



Declaring conflicts of interest during the recruitment process

What is a conflict of interest?

The School's [Conflict of Interests Policy](#) states that a conflict of interest arises where there is an actual or potential risk or a perceived conflict in duties between acting in the best interests of the School and formal and/or informal commitments, obligations or undertakings to another body/association/affiliation in relation to the same or related matters. A conflict of loyalty is where overlapping personal interests or loyalties could, or be perceived to, prevent an individual from making a decision only in the best interests of the School.

A conflict of interest in recruitment arises primarily when a **member of a departmental search committee or a member of the School's Selection Committee** (i.e. a panel member):

- Has, or has had, a close personal or working relationship with an applicant;
- Is related to an applicant;
- Has prior knowledge of an applicant outside of the work environment which could potentially affect the decision they make.

Examples of conflicts of interest could include, but are not limited to, when a member of a departmental search committee or a member of the Selection Committee:

- Is involved in the shortlisting and/or interviewing of a candidate who is a spouse, partner, close friend or other family member;
- Is currently or has been an academic supervisor or a co-supervisor of a candidate who has applied for a job;
- Is a co-author on a publication with a candidate who has applied for a job;
- Has a close working relationship with a candidate who has applied for a job, such as previous line management responsibility or previous relationships as a client and/or consultant.

When should a conflict of interest be declared?

All selection committee or panel members must have completed a declaration of interests. You should disclose any conflict of interest as soon as you are aware so that it can be avoided or managed as early as possible in the process. Before you begin to longlist or shortlist, we advise that you check the list of applicants to identify any potential, actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

Please note that it is your responsibility to notify HR of any conflict of interest at any stage during the recruitment process.

In the event that the conflict of interest arises after the shortlisting process has already taken place, please inform HR as soon as it occurs.

How to declare a conflict of interest

Please declare your conflict of interest to your designated [HR Adviser](#) who will provide details to the Vice Chair of the Appointments Committee (VCAC) or Pro-Director (Faculty Development) (PDFD) for academic, research and teaching posts, or the Chair of the panel for professional services posts.

HR will advise the VCAC/PDFD/Chair on assessing the significance and implications of the declared conflict of interest. The VCAC/PDFD/Chair of the panel will decide whether a conflict of interest exists and the appropriate management of the conflict, which may include a range of actions up to and including the individual excusing themselves from all or part of the process. If the Chair has a conflict, this must be declared to HR who will consult with the PDFD or the School Secretary to assess and agree on how the conflict should be managed; in these circumstances, the Committee should typically agree for another member to act as Chair for the item.

It should be noted that considering potential conflicts of interest involves a spectrum of directness and significance. Several factors may need to be considered when assessing the seriousness of the conflict of interest and potential for bias. Due to the complexity of reviewing both conflicts of interest and the specialist requirements on the recruitment panel, there can be no set outcomes for the management of different types

of conflicts. The management of a conflict of interest will also vary according to the role of the individual panel members.

HR will record on file any declarations of interest, as well as the consideration and decision of how any conflict of interest should be managed. Any conflicts of interest should also be recorded in the interview notes.

What if I am not a member of a search committee or of the School's selection panel?

Given wide participation in departmental recruitment processes for NAC, NRSC and ECT roles, conflicts of interest may also exist for colleagues who are neither formally serving on departmental search committees or on the School's selection panel. Such conflicts of interest should be declared to your Head of Department or Centre/Institute Director, so that they can be taken into account during departmental recruitment processes. As a general rule, colleagues should not be in a position to argue for or vote for candidates with whom they have a close personal or professional connection, as defined above. Advice on such cases can be sought from the VCAC.

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