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## Conflict Of Interest in Research Procedures

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<b>Policy Sponsor:</b>	Provost and Vice President Academic
<b>Name of Parent Policy:</b>	<a href="#">Conflict of Interest in Research Policy</a>
<b>Policy Contact:</b>	Manager, Research Services
<b>Procedure Contact:</b>	Manager, Research Services
<b>Effective Date of Procedures:</b>	January 11, 2013
<b>Review Date:</b>	Annually

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### **Purpose**

To delineate the process for identifying, disclosing and managing real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in research at Athabasca University (AU).

These procedures apply to Athabasca University (AU) faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and other personnel involved directly or indirectly in research, including but not limited to research assistants/associates, technical and support staff, adjunct professors, visiting scholars, institutional administrators, and officials representing the university.

### **Definitions**

**Conflict of interest**      The incompatibility of two or more duties, responsibilities or interests (personal or professional) of an individual or institution as they relate to the ethical conduct of research, such that one cannot be fulfilled without compromising the other.

Conflict of interest may arise in research when activities or situations place an individual in a real, potential or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to the research, and personal, institutional or other interests. These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current or prospective professional associates.



<b>Human</b>	Includes living human participants and human biological material derived from living and deceased individuals.
<b>Institution</b>	Universities, hospitals, colleges, research institutes, centers and other organizations eligible to receive and manage Tri-Agency grant funds on behalf of grant holders and the Agencies.
<b>Participant</b>	An individual whose data, or responses to interventions, stimuli or questions by a researcher are relevant to answering a research question.
<b>REB</b>	AU Research Ethics Board.
<b>Researcher</b>	Anyone who conducts research activities.
<b>Research sponsor</b>	An external entity that enters into a formal agreement with AU to provide financial or other support for research.
<b>Tri-Agency</b>	Canada's three federal research councils: the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

### **Procedure**

1. The principal investigator ensures that all individuals affiliated with their research are informed of the Conflict of Interest in Research Policy and their obligations and responsibilities in relation to the policy and related procedures.
2. Prior to commencing any research-related activity, each researcher determines whether or not any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest in research exists that may jeopardize the integrity of the research or the protection offered to participants. This assessment may occur in conjunction with, or independent of, the completion of an application for ethics review.
3. The researcher discloses in writing, any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest to the Research Ethics Board (REB) and the action(s) to be taken to manage the conflict of interest.
4. The REB engages in consultation with the researcher and any additional experts, affirms or determines an alternative course of action to manage the conflict of interest and communicates that decision to the individual in writing in a timely manner.

Decisions may include, but are not necessarily limited to,

- a. concluding that the identified conflict of interest does not warrant further action;
- b. requiring that the researcher disclose any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest to potential participants;



- c. requiring that the researcher disclose the conflict of interest to the sponsor, institution or any relevant professional body;
  - d. requiring that the researcher withdraw from the research or that other members of the research team who are not in conflict of interest make research-related decisions;
  - e. delineating the extent of involvement of a researcher with a conflict of interest, if there is a need for the researcher to be involved in the project;
  - f. denying approval of a research project involving human subjects if the REB determines that the conflict of interest has not been avoided or cannot be appropriately managed.
  - g. recommending that the institution decline or withdraw from participating in the research.
5. The researcher documents the specific action(s) taken to manage the conflict of interest and provides that documentation to the REB in accordance with any reporting schedule set.
  6. The REB takes action, in accordance with the [Research Integrity Policy](#) and related [Procedures](#), in cases involving the failure to disclose a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest or the failure to comply with REB directives for managing a conflict of interest.
  7. Upon written notification by the REB of the failure to disclose a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest or the failure to comply with the REB directives for managing a conflict of interest, the Associate Vice President, Research acts to protect the funds of any external funding agency or research sponsor until such time that confirmation has been received in writing from the REB that the conflict of interest has been appropriately managed.
  8. The Associate Vice President, Research provides written notification to any external funding agency or research sponsor of any conflict of interest that may affect a decision about a specific grant or award application.

### **Applicable Legislation and Regulations**

[Terms and Conditions of Agreement between AUBG and AUFA](#)  
[Collective Agreement between AUBG and AUPE](#)  
[Collective Agreement between AUBG and CUPE](#)

### **Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms**

[2nd edition of Tri-Agency Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans](#) (2010) and as amended from time to time.

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) [Memorandum of Understanding on Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Federal Grants and Awards](#) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.

[http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/MOURoles-ProtocolRoles/index\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/MOURoles-ProtocolRoles/index_eng.asp)



[Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (*The Framework*) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.

<http://www.rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/framework-cadre/>

[Conflict of Interest in Research Procedures](#)

[Conduct for Research Involving Humans Policy](#)

[Research Integrity Policy](#)

[Protected Disclosure \(Whistleblower\) Policy and Procedures](#)

[Code of Conduct for Members of the University Community](#)

## **History**

The Governors of Athabasca University, Motion # 180-13; January 11, 2013 (Revised)

Athabasca University Academic Council, Motion 184-13; September 15, 2004 (Revised)

Athabasca University Academic Council, Motion 172-7; September 25, 2002. (Approved)