



# Conflict of Interest Management Policy

## 1. Purpose, scope, and relationship with other documents

1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to safeguard independent decision making, integrity of processes, and trust in SCIR outputs by ensuring timely identification, disclosure, and appropriate management of conflicts of interest.

1.2. This Policy applies to all areas of SCIR activity, including publishing workflows, projects, analytical products, educational programmes, conferences, partnerships, grant related activities, and public communications.

1.3. This Policy applies to SCIR employees and contractors, project leaders and team members, editors, editorial board members, reviewers, authors, instructors, moderators, experts, partners, and any other persons involved in decision making or assessment.

1.4. This Policy operates alongside the SCIR Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, the Artificial Intelligence Policy, the Complaints and Appeals Procedure, the Fact Checking and Data Verification Policy, the Privacy Policy, and any service specific rules.

1.5. Where a specific journal, event, or project sets additional rules, such rules apply provided they ensure an equal or higher level of independence, transparency, and protection against bias.

## 2. Core principles

2.1. Transparency. A conflict of interest must be disclosed in advance and to the extent necessary to assess the risk of bias.

2.2. Independence. Conflicts of interest must not influence decisions related to publication, peer review, participant selection, grant awards, assessment of learning outcomes, development of ratings, analytical conclusions, or recommendations.

2.3. Proportionality. Management measures must be appropriate to the level of risk and the potential impact of the situation.

2.4. Data minimisation. Only the information necessary for managing the conflict and ensuring accountability is collected and disclosed.

2.5. Accountability. Each person is personally responsible for the truthfulness and completeness of their disclosure.



2.6. Documentation. Decisions and actions taken to manage conflicts of interest are recorded internally to a level sufficient for procedural review.

### **3. Definitions**

- 3.1. A conflict of interest is a situation in which private, financial, professional, institutional, or other interests may influence, or may reasonably be perceived as influencing, a person's impartiality in decisions or actions within SCIR activities.
- 3.2. An actual conflict of interest is a real clash of interests that can influence a decision.
- 3.3. A potential conflict of interest is a situation that may develop into an actual conflict depending on future circumstances.
- 3.4. A perceived conflict of interest is a situation that may undermine trust in the process even if actual influence is not demonstrated.
- 3.5. A conflict of interest disclosure is a statement of circumstances that may create a conflict, provided in the required form and within the required timeframe.
- 3.6. Conflict of interest management refers to measures that reduce the risk of bias or restore process independence, including recusal, role substitution, additional review, public disclosure, or other appropriate actions.

### **4. Typical sources of conflicts of interest**

- 4.1. Financial interests: payments, honoraria, grants, scholarships, consulting fees, equity ownership, investments, paid positions, remuneration, gifts, reimbursements, commercial contracts, patents, or licences.
- 4.2. Non financial interests: professional rivalry, career advantage, academic disputes, ideological positions, personal reputational interest, or public advocacy directly related to the subject under assessment.
- 4.3. Personal and close relationships: family, partner, relatives, close friendship, or hostile relationships with an author, reviewer, editor, participant, contractor, or partner representative.
- 4.4. Institutional interests: reporting lines, shared management, joint projects, governance roles, inter organisational relationships, competition, or contractual relationships that may affect impartiality.
- 4.5. Overlapping roles: combinations such as author and editor, reviewer and co author, project leader and evaluator, instructor and assessor where



direct benefit exists, or other role combinations that undermine confidence in the process.

4.6. Data related conflicts: access to confidential data, interest in a specific interpretation or outcome, data ownership claims, or commercial interests in methods, tools, or datasets.

## **5. Disclosure obligations and timing**

5.1. Disclosures must be made before the relevant role begins and must be updated if circumstances change.

5.2. Authors must disclose conflicts of interest at submission, and within the manuscript where required by the relevant journal or service rules.

5.3. Reviewers must disclose conflicts of interest before accepting an invitation to review, or immediately upon identifying relevant circumstances.

5.4. Editors, editorial board members, and programme committee members must disclose conflicts before assuming duties, confirm disclosures periodically, and disclose case by case whenever a conflict may arise.

5.5. Project leaders and team members must disclose conflicts of interest during project initiation, before participation in evaluation of results, and before publication of conclusions and recommendations.

5.6. Instructors and assessors in educational programmes must disclose conflicts of interest before assessment if relationships or interests could affect impartiality.

## **6. Managing conflicts of interest: decisions and measures**

6.1. The aim of management is to restore process independence or reduce the risk of bias to an acceptable level.

6.2. Typical management measures include:

- a) recusal from decision making or assessment;
- b) replacement of a reviewer, editor, expert, instructor, or other role;
- c) reassignment of a case to another editor or an independent coordinator;
- d) appointment of an additional independent reviewer or an additional verification step;
- e) restriction of access to confidential materials;
- f) public disclosure of the conflict where relevant and proportionate;
- g) refusal of a submission or discontinuation of involvement where the conflict cannot be adequately managed or where trust would be materially undermined.



