



Appendix 3

Guidelines on Conflicts of Interest

The following compliance measures have been in use by NSERC committees for several years. These measures do not necessarily respond to all possible situations, and Council relies on the judgment of the committee members in developing measures that resolve real, potential, or apparent conflicts of interest in the public interest.

I. Council

Members who would be affected by a policy or financial decision of Council should clearly state the conflict of interest and Council should take appropriate action.

II. Standing Committees of Council

These are basically policy-making committees. Should a conflict of interest arise, the member concerned must declare such conflict and the committee will decide on whether or not that member may participate in the discussion and vote.

However, when a standing committee acts as a selection committee, any member in a conflict of interest must disclose the conflict in advance. The committee should then follow appropriate compliance measures (see below for examples of current practices). If a member who has to withdraw from discussion is the only member of the committee with expertise in the area under review, the committee may consult other experts.

III. Selection Committees and Panels (Grants and Senior Fellowships)

Individual and Small Group Grants

A member **must not** be assigned the application for review and **must** leave the room before discussion of the application without commenting:

- when the member is the applicant, co-applicant or co-signer, or is from the same university/company/department, or belongs to the same research unit as the applicant; or
- when there is an administrative or family link between the member and the applicant (e.g., head of the department, dean of the faculty, etc.); or
- when the member is an industrial or government representative directly involved in collaborative activities with the applicant; or
- when the member is uncomfortable with reviewing the applicant's proposal due to previous conflicts or any other reason; or
- when NSERC staff have reason to believe that the member should not be involved in the review.



For Discovery grants, applications from committee members must be reviewed in the presence of the Group Chair (or delegate).

For Research Tools and Instruments Grants, the final ranking of applications must be done in the absence of members with an application in the competition.

Large Group or Large Equipment Grants

For large group proposals or large equipment requests involving several departments in several universities, a member from the same institution as one or several of the co-applicants may be allowed to participate in the discussion and vote, even if one or several co-applicants are from the member's university. The following process is to be used in such cases.

Well before the meeting, NSERC staff will attempt to identify potential conflicts of interest to avoid placing members in an uncomfortable position; at the beginning of a session, the Chair will read the list of identified conflicts and will also ask each member in turn to declare any other relationship to a proposal (positive or negative). If the Chair believes that a member should not participate in the review, that member should withdraw from discussion and voting.

When the committee (or the Chair) has difficulty dealing with a particular situation, it should be brought to the attention of NSERC staff who are responsible for making the final decision on compliance measures.

IV. Scholarships and Fellowships Selection Committees (Graduate and Postdoctoral Level)

If a student applying for an award is under the direct supervision of a committee member, the member should leave the room and abstain from discussion and voting; if the student is from the member's department, the member may remain in the room but should not participate in the discussion and voting.

When the guidelines do not clearly describe a situation, or when the committee (or the Chair) has difficulty dealing with a particular situation, it should be brought to the attention of NSERC staff who are responsible for make the final decision on compliance measures.

V. Investors in Participating Companies

When a committee member is an investor in a company that is a partner in, or contributor to, a project or program being considered for an NSERC grant, the member should disclose this information to NSERC staff and not participate in the review of the application.