

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Policy No. COIP 2024
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KALASALINGAM ACADEMY OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

(Deemed to be University)

(Under the section 3 of UGC act 1956)

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Policy Preparation & Verification Team

Prepared: 2024

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST (COI) POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education (KARE) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and ethical conduct in all its academic, research, administrative, and financial activities. A Conflict of Interest (COI) arises when an individual's personal, financial, or external interests have the potential to improperly influence, or appear to influence, their professional responsibilities and decision-making within the institution.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual, potential, or perceived, can undermine trust, compromise objectivity, and negatively impact the reputation of the institution. Therefore, it is essential to identify, disclose, and manage such conflicts in a transparent and accountable manner.

This policy establishes a structured framework for recognizing, declaring, and mitigating conflicts of interest to ensure that institutional decisions are made fairly, objectively, and in the best interest of KARE.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide clear guidance on identifying and managing conflicts of interest
- Promote transparency and accountability in decision-making processes
- Protect the integrity of academic, research, and administrative functions
- Ensure compliance with ethical standards, regulatory requirements, and institutional values
- Prevent situations where personal interests may compromise professional responsibilities
- Safeguard the reputation and credibility of the institution

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals associated with KARE, including:

- Faculty members (permanent, visiting, adjunct)
- Administrative and technical staff
- Students and research scholars
- Members of governing bodies, committees, and boards
- Consultants, contractors, vendors, and external collaborators

The policy covers conflicts arising in:

- Academic activities (teaching, evaluation, supervision)
- Research and consultancy projects
- Financial and procurement decisions
- Recruitment, promotions, and administrative decisions
- Collaborations and partnerships

4. DEFINITIONS

- **Conflict of Interest (COI):** A situation in which an individual's personal, financial, or external interests interfere, or appear to interfere, with their ability to perform their institutional duties objectively.
Example: A faculty member participating in the selection of a company owned by a close family member for a University project.
- **Actual Conflict:** A direct and existing conflict between personal interests and official responsibilities.
Example: A committee member evaluating the promotion application of a spouse or close relative.
- **Potential Conflict:** A situation that may develop into a conflict of interest in the future.
Example: A faculty member negotiating future employment with an organization while simultaneously evaluating that organization's research proposal.
- **Perceived Conflict:** A situation where others may reasonably believe that a conflict exists, even if no actual conflict is present.
Example: A faculty member participating in procurement decisions involving a former employer, even though no financial relationship currently exists.
- **Disclosure:** The act of formally declaring a conflict of interest to the appropriate authority.
- **Management of COI:** Measures taken to mitigate or eliminate the impact of a conflict.
Example: Recusal from decision-making, independent review, reassignment of responsibilities, or additional oversight.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education adopts a zero-tolerance approach toward undisclosed conflicts of interest. All members are required to act in the best interest of the institution and must avoid situations where personal interests may influence professional decisions.

All conflicts of interest must be:

- Identified promptly
- Disclosed transparently
- Managed appropriately through institutional mechanisms

Failure to disclose or manage conflicts may result in disciplinary action.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 University Management

- Establish and enforce the COI policy framework
- Promote a culture of transparency and ethical conduct
- Ensure mechanisms for disclosure and monitoring

6.2 Ethics Committee / COI Committee

The Conflict of Interest (COI) Committee shall ordinarily consist of:

- Chairperson – Nominee of the Vice-Chancellor
- Registrar or Nominee
- Dean/Director of the concerned academic or administrative area
- Representative from Internal Audit/Finance
- Legal Officer/Compliance Officer (where available)
- One senior faculty member not connected with the case under review
- Any subject expert co-opted by the Committee, if required

The Committee shall:

- Review and assess disclosed conflicts.
- Provide guidance on mitigation strategies.
- Maintain records of disclosures.
- Ensure fair and unbiased decisions.
- Maintain confidentiality of all disclosures and proceedings.
- Maintain a secure Register of Conflict of Interest Declarations, recording all disclosures, mitigation measures, and decisions. The register shall be reviewed annually to monitor compliance and identify recurring risks.

6.3 Department Heads / Supervisors

- Monitor potential conflicts within their departments
- Ensure timely disclosure and compliance
- Take appropriate actions to manage conflicts

6.4 Faculty and Staff

- Identify and disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts
- Avoid participating in decisions where conflicts exist
- Comply with mitigation measures

6.5 Students and Research Scholars

- Maintain academic integrity
- Disclose conflicts in research, publications, or collaborations

6.6 Vendors and External Partners

- Declare any relationships or interests that may influence transactions
- Avoid unethical practices such as bribery or favoritism

6.7 Confidentiality

All Conflict of Interest disclosures, supporting documents, deliberations, and decisions shall be treated as confidential and accessed only by authorized personnel who require such information for official purposes. Information shall not be disclosed unless required by law or authorized by the competent authority.

6.8 Gifts, Hospitality and Sponsored Benefits

Members shall not solicit or accept gifts, hospitality, travel sponsorship, honoraria, entertainment, or any other personal benefit that could improperly influence, or reasonably appear to influence, their official duties or decision-making.

Acceptance of nominal gifts of customary value or hospitality provided during official University events may be permitted where it does not create an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. Sponsored travel, consultancy fees, honoraria, or similar benefits related to official University activities shall be disclosed to the COI Committee and approved by the competent authority before acceptance, wherever applicable.

7. SUPPORTING PROCEDURES, POLICIES AND/OR STATUTES

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy
- Anti-Fraud Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Financial Regulations & Audit Procedures
- Disclosure (Whistleblower) Policy
- Research Ethics Guidelines
- Data Protection and IT Policies

Supporting procedures include:

- COI Disclosure Forms for annual and event-based declarations
- Review and Approval Process by Ethics Committee
- Mitigation Measures, such as:
 - Recusal from decision-making
 - Independent review
 - Restriction of access to sensitive information

8. BREACH OF POLICY

Failure to comply with this policy, including non-disclosure or misrepresentation of conflicts, will be treated as a serious violation.

Consequences may include:

- Disciplinary action (warning, suspension, termination)
- Removal from committees or responsibilities
- Academic penalties (for students/researchers)
- Termination of contracts (for vendors)
- Legal action where applicable

All breaches will be investigated thoroughly, ensuring fairness and due process.

9. REVIEW AND APPROVAL

- This policy shall be reviewed periodically to ensure relevance and effectiveness
- Updates will be made based on regulatory, legal, and institutional requirements
- Final approval of this policy and decisions relating to significant Conflict of Interest cases shall be granted by the Vice-Chancellor or an authority specifically authorized by the Vice-Chancellor in accordance with the University's statutes, ordinances, or regulations.

10. FURTHER INFORMATION

All members are encouraged to seek guidance from the COI Committee whenever they are uncertain whether a situation constitutes a conflict of interest. Early disclosure is encouraged to facilitate timely and appropriate management of potential conflicts.

For clarification, guidance, or reporting conflicts, individuals may contact:

- Ethics Committee / COI Committee
- Internal Audit Department
- Administrative Office

Training and awareness programs will be conducted to ensure understanding and compliance.

CONCLUSION

The Conflict of Interest Policy reinforces Kalasalingam Academy of Research and Education's commitment to ethical governance, transparency, and accountability. By ensuring that all conflicts are properly disclosed and managed, the institution upholds its values and maintains the trust of its stakeholders.