



DECLARATION FOR MEMBERS OF NSERC SELECTION COMMITTEES¹

Statement on Ethics

NSERC must meet the highest ethical standards in all that it does in order to continue to merit the trust and confidence of the research community, the government and the public at large. The members of NSERC selection committees and panels must meet very high standards of ethical behaviour in their task, and must be seen to do so in order to honour and enhance public confidence in the Council's ability to act in the public interest and for the long-term public good. Where a conflict arises between private and public interests, members will be expected to take whatever measures are necessary to ensure that public interests are protected.

The members of NSERC selection committees and panels are appointed as individuals; they are not the advocates or representatives of their disciplines, nor are they the delegates of any organization. Their duty is to make the best possible objective decisions on the investment of a fixed sum of scarce public funds in basic research, based on the merits of the cases made to them.

Conflict of Interest

Because of the technical content of the issues they must address, the selection committees and panels must have members who have current knowledge of the issues in research. However, the activities which maintain that current knowledge could put individual members in situations of real, potential or perceived conflict between their private interests and their public duties as committee or panel members. If that should happen, there will be full and open disclosure, and the committee or panel as a whole will take whatever measures are required to ensure ethical behaviour and to preserve the appearance of ethical behaviour.

NSERC recognizes that the potential for conflict of interest will always exist when expertise and current knowledge are required to judge among competing proposals in research. To attempt to devise rules that would eliminate all potential for conflict of interest would be to risk reducing vision and expert judgment to a bureaucratic exercise. The challenge is to recognize that conflict is always possible, and to be ready to manage it so that the ultimate outcome is in the public interest. NSERC has established conflict of interest guidelines for members of selection committees which can be found in the relevant sections of the program's *Peer Review Manual*.

Disclosure and Compliance Measures

NSERC recognizes that the first guardian of ethical behaviour in such circumstances is the individual committee member involved. The second guardian is the committee as a whole. Rules of disclosure and procedure can assist members meet their obligations, but only if they choose to invoke them and to follow them both to the letter and in the spirit in which they were formulated. Members must openly disclose any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest. The committee will then discuss with the Chair what measures, if any, are required to ensure that the public interest is protected. The Chair may seek guidance from NSERC staff before coming to a conclusion.

Disclosures and compliance measures will be documented and retained for the record. However, given their particularly sensitive mission, the selection committees and panels might consider these rules as only minimally adequate for their purposes, and may choose to add to them.

Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure

Documentation provided by NSERC to members of selection committees may contain personal information and confidential technical information. It is subject, therefore, to the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*, www.nserc.gc.ca/professors_e.asp?nav=profnav&lbi=p1, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Integrity in Research and Scholarship*, http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Politiques-Politiques/tpsintegrity-picintegritie_eng.asp, and the *Government Security Policy*, www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/pubs_pol/gospubs/TBM_12a/gsp-psg_e.html. Documentation must be treated as strictly confidential.

- 1) Peer review documentation provided to committee members must be used by the appointed committee members only for the purpose for which it was originally collected,

¹ Committees includes groups and panels
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i.e., assessing NSERC applications and making funding decisions. It must not be used for any other purpose or discussed with, or disclosed to, non-committee members.

- 2) Committee members must ensure that NSERC documents in their possession are stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. They must be transmitted using secure techniques and when they are no longer required they must be destroyed in a secure manner, e.g., by deleting electronic data files, or by shredding or burning paper, or arranging for their return to NSERC.
- 3) Committee deliberations are confidential. Comments made by individual committee members during the meetings and during the ranking of applications must never be discussed or disclosed. In programs where consensus committee comments on specific applications are recorded, NSERC staff will provide such comments to the applicant(s). Until competition results are announced officially, they must remain confidential. The President must approve the recommendations of selection committees before the names of successful applicants and details of awards are released to the public. The names of applicants whose applications were not recommended for support, or who were declared ineligible, are never made public by NSERC and must not be divulged by committee members.
- 4) Enquiries received by committee members from applicants about the review of their applications must be referred to NSERC staff. There must be no direct communication between applicants and committee members on matters arising out of peer review.

I have read and understood the above and the relevant sections of the program's *Peer Review Manual* on conflicts of interest.

I understand that abrogation of these provisions may result in a review of the matter and that NSERC reserves the right to take appropriate actions including, but not limited to, requiring that I step down from the committee and the removal of my name from NSERC's database as a potential peer reviewer. The person to whom the information relates may seek civil action against me.

I agree to take personal responsibility for complying with these requirements.

Name (please print)	Signature
Committee Name	Date

In order for NSERC to be able to provide you with information for peer review, we ask that you return this form at your earliest convenience to the Program Officer responsible for your committee:

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