Guidance on the purchase, use, safekeeping and eventual disposal of portable media devices

Background

This advice note draws together existing guidance and Financial Regulations in relation to University assets such as Mobile Telephones/Smart Phones, iPads, Laptop Computers, Notebooks and Satellite Navigation equipment. As mobile and portable technology develops, other items will fall under this guidance. This note applies irrespective of the method by which the item has been purchased, i.e. once funded by the University, the item is a University asset and the member of staff holding or using the equipment must adhere to the applicable guidance and Financial Regulations.

Purchase of portable media devices

The expected method for purchase of these items is via a university Purchase Order being sent to a recognised University supplier. The Procurement team’s web site contains relevant information on:

- Guidance on purchasing and obtaining value for money
- Guidance on purchasing computing and computer products
- The University’s Financial Regulations includes information on purchasing and ordering and, specifically, the use of contracted and preferred suppliers and the regulations relating to the use of Purchasing Cards. The procurement flowchart will help staff in determining the need for Quotes.

Further information in relation to the use of Purchasing Cards can be found here on the Department of Finance web pages.

Given the purchasing options of both Purchase Ordering and Purchasing Cards, it is not expected that staff should need to purchase portable media devices from their own funds and then reclaim the costs via expenses. Further information in relation to expenses can be found here on the Department of Finance web pages. If an expenses claim for a portable media device such as the examples listed above is made by a member of staff, the claim form should include an explanation of why a Purchase Order or Purchasing Card and a recognised University supplier were not used. This is to ensure that the University achieves value for money in the purchase of such items and it is clear to the supplier that the equipment is owned by the University and not the individual staff member.

CICS web pages contain general guidance on buying computers, mobile phones and devices, printers and software. There is even specific guidance on buying an Apple Computer or iPad.
Use, safekeeping and recording in relation to portable media devices

The general principle for staff to note is that any items either bought directly by the University, or bought by an individual and then fully reimbursed as expenses, are the property of the University and use by a staff member must always be primarily in relation to University activities. Significant personal use of portable media devices and Satellite Navigation equipment would be construed by HMRC as a benefit in kind and hence would require a personal tax liability to be assessed.

The University’s Financial Regulations contain a requirement for items of equipment to be recorded in a Departmental Asset Register or Inventory. Paragraphs 4.27 and 4.31-4.36 specify the recording requirements and Paragraph 4.29 confirms the Head of Department’s overall responsibility for the care, custody and security of all equipment assets either physically located within their Department or used by members of their staff on premises other than within the Department.

Insurance matters are covered in Paragraph 4.30 of this area of the Financial Regulations and a very important aspect for portable media devices and use at home or away from the University workplace is shown below:-

All University equipment, except Laptop computers, will be insured whilst in the homes of staff or students if home use has been authorised by the Head of Department. Laptop computers will be insured if the Department concerned has made an application to the Insurance Office to insure its Laptops.

Insurance cover for other portable media devices (excluding Laptops) is automatic, subject to the policy excess, so long as home use is authorised by the Head of Department. It is therefore strongly recommended that for all portable media devices that are being used by staff either at home or away from the workplace, a list of such items per person is established and then countersigned as approved for such use by the Head of Department. The list should then be submitted to the Insurance section within the Department of Finance. Staff will be responsible for ensuring that the list is kept up to date and re-submitted to the Insurance section as required.

CiCS web pages contain the IT Code of Practice which includes important information about security of portable media devices and there is also a specific section on Personal Information on Portable Computers and Media.

Disposal of items of equipment or the departure of a staff member who was using them

The University’s Financial Regulations contain explicit information in relation to the position for staff using University equipment in the event of their resignation, retirement or other departure from the University’s employment. This is shown below:-

Heads of Departments are responsible for ensuring that members of staff return all items of University property, including equipment, computers, lap-top computers, mobile telephones, other electronic storage devices, uniforms, identity cards and keys, prior to termination of their employment with the University.

More detailed information in relation to the disposal or end of use of items of equipment can be found in Paragraphs 4.37-4.41 of this area of the Financial Regulations.

Further information on the treatment of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) can be found on the Energy and Environment Team’s web site here.