

Conflict of interest in research and publication

Conflict of interest is an integrity issue. Conflict of interest in research and publication can be defined as a situation in which an individual has (or individuals have) interests in the outcome of the research or publication that may lead to a personal advantage.

Conflicts of interest, sometimes termed competing interests, can be broadly divided into financial and non-financial categories.

Financial conflicts of interest

This category includes:

- Honoraria
- Grants and other forms of research support
- Participation in speakers' bureaus
- Membership of board of directors
- Employment
- Consultancies
- Stock ownership or other equity interest
- Royalties
- Expert testimony
- Patent-licensing arrangements

Non-financial conflicts of interest

These include:

- Personal or professional relationships
- Affiliations
- Academic competition
- Personal beliefs

Declaration of conflicts of interest are integral to transparency in research and publication.

Conflicts of interest should be recognized by:

- Researchers, institutions and organizations
- Funders
- Authors
- Peer reviewers
- Editors and journal staff

Managing conflicts of interest

If there are conflicts of interest they can be managed with the following steps:

- Declaration of their relevance, for example when submitting an article for publication
- Declining to peer review with notification to the requesting journal or organization
- Not taking part in decisions or standing aside from involvement with certain matters in accordance with institutional, organizational and publisher's guidelines

Conflicts of interest may also arise from family members or personal relationships.

Further information

Elsevier. Factsheet: Competing interests https://legacyfileshare.elsevier.com/assets/pdf_file/0007/653884/Competing-Interests-factsheet-March-2019.pdf

ICMJE <https://www.icmje.org/recommendations/browse/roles-and-responsibilities/author-responsibilities--conflicts-of-interest.html>

INTEGRITY. Conflict of interest in research: what is it and why it matters? <https://h2020integrity.eu/conflict-of-interest-in-research-what-is-it-and-why-it-matters/>

University of Oxford. Statement of policy and procedure on conflict of interest <https://compliance.web.ox.ac.uk/governance/integrity/conflict/policy>