

Prevocational Medical Accreditation Queensland

Conflict of Interest Guideline

1. Purpose

Prevocational Medical Accreditation Queensland (PMAQ) administers a system of accreditation that ensures quality education and training for prevocational doctors that enables the provision of safe patient care.

PMAQ is accredited by the Australian Medical Council as an intern training accreditation authority and has delegated authority from the Medical Board of Australia (MBA) to accredit intern training posts in Queensland.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to any individual who works or acts in any capacity for and on behalf of PMAQ. This includes any consultative forums with which PMAQ provides secretariat support.

3. Requirements

This conflict of interest guideline is a practical reference tool that has been developed to assist individuals to:

- identify conflicts of interest that individuals may encounter
- recognise their responsibilities to disclose and promptly address any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest
- outline the process for managing conflicts of interest.

3.1 What is an interest?

An interest is anything that can have an impact on an individual or group. The impact can bring a benefit or disadvantage to us or others. Interests can be public or personal. There are two main types of interests – pecuniary and non-pecuniary – that can impact on either the public interest or a private/personal interest.

3.1.1 Public interest

The public interest refers to the collective interest of the entire community – not the sum of individual interests, nor the interest of a particular group.

3.1.2 Private/personal interest

A private or personal interest are those private, professional or business interests that can benefit or disadvantage us as individuals, or others we may wish to benefit or disadvantage. They also include the personal, professional or business interests of individuals or groups we associate with, such as family members and friends. Private interests include a wide range of external activities including financial and economic interests, family or private businesses, clubs or interest groups, and involvement in other employment.

3.1.3 Pecuniary interest

A pecuniary interest involves an actual or potential financial gain or loss. It may result from the employee or someone associated with them (e.g. family member) owning property, holding shares or a position in a company bidding for government work, accepting gifts or hospitality, or receiving an income from a second job. Money does not actually have to change hands for an interest to be pecuniary.

3.1.4 Non-pecuniary interest

A non-pecuniary interest does not have a financial component but may arise from personal or family relationships, involvement in sporting, social, trade union, community or cultural activities. Non-pecuniary interests include any tendency toward favour or prejudice resulting from friendship, animosity or other personal involvement that could bias your judgement or decisions.

3.2 What is a conflict of interest?

3.2.1 Actual conflict of interest

An actual conflict of interest involves a direct conflict between an individual's official current duties and responsibilities and existing private interests.

3.2.2 Perceived conflict of interest

A perceived or apparent conflict of interest can exist where it could be perceived, or it appears, that an individual's private interests could improperly influence the performance of the individual's official duties and responsibilities – if this is in fact the case.

3.2.3 Potential conflict of interest

A potential conflict of interest arises when an individual has a private interest that could conflict with their official duties and responsibilities in the future.

4. Identifying a conflict of interest

Individuals are responsible for identifying and disclosing their own conflicts of interest. Consideration is to be given as to whether in performing their role, an individual could be influenced, or appear to be influenced, by personal interests.

Individuals need to consider:

- if they, or someone associated with them, would benefit or be disadvantaged directly or indirectly, now or in the future, from a decision they may be involved in making.
- whether they, or someone associated with them, has received a gift or benefit from another person or business who stands to benefit from a decision the individual makes or can influence.
- whether a member of the public would view the individual's decision as being influenced by their personal interests or associations with other persons/entities.

5. Declaration of conflict of interest

PMAQ committee members and assessors will be asked to complete a *Conflict of Interest Declaration* prior to participation in any PMAQ activity.

Receipt of a declaration of interest is to be brought to the attention of the PMAQ Accreditation Committee or the PMAQ Governance Committee for consideration and to seek direction as to what, if any, future involvement there should be in the matter.

The PMAQ Accreditation Committee or PMAQ Governance Committee is responsible for:

- assessing the situation
- determining whether a conflict of interest exists
- making a decision about the most appropriate strategy to manage or resolve the conflict in the public interest
- implementing and recording the strategy to resolve the conflict in the public interest.

6. Strategies to manage or resolve conflicts of interest

There are six major options for managing conflicts of interest, as outlined below:

Options	Description
Record	The disclosure of a conflict of interest is to be recorded in writing using the appropriate form. This provides the delegate with transparency of information to assess the level of risk associated with the actual or perceived conflict of interest to manage the situation appropriately.
Restrict	Where restrictions are placed on the committee members or assessors involvement in the matter.
Recruit	Where a neutral third party is used to oversee part or all of the process that deals with the matter.
Remove	Where the committee member is removed from their involvement in the matter creating the conflict
Relinquish	Where the committee member relinquishes the private interest that is creating the conflict.
Resign	Where the committee member resigns from their position with the department.

The strategy adopted to manage or resolve the conflict should:

- restrict the extent to which a private interest could compromise, or be seen to compromise, impartiality when carrying out official duties
- ensure there can be no perception of receiving an improper benefit that could influence the performance of official duties
- remove the employee from involvement in official decisions and actions which could be compromised by private interests and affiliations.

7. Monitor

Ongoing monitoring and regular reviews of identified and arising conflicts of interest allow changes to be made to the management strategy if the need arises. Formal written records should be kept of all reassessments, decisions made and actions taken in relation to all conflicts of interest.