

# Conflict of Interest Code

## 1. General

In carrying out research, research workers must be unbiased. Their professional judgment should at all times be exercised independently, and extraneous interests should never be permitted to influence them in any aspect of their research. The University requires disclosure of all interests that are, or might appear, likely to bias research or improperly to influence decisions which can affect its progress. Disclosure makes it possible to take appropriate steps in order to ensure that research is carried out in an unbiased manner, independently and professionally.

The University has established a Conflict of Interest Committee to monitor and resolve emerging conflicts of interest in research and to give advice on situations that may develop into conflicts of interest.

Breach of the rules concerning conflict of interest contained in sections 3 and 4 of this code, as well as non-compliance with any decision of the Conflict of Interest Committee, is considered a disciplinary offence.

## 2. What is a Conflict of Interest?

Research workers have a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when there is a real, perceived or potential possibility that some extraneous interest will compromise the unbiased, independent and professional judgment required in academic research

*Research workers* include any of the following people involved in the design, the application for funding, the conduct or the reporting of research or in decisions affecting its commercialization: University employees, pensioners, guests, Masters' degree students, doctoral students and anyone else using University resources and/or involved in research together with any of the above.

*real, perceived or potential conflict of interest:* A **real** conflict of interest exists when the situation in which the research worker finds himself raises the possibility that the unbiased, independent and professional judgment required in academic research will be compromised by extraneous considerations. A **perceived** conflict of interest exists when a reasonable person would consider it likely that the research worker's independence and professionalism will be biased. A **potential** conflict of interest is a situation that could develop into a real or perceived conflict of interest.

*extraneous interest:* This interest may be of any nature – personal, professional, financial, commercial or otherwise. It may be the research worker's own interest or that of close relatives, of close friends, of funders, or of any other person or organization with which he is connected.

Typical situations in which conflicts of interest arise include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. When the research worker (or his/her close relatives, close friends, students or any other person or organization with which he is connected) is affiliated with, or involved in, the body funding the research and this involvement permits any direct or indirect possibility of financial gain, a **real** conflict of interest requiring

disclosure and management exists. Even when there is no possibility of financial gain, a **perceived** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management exists in such situations. When any of the above people are considering affiliation with the funder, a **potential** conflict of interest exists requiring disclosure and management.

In particular where in the course of research, a research worker seeks to patent the results of his research via "Yissum" through any person or body with which he/she is connected or independently, a **real** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management exists.

- b. When the funder of the research has a financial or other non-academic interest in the results of the research (such as commercialization), there may be no real conflict of interest, but there may well be a **perceived** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management and the situation may also be a **potential** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management.
- c. When the funder, or the research worker (or his/her close relatives, close friends or students), or any body in which the researcher is involved has an interest in, or is likely to benefit from, publication that is delayed, partial, or misleading, or non-publication of the results of the research, a **real** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management exists .
- d. When the research worker's private gains or significant personal or professional benefits (other than customary professional advancement) depend on the outcome of the research, a **real** conflict of interest requiring disclosure and management exists.

### 3. General Obligations

- a. Research workers must never allow extraneous interests to interfere with the unbiased, independent and professional judgment required in academic research.
- b. Research workers must comply with disclosure requirements and with decisions of the Conflict of Interest Committee.

### 4. Disclosure Requirements

#### 4.1 Annual Disclosure

All academic employees and laboratory workers without exception, all engineers and technicians involved in funded research, and all workers in the Authority for Research and Development must submit an annual Conflict of Interest Declaration. The declaration form will be sent out by the Authority for Research and Development and submitted to it as required.

Any Declaration that reveals a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest will be transferred to the Conflict of Interest Committee.

#### **4.2 Disclosure on Application for Funding**

All applications for research funding must be accompanied by a Conflict of Interest Declaration covering all workers involved in the research. Any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest arising in the course of the research must be disclosed immediately.

#### **4.3 Disclosure by Research Students**

All research proposals submitted to the Authority for Research Students must be accompanied by a Conflict of Interest Declaration relating to the research proposed and signed by the doctoral student, attesting to the fact that the student's supervisor has explained the rules concerning conflicts of interest in research and that the student understands them.

The student's declaration must be accompanied by a signed declaration on the part of the student's supervisor to the effect that prior to the student's signing the declaration, the supervisor explained the rules concerning conflicts of interest in research and that the supervisor is satisfied that the student understood them before signing the Declaration.

The Authority for Research Students will send a copy of all such declarations to the Authority for Research and Development.

#### **4.4 Ad hoc declarations**

All research workers must disclose to the Conflict of Interest Committee on their own initiative any real, perceived or potential conflict of interest that arises in the course of their research and that has not been disclosed in an annual declaration or in an application for funding, or that has changed since disclosure. The disclosure must be made as soon as the said conflict of interest arises.

