

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY – RESEARCH COMMITTEE AND FUNDING PANELS

1) General

a) This policy relates to the Research Committee and other research funding Panels of Diabetes UK and their Chairs.

b) The purpose of this document is to minimise the potential for conflicts of interest arising in the Diabetes UK research funding process and to protect Diabetes UK and those who work and volunteer for it from any perception, real or otherwise, that the external interests and affiliations of its advisors might interfere with their ability to work towards the furtherance of Diabetes UK's objectives.

2) Declaration of interests

a) Any persons covered by this policy, as defined in paragraph 1a), must declare any disclosable external interest at the time of their appointment to the Diabetes UK Research Committee as outlined in the Committee code of conduct.

b) The individual should adhere, as far as is possible, to the spirit of this document and in so doing should declare any other interests which the individual feels may be a source of conflict, or which might be perceived to conflict, with the interests of Diabetes UK.

c) The requirement to disclose these interests also extends to any interests of a similar nature held by an individual's spouse or minor children. In the case of adult children, the individual must declare any interests that they may hold to the extent that he or she is aware of them.

3) Discussion of Proposals

a) Details of research applications, related correspondence and the names of external referees are strictly confidential and should not be discussed with persons outside of the review process. Breach of this confidentiality would result in the member in breach being asked to step down from the committee.

b) Discussions of a research application between members of the Diabetes UK Research Committee or members of the research funding Panels which occur outside a Committee/Panel meeting should be declared to the Chair of the Committee or Panel before the relevant application is discussed.

c) If a Committee member is approached by an applicant for technical advice on an application then he or she may provide advice but must report this to the Committee

or Panel Chair and Scientific Secretary (Head of Research Funding). They may subsequently be asked by the Chair to absent themselves from a discussion of the application concerned

d) If the advice sought by an applicant is on administrative grounds or to seek information on the status of their proposal, including discussions about the outcome of their proposal, the Committee member should refer the applicant to the scientific secretary (Head of Research Funding).

4) Resolution of Conflicts of Interest

a) Diabetes UK recognises that the majority of conflicts arising will relate to a particular issue and as such will not present any long-term restrictions on an individual's ability to sit on its Research Committee or research funding Panels.

b) In a small number of cases, major conflicts of interest may arise which compromise an individual's ability to continue in their position. Where such a situation relates to a member of the Research Committee or a research funding Panel, the matter will be discussed by the Chair of the Committee or Panel and the Head of Research Funding. In cases where agreement cannot be reached through this means, the case will be referred to the Secretary (Director of Research) whose decision shall be taken as final.

c) Complaints relating to the resolution of a conflict of interest may be dealt with finally through Diabetes UK's complaints procedure.

d) Automatic exclusion from participation in a funding decision - an individual should be automatically excluded from participation in a funding decision in cases where that individual has a direct interest in the funding proposal under discussion. Diabetes UK staff will highlight these conflicts wherever possible.

Members of the Research Committee and other funding Panels are expected to declare any unidentified potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Committee secretariat before the meeting where they will be discussed.

A direct interest applies to any of the following situations:

- The individual concerned is the sole applicant on the funding proposal
- The individual is a joint applicant and co-applicant on the proposal
- The individual is a collaborator on the proposal
- A relative of the individual is the sole applicant, joint applicant or co-applicant on the proposal
- An applicant on the proposal is a business partner of the individual
- An applicant on the proposal is a member or employee of the same institution as the individual concerned
- The individual concerned can be seen as a direct competitor of the applicant, i.e. they are currently being funded or are currently applying for funding on a project of a similar nature to the proposal under discussion

- The individual has collaborated or published with the sole applicant, joint applicant or co applicant within the past five years.
- The individual is aware of any other issue that might reasonably be expected to give rise to, or give rise to the perception of, a conflict of interest.

Where an individual is excluded from a funding decision on this basis, he or she should absent themselves from the meeting while the proposal concerned is being discussed. He or she should not receive the application itself or any related papers, including the referee reports and the minute of the relevant application.

e) Members of the Research Committee and other funding Panels are expected to declare any further instances of potential conflicts of interest relating to individual funding decisions to the Scientific Secretary (Head of Research Funding) before the meeting wherein they will be discussed, or during the meeting as soon as the existence of a conflict becomes apparent. The Chair together with the Secretary will then make a decision.

f) In cases where an individual is uncertain as to whether a conflict of interest exists or not, they should report this to the Scientific Secretary in the first instance. The Scientific Secretary shall discuss the matter with the individual as necessary and report to the Chair, who will make a decision with regard to the provisions of paragraphs 3d.

g) If an individual is concerned about a possible conflict of interest involving another member of the Research Committee or research funding Panel, then he or she should raise the matter with the Scientific Secretary (Head of Research Funding) who will inform the Chair of the Research Committee or Panel.

5) External Reviewers

Diabetes UK staff choose which external peer-reviewers to approach and in doing so will not ask an external reviewer to peer-review a grant they are deemed to have a direct interest in.

A direct interest applies to any of the following situations:

- The external reviewer concerned is the sole applicant on the funding proposal
- The external reviewer is a joint applicant and co-applicant on the proposal
- The external reviewer is a collaborator on the proposal
- A relative of the external reviewer is the sole applicant, joint applicant or co-applicant on the proposal, where this is known
- An applicant on the proposal is a business partner of the external reviewer, where this is known
- An applicant on the proposal is a member or employee of the same institution as the external reviewer concerned

- The individual concerned can be seen as a direct competitor of the external reviewer, i.e. they are currently being funded or are currently applying for funding on a project of a similar nature to the proposal under discussion
- The external reviewer has collaborated or published with the sole applicant, joint applicant or co applicant within the past three years
- The external reviewer is aware of any other issue that might reasonably be expected to give rise to, or give rise to the perception of, a conflict of interest.

There may be some instances where areas of research lack numerous appropriate and qualified external reviewers and in this case it may be deemed that a reviewer will need to be approached who has published with the sole applicant, joint applicant or co-applicant within the past three years. Where this is the case this will be judged on a case-by case basis taking into account the extent of joint publication history.

Trustees of Diabetes UK will not be approached to externally peer review applications.

Version	Changes	Effective date	Author	Approver	Next review date
1.0	n/a	01/03/2015	Anna Morris (Head of Research Funding)	Alasdair Rankin (Director of Research)	01/08/2015
2.0	n/a	15/02/2021	Kamini Shah (Head of Research Funding)	Elizabeth Robertson (Director of Research)	15/02/2023
3.0	Section 4 – conflict period reduced from five years to three years	15/03/2023	Kamini Shah (Head of Research Funding)	Elizabeth Robertson (Director of Research)	15/02/2025