

PEQAB Policy 9. Conflict of Interest for External Expert Review Panels

This policy applies to all External Expert Reviewer Panels (EERPs) selected by the Board and impacts applicants wishing to declare a conflict of interest with an individual appointed by the Board.

Individuals appointed in these capacities must possess the qualifications to engender the confidence of the Board, the Minister, applicants, the public, accrediting bodies, other degree-granting institutions and other jurisdictions.

External Experts must not reveal or divulge confidential information received in the course of their duties. Confidential information must not be used for any purpose outside the Board's mandate, and EERPs must not make public comments concerning any application.

External Experts are expected to avoid conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest between their duties as External Experts and their personal or business interests. An actual or potential conflict of interest arises when an individual is placed in a situation in which their interests and experience appear to conflict with their responsibilities to the Board, the Minister and the public interest.

Conflict of Interest

External Experts appointed by the Board should not have any connection to the applicant or a program partner under Review within the previous five years, or for a period of up to six months following the completion of their duties in connection with the PEQAB Review process. Some examples of an unacceptable connection include:

- Preparing or providing expert advice used in developing the application for consent
- Making public comment for or against an application or institution that might result in the apprehension of bias
- Being currently or recently employed by the institution
- Being a recent student or graduate of the institution
- Working as a consultant for the institution
- Serving in an advisory capacity or on a board or committee at the institution
- Having financial or other business interests with the institution
- Supervising students or employees of the institution
- Collaborating regularly with the institution
- Teaching at the institution.

The Board notes that employment or previous employment at a competitive or potentially competitive institution does not, in and of itself, constitute a conflict of interest but may be considered in the appointment of EERPs.

External Experts who have any interest in a proposal by virtue of a past or current connection, or who make public statements about an application under consideration must decline acceptance of an appointment as Reviewer or withdraw from an EERP. The Board considers individuals who make public statements or who participate in the preparation of public statements concerning the applicant and/or any aspect of an application for consent, before or during an assessment, to be in a conflict of interest by reason of a potential apprehension of bias.

Disclosing a Conflict of Interest

To assist in determining whether a potential conflict exists, all EERPs shall make full disclosure to the Board of any potential conflict of interest, within the terms of this policy as soon as the individual knows the applicant's identity. Similarly, if an applicant has evidence of a conflict of interest between itself and an individual appointed by the Board, then the Board will require the applicant to make full written disclosure to the Board through the Secretariat as soon as the applicant knows the Reviewer's identity. In its disclosure to the Board, the applicant must state the nature and details of any past affiliation between the applicant and the individual.

In accordance with this policy, PEQAB through the CEO will exercise its discretion in determining whether an actual or potential conflict of interest exists and notify the parties accordingly.

November 19, 2024