

Conflict of interest policy for grants Selection Panels and Sectional Committees

1) General

- a) This policy relates to peer reviewers, funding panels and sectional committees of the Academy, their Chairs and other members, as well as Academy staff members (which includes any temporary or contracted staff) engaged in grant processes or the Fellowship election.
- b) The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising and to protect the Academy and those who work for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its committee members might interfere with their ability to work towards the furtherance of the Academy's objectives.

2) Declaring conflicts of interests

- a) Any persons covered by this policy (as defined in paragraph 1a), must declare any disclosable external interest on their appointment to the Academy (in their capacity as peer reviewer, panel member, sectional committee member or Academy staff member) and forthwith on an ad hoc basis, if and when conflicts change. The onus is on persons covered by this policy (as defined in paragraph 1a), to keep the Academy informed of their conflicts of interest.
- b) The spirit of this document should be adhered to, and any other interests should be declared which could be considered a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of the Academy. This includes interests held by the spouse or children of peer reviewers, panel/committee members and staff.
- c) Staff will assume that conflicts of interest are limited to institution of employment of any given Panel/Committee member. The onus is then on Panel/committee members and peer reviewers to declare any other interests as soon as possible upon identifying the conflict, preferably:
 - i. Before the meeting papers have been sent out, and at the latest, just before the application/nomination is discussed by panel/committee members.
 - ii. Prior to agreeing to provide a peer review, and prior to receiving the application/nomination for potential peer reviewers.

3) Defining conflicts of interests

- a) A conflict of interest is defined as, but not limited to, where a panel/committee member or peer reviewer:
 - i. Is named on the application/nomination as a current supervisor, principal nominator, collaborator, mentor etc.
 - ii. Is an employee of the same institution as an applicant/nominee or collaborator. N.B. A federated institution, such as the University of London or the University of Wales, is not regarded as a single institution for these purposes.
 - iii. Is a major collaborator with the proposal applicant.

- iv. Is related to a named individual associated with the application, or has some other personal connection that amounts to a conflict of interest.
 - v. Was an employee of the same institution as an applicant/nominee in the last 12 months (e.g. Emeritus Professor).
- b) A conflict of interest is defined as, but not limited to, where a staff member:
- i. Is related to a named individual associated with the application, or has some other personal connection that amounts to a conflict of interest.
 - ii. Is employed by, or has strong links with the same institution as an applicant.

4) *Managing conflicts of interest*

- a) Conflicted panel/committee members should:
 - i. Withdraw from any consideration of that application/nomination.
 - ii. Not receive documents pertaining to the application/nomination.
 - iii. Not receive relevant referees' reports.
 - iv. Retire from the meeting when the application/nomination is assessed.
 - v. Not Chair the panel/committee. Where the Chair is conflicted, he or she must retire from the meeting when the application/nomination is assessed; a Vice Chair will Chair that part of the meeting.
- b) Conflicted peer reviewers should:
 - i. Withdraw from any consideration of that application/nomination.
 - ii. Not receive documents pertaining to the application/nomination.
 - iii. Not receive relevant referees' reports.
 - iv. Not submit a peer review report on the application in question. If they do, the report may not be used to make a funding/election decision.
- c) Conflicted staff should:
 - i. Not be involved in the selection of peer reviewers or panel/committee membership.
 - ii. Not receive documents pertaining to the application/nomination.
 - iii. Not learn the identity of associated referees or have access to relevant referees' reports.
 - iv. Retire from the meeting when the application/nomination is assessed.
 - v. Be subject to further restrictions where the conflict is particularly close, at the discretion of the secretariat, Chair or line manager.
- d) **Where a potential conflict of interest is perceived not to be material, the Chair will determine to what extent a panel/committee member should participate in the consideration of the application/nomination.** In this case, the conflict may be described as 'soft'. Every effort will be made to minimise the number of 'soft' conflicts associated with any given application/nomination.
- e) The Academy recognises that the majority of conflicts or potential conflicts will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long term restrictions on an individual's ability to work for the Academy, to sit on its committees/panels or act as a peer reviewer.
- f) In the event that a major conflict of interest is identified, it will be referred to the Executive Director and Officers, in accordance with the Academy's governance processes.

- g) In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the committee/panel secretariat; the secretariat shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the Chair, who will decide on a course of action.
- h) If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of a panel/committee, then he or she should raise the matter with the Chair of the panel/committee.

5) Updating the policy

- a) The Academy will endeavour to review this policy, as necessary, every two years, in consultation with Council and/or Officers and/or Committee/Panel Chairs.

6) Discussion of proposals

- a) Details of applications/nominations, meeting papers and related correspondence, and the names of external referees and their institutions are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside the review process. Membership of Panels/Committees will, however, be publicly available.
- b) Discussions of a proposal/nomination between members of a panel/committee which occur outside of their meetings should be declared to the Chair of the committee/panel.
- c) If a committee/panel member or a peer reviewer is approached by an applicant/nominator for technical advice on an application/nomination, he or she may provide advice, but must report this to the committee/panel Chair and secretariat. They may subsequently be asked by the Chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application/nomination concerned, or their peer review report may not be used.
- d) Committee/panel members should refuse any requests for information or feedback from applicants/nominators or other stakeholder on how a particular judgement was reached. Instead they should be referred to the panel/committee secretariat.