



Grant Funding Review Panels Conflicts of Interest Guidance

It is important that all panel reviewers are seen to be completely impartial at all stages of the review process. A 'conflict of interest' is any situation in which the personal interests of an individual volunteer or staff member, or the loyalty which they owe to another organisation or person, could influence, or appear to influence, a decision they make.

The MS Society endeavours to identify conflicts of interest and will not allocate a panel member to an application to review if there is a clear conflict. However, not all conflicts are obvious from the information we have available. Therefore, **if you consider you may have a conflict of interest you must contact the MS Society before proceeding with the review.**

Examples of Conflicts of Interest:

A conflict of interest for a panel reviewer includes (but is not limited to) when you:

- Are a relative, personal friend or patient of the applicant
- Are directly involved in the work that the applicant proposes to carry out and/or have assisted the applicant with their application for funding
- Have recently collaborated with the applicant, i.e. it has been less than five years since last publication
- Are currently employed at the same research organisation, or other institution, as the applicant
- Have been employed at the same department as the investigator(s) in the last 12 months
- Were the PhD Supervisor for the applicant
- Have been approached and agreed to be a member of a committee connected with the research project, for example an advisory group or steering committee (this includes PPI advisory groups)
- Have a commercial or financial/pecuniary interest for example if you are a member of an organisation that may benefit financially, directly or indirectly from any decision made

***Please note the restrictions which apply to the lead applicant apply equally to co-investigators on an application**

If you do not feel that you are an appropriate referee for this application please inform us as soon as possible. Similarly, if you are unsure as to whether a conflict is actual or not, please contact us as soon as possible. It does not necessarily mean that you will be excluded from a particular activity – it may be possible to manage a conflict by declaring it, and withdrawing from certain parts of the discussion during a review panel, for example.

Panel reviewers with conflicts of interest will be withdrawn from consideration of that application. The member will not receive documents pertaining to the application, learn the identity of its reviewers or receive its referee's comments, and does not score the application. The member must retire from the meeting while that application is assessed, and will not receive details of the discussion of that application in subsequent papers.