Introduction
Managers can use this On-the-Spot reward program as one way to recognize excellent performance and valuable contributions in a real-time way. By providing a Spot Reward Gift Card, managers have the opportunity to provide a meaningful “thank you” and connect the reward to the contribution and/or performance being recognized.

Applicability
All non-union full and part-time benefits-eligible staff who have been employed by Brandeis for a minimum of 3 months are eligible to receive a reward under this program. Please note, all managers, including faculty who manage staff, can request a reward for their employees.

Award
Managers can reward an employee or employees with an Amazon gift card (available in $50 increments) * up to $350 maximum per card.

Visa gift cards may be requested as an alternative where Amazon cards are not suitable, but with the understanding that there may be fees incurred for both the department and the employee.

*NOTE: Gift card awards amounts are gross payments; imputed income will be recorded in employee payroll & taxes withheld. Please keep this in mind when defining the size of the award.

Policy Statement
The On-The-Spot Reward Program is meant to reward individuals who have recently displayed extra effort or who have gone above and beyond their day-to-day responsibilities. The program recognizes employees “in the moment” on a one-time basis for recent exemplary action. Continuous and sustained excellence should be recognized through other institutional means, such as the annual merit program or a promotion if appropriate.

To illustrate ways in which an On-The-Spot Reward can be utilized, below are some examples of an employee action that may result in a Spot Award:

- Improving a process which created substantial department efficiency and overall budget savings
- Utilizing creative problem-solving to resolve a particularly complicated and ongoing issue
- Working extra assignments outside of the regular pattern of work to be of further assistance to their department
- Assisting a colleague in completing a large work assignment or project that took considerable time and effort, and would normally be outside of the employee's job domain

It is important that all rewards are distributed in a manner that is fair, equitable and transparent to employees within the overall rewards budget.

Funding
Rewards will be funded out of the budget of the approving manager's department. In extenuating budget circumstances, departments should first seek assistance from the Dean or Vice President, and potentially from central funds.
Procedure
Anyone in an employee’s supervisory chain can nominate an employee for an On-The-Spot Reward, but the reward will need to be approved by the employee’s manager (second level supervisor of the employee).

To request an On-The-Spot Reward, please do the following:
• Complete a One Time Payment Form (OTF)
• Complete a Spot Reward Gift Card Request & Approval Form
• Forward both to Human Resources for review and final approval
• Supervisors or Managers will be able to pick up the Gift Card from the HR Front Desk.
• The employee’s supervisor or manager should notify the employee in person, and thank them for the work or behavior that is being rewarded.

Under Internal Revenue Service regulations, these spot award gift cards are considered taxable income and will be processed accordingly. Because the IRS requires employers to treat gift cards as taxable income, managers may not use university funds to purchase gift cards for employees, for any reason, outside of this program.

Relevant Documents:
Spot Reward Gift Card Request & Approval Form

This policy does not create an employment contract or any right to continued employment at Brandeis University. Brandeis University reserves the right to modify, revoke, suspend, terminate and/or change any and all policies and procedures at any time, with or without notice.

Policy Owner
Office of Human Resources/Recruitment, Talent & Compensation Unit

Office of Human Resources
Effective Date: January 2020
On-The-Spot Rewards Program Frequently Asked Questions

Question: What is the purpose of this program?

Answer: Brandeis would like to continue to find ways to enhance the culture of recognition and reward for going above-and-beyond, encouraging initiative and creativity, in service of students and all constituents.

Question: How is this intended to be used?

Answer: A Reward program like this is to be used for special situations and circumstances, not on a frequent or recurring schedule with any individual employee. The intention is to provide more opportunity in a staff member’s career to be recognized and rewarded than annual increases and promotions. It is not intended as a supplement to compensation.

Question: How centralized or decentralized is the administration of this program?

Answer: We would like this to be as decentralized as possible, with the manager (within the guidance of the School/Department) to be able to make the decisions on when and who to recognize.

The Office of Human Resources is involved in the approval process primarily to help guide patterns of use across schools and units, and less for the purpose of evaluating individual awards.

The procurement of the cards is centralized (only HR may purchase the cards); and the funding is decentralized, with the cost of cards issued being charged to the manager’s budget.

Question: Are there any situations in which staff are ineligible?

Answer: There are no policy provisions on this, but we would discourage use of the program for probationary employees, employees on a performance plan or recent discipline, or temporary employees.

Question: Does this apply to all types of staff?

Answer: Currently all non-union staff are eligible, no matter the classification or funding type. We will engage all bargaining units about being included, and will update the policy as progress dictates.