with whom it conducts business, to ensure they share the organisation's commitment to ethical conduct and compliance with the Bribery Act 2010. Background checks may include verification of ownership, reputation, financial standing, and previous involvement in bribery or corruption cases. All contracts and agreements with third parties must include clear anti-bribery and corruption clauses, requiring adherence to this policy, cooperation in any related investigation, and the right for HBXL to terminate the agreement immediately in the event of any breach. Third parties acting on behalf of HBXL must not offer, give, solicit or accept any bribe or improper advantage, and must maintain accurate and transparent financial records relating to all transactions undertaken on HBXL's behalf.

15. Who is responsible for this policy?

14.1 The board of directors has overall responsibility for ensuring this policy complies with our legal and ethical obligations, and that all those under our control comply with it.

14.2 The Managing Director has day-to-day operational responsibility for implementing this policy, and for monitoring its use and effectiveness and dealing with any queries on its interpretation. Management at all levels are responsible for ensuring those reporting to them are made aware of and understand this policy and are given adequate and regular training on it.

16. Monitoring and review

15.1 The Managing Director will monitor the effectiveness and review the implementation of this policy annually or sooner if legislative or organisational changes occur. The Managing Director will maintain a record of reported incidents, investigations, and training completion rates to support Board oversight. Any improvements identified will be made as soon as possible. Internal control systems and procedures will be subject to regular audits to provide assurance that they are effective in countering bribery and corruption.

15.2 All workers are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure they use it to disclose any suspected danger or wrongdoing.

15.3 Workers are invited to comment on this policy and suggest ways in which it might be improved. Comments, suggestions and queries should be addressed to the Managing Director.

17. Potential risk scenarios: "red flags"

The following is a list of possible red flags that may arise during the course of you working for us and which may raise concerns under various anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and is for illustrative purposes only.

If you encounter any of these red flags while working for us, you must report them promptly:

- (a) you become aware that a third party engages in, or has been accused of engaging in, improper business practices;
- (b) you learn that a third party has a reputation for paying bribes, or requiring that bribes are paid to them, or has a reputation for having a "special relationship" with foreign government officials;

- (c) a third party insists on receiving a commission or fee payment before committing to sign up to a contract with us, or carrying out a government function or process for us;
- (d) a third-party requests payment in cash and/or refuses to sign a formal commission or fee agreement, or to provide an invoice or receipt for a payment made;
- (e) a third party requests that payment is made to a country or geographic location different from where the third party resides or conducts business;
- (f) a third party requests an unexpected additional fee or commission to "facilitate" a service;
- (g) a third party demands lavish entertainment or gifts before commencing or continuing contractual negotiations or provision of services;
- (h) a third party requests that a payment is made to "overlook" potential legal violations;
- (i) a third party requests that you provide employment or some other advantage to a friend or relative;
- (j) you receive an invoice from a third party that appears to be non-standard or customised;
- (k) a third party insists on the use of side letters or refuses to put terms agreed in writing;
- (l) you notice that we have been invoiced for a commission or fee payment that appears large given the service stated to have been provided;
- (m) a third party requests or requires the use of an agent, intermediary, consultant, distributor or supplier that is not typically used by or known to us; or
- (n) you are offered an unusually generous gift or offered lavish hospitality by a third party.

Appendix 1: Gifts and Hospitality Register

Date	
Name of Employee/Recipient	
Position/Department	
Third Party (Individual/Organisation)	
Nature of Gift or Hospitality	
Estimated Value (£)	
Given or Received?	
Reason/Business Context	
Date Reported	
Manager/Approver	
Approval Status (Approved/Declined)	
Notes / Follow-Up Actions	