



Title	Conflict of Interest in Research
Policy Area	Education/Academic/Research
Policy Number	D.3.5
See also	Scholarly Integrity Policy Scholarly Misconduct Policy Student Non Academic Conduct Policy Code of Ethical Practices Policy Research Ethics Board Procedures

Effective Date: March 30, 2011

Approval Date: March 29, 2011

Applies to: Employees and Students of Okanagan College or any individuals who work under the auspices of Okanagan College who are conducting research.

Students from other institutions who are conducting research under the supervision of an Okanagan College employee.

Approving Body: Okanagan College Board of Governors

Supersedes: Okanagan College Board May 2009

Authority: *College and Institute Act*

The following are responsible for the administration of this policy

Primary Office

Office of the Vice President,
Education

Contact

Vice President, Education

Policy Statement

- 1.0 Okanagan College recognizes that situations may arise for researchers that could constitute a conflict of interest. The purpose of this policy is to minimize and manage situations pertaining to conflict of interest in research.

Policy Details

- 2.0 The researcher and members of the Research Ethics Board (REB) hold trust relationships which can be compromised by real or perceived conflicts of interest. For actions taken in the course of performing their functions related to research, neither party may create either the reality or perception that there is private gain or personal interests involved.
- 3.0 The researcher and the REB must identify and address conflicts of interest, real or perceived, to maintain the public confidence and trust, discharge professional obligations, and ensure accountability.

Definitions

- 4.0 Conflict of Interest: a conflict of interest occurs when a situation arises where there is a divergence between the private interests of a College researcher and that researcher's obligations to the College, such that an impartial observer might reasonably question whether actions or decisions taken or made by the researcher relating to that situation would be influenced by consideration of the researcher's private interest. Competing interests may arise from family relationships, financial partnerships or other economic interests.
- 5.0 The following can act as a guide when examining real or perceived conflicts of interest:
- a) Is the researcher influenced in any way that would bias or subvert the goals of the research?
 - b) Given possible considerations of private gain or personal interests, would an outside observer question the ability of the researcher to engage in impartial research?
 - c) Would an impartial observer believe that the trust relationship between the relevant parties could reasonably be maintained if the impartial observer had accurate information on the potential sources of conflicts of interest?

Procedures

- 6.0 Researchers and REB members must disclose real or perceived conflicts of interest to the Chair of the REB. If the conflict involves the Chair, the Chair will raise it with the full REB.
- 7.0 **Conflicts of Interest Involving Researchers**
- 7.1 The REB will assess the likelihood that the researcher's judgement may be influenced, or appear to be influenced, by private gain or personal interests. The REB will assess the seriousness of any harm that is likely to result from such influence or from the mere appearance of undue influence.
- 7.2 The decision of the REB is final. A Final Appeal Tribunal (the "Tribunal") may be constituted to review appeals relating to the process or procedure by which the REB decision has been determined. The Tribunal shall hear and adjudicate appeals that relate to the question of whether a decision was determined in a manner that was not

procedurally fair and impartial and whether that procedural defect substantially affected the REB decision. This process will follow that used for the Final Appeal Tribunal outlined in the Calendar under General Appeals on Academic Standing.

8.0 Conflicts of Interest Involving REB Members

- 8.1 To maintain the independence and integrity of ethics review, it is of the highest importance that members of the REB avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest. For example, REB members are in a clear conflict of interest:
- a) when their own research projects are under review by their REB; or
 - b) when they have been in direct academic conflict, have collaborated with, or have provided support to the researcher whose proposal is under review.
- 9.0 In the cases where a member of the REB has a conflict of interest pertaining to the research under review, that person shall not be present when the REB is discussing or making decisions on that research (See *D3.3 REB Terms of Reference section G*).
- 10.0 In the cases of disagreement over conflicts of interest, both the REB member in alleged conflict and the researcher may present evidence and offer a rebuttal concerning the nature of the conflict of interest. The other members of the REB should make a final decision regarding how to proceed.

Additional Information

This policy has been developed, with permission, based on a similar policy at Camosun College.