

# Guidelines for the Management of Conflicts of Interest in Research

## 1. The UC Charter of Conduct and Values

1.1 A conflict of interest arises from a situation where an employee or university representative has a private interest which may influence, or appear to influence, the impartial, objective and effective performance of their official duties. The employee's private interest includes any advantage to themselves, their family or friends and persons or organisations with whom they have a relation.

## 2. Conflicts of Interest in Research

2.1 A Conflict of Interest in the context of research exists where

- A person's individual interests or responsibilities have the potential to influence the carrying out of his or her institutional role or professional obligations in research, or
- an institution's interests or responsibilities have the potential to influence the carrying out of its research obligations;

2.2 Conflicts of Interest can be actual, perceived or potential. An actual conflict of interest is a situation where a researcher's ability to perform her/his responsibilities to the University are compromised by financial, personal or professional interests. A perceived conflict of interest is one in which an independent observer might reasonably think that the researcher's responsibilities may be or be seen to be unduly influenced by their own interests. A potential conflict of interest involves a situation that may develop into an actual conflict of interest;

2.3 Conflicts of Interest can be *tangible* (i.e. able to be seen and measured, and typically involving financial relationships – also known as *material*) or *intangible* (typically involving academic activity that can lead to gain of a non-financial nature). Examples:

- A researcher has a financial interest in the company sponsoring their research (tangible)
- A researcher conducts a clinical trial that is sponsored by an individual or organisation with a financial interest in the results of the trial (tangible)
- A researcher takes part in the negotiation of an agreement between the University and a company where they or their family or close personal friend/s have a financial or non-financial interest in that company (tangible)
- A researcher has an affiliation that may benefit directly or indirectly from the dissemination of research outcomes in a particular way (intangible)
- A researcher undertakes peer review of a research output or grant application submitted by a close personal friend, family member or affiliate or, conversely, by an adversary (intangible)

- A researcher with a close personal or familial relationship with a student or a student's family is involved in decisions about that student's admission, supervision, or award of prizes or scholarships (intangible and tangible)

### **3. Conflicts of Interest and the Researcher**

3.1 Conflicts of Interest are common in research and research-related activity and do not in themselves represent a breach in the responsible conduct of research;

3.2 Unreported and unmanaged Conflicts of Interest have the potential to compromise judgements and undermine community trust in research;

3.3. Researchers must declare any Conflicts of Interest, be they actual, potential or perceived, recognising that making a declaration does not represent a breach in the responsible conduct of research;

3.4. A researcher must make a full disclosure of a Conflict of Interest or of circumstances that might lead to a perceived or potential conflict of interest as soon as practicable to their direct line manager and any parties involved in the research;

3.5 The disclosure should include details of the researcher's affiliation with, or involvement in, any organisation or entity with a direct interest in the subject matter of the research, or in the provision of materials for the research;

3.6 The staff member in receipt of the disclosure must then discuss the matter with the researcher and determine a procedure for the management of the conflict of interest which must be documented;

3.7 The University recognises that the disclosure by an individual could involve the disclosure of personal information. The University adheres to the Australian Capital Territory's privacy principles and will treat information provided in accordance with these principles.