### **5. Advice**

All research workers may seek the advice of the Conflict of Interest Committee in order to establish whether they are, appear to be, or are likely to be, in a position of conflict of interest and how best to eliminate or manage it.

### **6. Declarations on file**

All declarations under sections 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, all requests for advice submitted to the Conflict of Interest Committee, and all proceedings of the Conflict of Interest Committee will be kept on file at the Authority for Research and Development and made available to all authorities competent to deal with matters of conflict of interest and breaches of University rules.

### **7. The Conflict of Interest Committee**

- a. The Conflict of Interest Committee is composed of 12 members: 10 members at the rank of Full Professor representing the various disciplines in

the University, a (non-voting) representative of "Yissum" and the Chairperson of the Authority for Research and Development who will be Chairperson of the Conflict of Interest Committee.

- b. The members of the Committee will be appointed by the Standing Committee upon recommendation by the Rector for a period of 3 years.
- c. In general no more than 30% of the Committee shall be changed at once, in order to ensure continuity.

## 8. Action by the Conflict of Interest Committee

- a. In all cases brought to the attention of the Conflict of Interest Committee, whether referred by the Authority for Research and Development (following annual declarations, funding application declarations or doctoral student declarations), by specific declaration by a research worker, or by request of a research worker for advice, the Chairperson of the Conflict of Interest Committee will appoint two additional voting members of the Committee to deal with the case, one of whom at least is in a discipline related to that of the research worker in question. The Chairperson and those two additional members will decide how to manage the situation. The representative of "Yissum" on the Committee may be added to the panel, but will have no vote.
- b. The Conflict of Interest Committee may decide
  - (1) that the situation does not require any action;
  - (2) that the research worker must provide disclosure of the conflict of interest to specified people or bodies;
  - (3) that the research plan must be modified in order to eliminate or manage the conflict of interest;
  - (4) that the design, conduct or reporting of the research must be subjected to independent monitoring;
  - (5) that the research worker must divest himself of any financial interest in the sponsor or any other body having an interest in the outcome of the research that is other than academic;
  - (6) that the research worker must sever his connection with the body or person creating the conflict of interest;
  - (7) that the research worker must be disqualified from participating in all or part of the research;
  - (8) that any other steps deemed appropriate in order to eliminate or manage the conflict of interest be taken.
- c. In deciding whether a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest exists and how to manage it, the Conflict of Interest Committee is not bound by any formal rules. Before reaching a decision, however, it must allow the research workers involved to present their view of the situation and their view of the appropriate means for managing or eliminating any conflict of interest if they so desire. In special cases, the Conflict of Interest Committee may allow the research worker to bring other views before it, in writing or in person.
- d. In deciding whether a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest exists and how to manage it, and in cases where these rules do not make explicit provisions to the contrary, the Conflict of Interest Committee is encouraged to refer to standards commonly relied on in other academic institutions in Israel and abroad.

- e. Apart from clarifications and preparatory exchanges of views, discussions of the Conflict of Interest Committee, including those involving the research worker, must be held in person and not conducted in writing or via e-mail. Nonetheless, research workers may also submit their views in writing if they so choose. The substance of the Committee's deliberations must be documented.
- f. All decisions of the Conflict of Interest Committee will be given in writing. Decisions and records of deliberations will be made available to members of the Committee on request. Decisions of the Committee will be made available to other members of the University in such a way that the identity of the people involved will not be revealed to unauthorized people and that details that are not necessary to understanding the conflict of interest will not be disclosed.
- g. In the course of deciding whether a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest exists and how to manage it, the Conflict of Interest Committee may make any temporary decisions it deems appropriate, such as suspending the research worker's involvement in the research, informing the funder, or freezing funding of the research project pending its final decision. No such action will be taken without giving the research worker an opportunity to be heard and no such action will be taken that will unnecessarily interfere with the progress of the research project or with the relationship between the funder and the research worker.
- h. Appeal from any decision of the Conflict of Interest Committee will be heard by the plenary of the Committee. The minimum number of voting members required for a quorum of the plenary is 7.
- i. Research workers are bound by decisions of the Conflict of Interest Committee.

## **9. Additional Rules**

- a. Compliance with specific University rules dealing with other problems arising from commercialization of research, such as connections between academic employees and commercial enterprises and exploitation of inventions and patents does not relieve research workers of their obligations under this Code.
- b. Research workers must comply with all conflict of interest standards and disclosure requirements laid down by funders.
- c. The rules laid down in this Code do not relate to the issue of conflicts of commitment which is dealt with in other University rules, such as rules dealing with outside employment, with employment, promotion or election of relatives, with unauthorized use of University property, and with receipt of gifts and benefits by employees.)

## **10. Breach of rules**

Any breach of the rules laid down in sections 3 and 4 of this Code as well as non-compliance with any decision of the Conflict of Interest Committee is considered a disciplinary offence.