



# Development and Alumni Engagement: Refund Policy

*Last reviewed: September 2024*

## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1. The University of Oxford works hard to ensure donors have a positive and trouble-free experience when making a gift. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances in which mistakes may be made or refunds may be requested.
- 1.2. To comply with legal and best practice regulations set by the Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator and the Institute of Fundraising, all donations for the University of Oxford are treated as irrevocable gifts and, as such, are non-refundable.

**Although we want to do everything we can to look after our valued supporters, we are unable to make a refund in the majority of cases.**

## 2. Regulation

- 2.1. As a corporate entity with exempt charity status, the University of Oxford is required to comply with charity law subject to regulation by [the Charities Act 2011](#) and [the Charities Act 2022](#).
- 2.2. We also adhere to the Fundraising Code and standards laid out by the Fundraising Regulator.
- 2.3. Other legislation may apply to the refunding of any donation relating to Financial Fraud and Money Laundering: this is not an exhaustive list, and the University may need to take specialist advice.
- 2.4. Under charity law, charities are not permitted to refund donations other than in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.5. As required by Anti-Money Laundering regulations, all refunds must be returned to the original bank account or card from which the payment was originally made.
- 2.6. The Code of Fundraising Practice (Fundraising Regulator) refers to guidance issued by the Institute of Fundraising. This states:

*Fundraising organisations which are charities must not return donations unless certain criteria are fulfilled. For all other fundraising organisations, donations must only be refunded in line with any policies or in exceptional circumstances. It may not be lawful to return a donation and fundraisers must take advice from legal advisers or the Charity Commission before doing so.*

### 3. When can we give a refund?

#### 3.1. A **legal obligation** to return a donation.

- 3.1.1. If certain conditions are attached to the gift. For example, where an appeal for a particular purpose fails to raise sufficient funds to achieve that purpose.
- 3.1.2. If we or any third-party event organiser cancel a fundraising event or appeal.
- 3.1.3. Fraud – If the supporter can show their credit or debit card was used without their knowledge.

#### 3.2. A **moral obligation** to return a donation.

- 3.2.1. Legacies – If a charity receives a legacy but there is evidence that the person who died had changed their mind since making the will.
- 3.2.2. If it can be evidenced that the donation has been made in error. For example, a donor makes a duplicate payment by mistake.
- 3.2.3. Other – An example might be when a person has made a gift to the University, but it later became clear that the donor's generosity to the University had reduced them to poverty; the University might feel morally obliged to make an ex gratia (voluntary) payment by returning all or part of the gift.
- 3.2.4. People in vulnerable circumstances – guidance has been issued by the Fundraising Regulator and the Institute of Fundraising which may lead to donations needing to be refused or refunded.

### 4. Process

- 4.1. Any request for a refund should be made in writing to the Head of Donor Relations, who will begin an investigation. The investigation will review the circumstances of the request, including the donor's personal details, the intended purpose of the donation (if applicable), the method of donor payment, and the reasons for the refund.
- 4.2. Advice may be sought from the Charity Commission and the Institute of Fundraising.
- 4.3. If you wish to request a refund for a donation that you have made, you will need to contact the Head of Donor Relations by one of the following methods:
  - Email: [donor.relations@devoff.ox.ac.uk](mailto:donor.relations@devoff.ox.ac.uk)
  - Telephone: +44 (0)1865 611530
  - Write to:  
Head of Donor Relations,  
Development and Alumni Engagement,  
University of Oxford, University Offices,  
Wellington Square,  
Oxford, OX1 2JD,  
United Kingdom

We are committed to providing our donors with the highest standards of legal compliance and treat all requests for refunds with the utmost importance. We will need to ask you a series of questions to determine the reasons for your request.

We undertake to process any request as quickly as possible. However, this process may require advice from external agencies, and response times may not be within our control. We will advise you of progress as appropriate.