6.3. The responsible role for deciding management measures is determined by the relevant process, provided that the decision maker has no conflict of interest in the case.

6.4. Where the conflict involves a key responsible person, the decision is escalated to a higher level of management or to an independent authorised person under internal procedures.

6.5. Where there is a high risk of reputational harm, decisions must include enhanced documentation and, where appropriate, additional control checks.

## **7. Publishing specific provisions**

7.1. Editors must not make decisions on submissions where they have a conflict of interest, including co authorship, supervisory relationships, close personal relationships, or direct competition.

7.2. Reviewers must not review manuscripts where a conflict of interest exists. If a conflict is identified after review has begun, the reviewer must immediately inform the editorial office and stop working with the material.

7.3. Authors must disclose funding, institutional support, and other interests that may influence interpretation of results.

7.4. For special issues, thematic collections, or guest editors, additional safeguards apply, including separation of roles and independent oversight of editorial decisions.

## **8. Project, analytics, ratings, and public recommendations provisions**

8.1. Each project must define internal conflict of interest disclosure rules for the team and for external experts.

8.2. Where project outputs include ratings, indices, evaluation of organisations, or policy recommendations, conflicts of interest among key contributors and assessors must be checked prior to public release.

8.3. In collaborations with partners or donors, the nature of influence on the process must be clarified, including the principle that partners cannot determine conclusions which must be grounded in data and methodology.

8.4. If a conflict of interest cannot be removed, SCIR applies proportionate public disclosure, changes the team composition, or adjusts the decision making process.



## **9. Educational services and events provisions**

9.1. Instructors, mentors, and assessors must avoid assessing work of individuals where conflicts exist, including close relationships or direct reporting lines.

9.2. For competitive selection, scholarships, grant funded places, or awards, recusal rules apply to committee members and transparent assessment criteria must be used.

9.3. For conferences and programme committees, recusal rules apply to abstract selection and presentation acceptance, along with transparency rules for sponsorship and partnership.

## **10. Public disclosure and confidentiality**

10.1. Public disclosure is required where it is relevant for assessing independence or reliability and where it respects the principle of data minimisation.

10.2. Internal disclosures may include personal details, but only to the extent necessary to manage risk.

10.3. Where public disclosure would create safety or privacy risks, alternative management measures apply, including recusal or independent review.

## **11. Breaches and consequences**

11.1. Failure to disclose, providing false information, or concealing a conflict of interest is treated as a breach of ethical requirements and may lead to consequences under SCIR procedures.

11.2. Possible consequences include role replacement, invalidation of a decision, additional checks, rejection of a submission, corrections or other editorial actions, restriction of access to services, termination of cooperation, or other measures proportionate to the breach.

11.3. Complaints or disputes regarding conflicts of interest are handled under the SCIR Complaints and Appeals Procedure.

## **12. Records, policy review, and contacts**

12.1. SCIR keeps internal records of disclosures and management decisions for as long as necessary to ensure accountability and meet legal obligations.

12.2. This Policy is reviewed when publishing practices, project activity, technological risks, or regulatory requirements change.



12.3. Questions about this Policy, as well as reports of potential conflicts of interest, should be submitted through SCIR official channels published on the relevant SCIR resources and subdomains.

### **Appendix 1. Conflict of interest disclosure template for authors**

1. Title of the submission, project, or output.
2. Role: author, co author, editor of materials, analyst.
3. Funding or other support linked to the work.
4. Financial interests related to the topic or results.
5. Non financial interests that may affect interpretation.
6. Institutional links and partnerships relevant to the work.
7. Personal or close relationships relevant to the assessment process.
8. Statement: "I confirm that the information provided is complete and accurate, and I will report any changes without delay."
9. Date, name, contact.

### **Appendix 2. Conflict of interest disclosure template for reviewers and editors**

1. Journal or service name, manuscript or case identifier.
2. Role: reviewer, editor, editorial board member, guest editor.
3. Basis of potential conflict: financial, institutional, personal, competition, joint projects.
4. Decision: propose recusal or confirm no conflict.
5. Date, name.

### **Appendix 3. Conflict of interest management workflow**

1. Identify or report a potential conflict of interest.
2. Conduct an initial risk assessment and assign an independent decision maker.
3. Recuse individuals with conflicts from the decision or assessment.
4. Select a management measure: replacement, additional review, access restriction, public disclosure.
5. Document the decision and notify relevant parties on a need to know basis.
6. Monitor implementation and close the case, with access to the Complaints and Appeals Procedure if needed.