



Conflict of Interest Policy and Procedure

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. Courage Consultants UK Limited recognises and encourages members of its staff to engage in a wide variety of external activities within the local, national and international community. The traditional academic roles, such as teaching and supervising students are often supplemented by commercial collaborations including consultancy, commercial research and development, intellectual property licensing and involvement in companies.
- 1.2. Courage Consultants UK Limited recognises that involvement in such external activities carries many advantages to the institution and the individuals concerned. However, on occasion, they may give rise to conflicts of interest, whether potential or actual, perceived or alleged.
- 1.3. Therefore, all Courage Consultants UK Limited staff are required to recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to conflicts of interest or the perception of conflicts and to ensure that such conflicts are seen to be properly managed or avoided.
- 1.4. Courage Consultants UK Limited recognises that, if properly managed, potential conflicts of interest will be easily avoided or resolved by informal action either by the individual concerned or through discussion with his/her manager. As such, activities can usually proceed as normal whilst at the same time upholding the person's obligations to Courage Consultants UK Limited, meeting regulatory and other external requirements and protecting the integrity and reputation of Courage Consultants UK Limited and its members. By contrast, conflicts which are not managed effectively may jeopardise Courage Consultants UK Limited' public standing and may cause serious damage to the reputation of Courage Consultants UK Limited and of the individuals concerned.
- 1.5. It is therefore Courage Consultants UK Limited policy to encourage and foster external activities whilst ensuring that when conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest arise, they are identified and disclosed, and in relevant cases, appropriately managed. In every instance, Courage Consultants UK Limited reserves the right to make a determination in light of its best interest.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all members of Courage Consultants UK Limited, including staff, external committee members, consultants, honorary appointments and volunteers. A reference in this policy to staff includes any person within the scope of the policy.
- 2.2. It is the responsibility of each individual to recognise situations in which he or she has a conflict of interest, or might reasonably be seen by others to have a conflict, to disclose that conflict to the individual's line manager and through them to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and, to take such further steps as may be appropriate as set out in more detail under the procedure below.
- 2.3. Each employee has an obligation to act in the best interests of the Centre in relation to their centre duties, activities and employment. In particular, employees have rights under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, reflected in the centre's Code of Practice on Reporting Malpractice (Whistleblowing).
- 2.4. The centre has obligations to its employees:
 - Not to interfere in their private concerns where these have no bearing on the legitimate interests of the centre
 - To deal with issues raised under this Policy in a prompt, fair, reasonable and objective manner, paying due attention to the effects of any actions on an employee's work, career and reputation.
- 2.5. The existence of an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest does not necessarily imply wrongdoing on anyone's part. However, any private, personal or commercial interests

which give rise to such a conflict of interest must be recognised, disclosed appropriately and either eliminated or properly managed.

- 2.6. If an individual is uncertain about how this policy might affect his or her activities or has any questions about its application, he or she should contact their line manager.

3. Recognising Conflict of Interest

- 3.1. A conflict of interest arises where the commitments and obligations owed by an individual member of staff to Courage Consultants UK Limited or to other bodies, for example a funding or awarding body, are likely to be compromised, or may appear to be compromised, by:
- that person's personal gain, or gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship), whether financial or otherwise; or
 - the commitments and obligations that person owes to another person or body.
- 3.2. There can be situations in which the appearance of conflict of interest is present even when no conflict actually exists. Thus, it is important for all staff when evaluating a potential conflict of interest to consider how it might be perceived by others. For the purpose of this Policy, the term 'conflict of interest' includes perceived and potential as well as actual conflicts of interest.
- 3.3. The duty to declare a possible conflict applies to the perception of the situation rather than the actual existence of a conflict. However, the duty is not infringed if the situation cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to give rise to a conflict of interest.
- 3.4. Conflicts of interest may be financial or non-financial or both. Further information about both types is set out below.

4. Determining a conflict of interest

- 4.1. In order to determine whether a conflict of interest exists, it should be determined whether the private, personal or commercial interest is likely to interfere or appear to interfere with the objective judgment the employee should show in performing his/her duties. An employee should ask him/herself if relevant others (e.g. managers, students, customers, colleagues, members of the public) would trust his/her judgment if they were in possession of the facts of the private, personal or commercial interest. Could others reasonably conclude that it might influence the employee to act other than in the interests of the centre?
- 4.2. It would be impossible to list all possible conflicts of interest, since the circumstances and relationships may vary so widely. However, serious conflicts of interest would include the following:
- An employee using his/her centre position to:
 - i. Influence a contract or other favourable terms for a company in which he/she, or a relative or friend, had a financial interest.
 - ii. Influence employment, promotion, admission to a course of study, educational progression or other financial or non-financial benefit for a relative or friend.
 - iii. Obtain financial or non-financial benefits for him/herself or for a relative or friend in return for providing advantage, or potential advantage.
 - An employee compromising evidence objectivity or independence in return for financial or non-financial benefit for him/herself or for a relative or friend
 - An employee using centre resources or confidential information obtained through his/her centre position for personal financial or non-financial benefit, or benefit to a relative or friend.

- An employee conducting business, employment or activity outwit the Centre, which adversely affects the employee's ability to perform his/her duties.
- 4.3. If an employee believes there may be a conflict of interest, but is unsure, he/she should assume that there is a conflict of interest and act accordingly. Similarly, if a manager becomes aware of a possible conflict of interest, which the relevant employee appears not to have considered, he/she should bring it to the employee's attention for appropriate consideration.

5. Financial Conflicts of Interest

- 5.1. A financial conflict of interest, for the purposes of this policy, is one where there is or appears to be opportunity for personal financial gain, financial gain to close relatives or close friends, or where it might be reasonable for another party to take the view that financial benefits might affect that person's actions.
- 5.2. Financial interest means anything of monetary value, for example:
- payments for goods or services;
 - equity interests (e.g. stocks, stock options or other ownership interests);
 - resources and assets, including equipment, technical staff and facilities and/or
 - intellectual property rights (e.g. patents, copyrights and royalties from such rights).
- 5.3. The level of financial interest is not the determining factor as to whether a conflict should be disclosed. What might be 'not material' or 'not significant' for one person might be very significant for another. Good practice in many situations will mean the disclosure of 'any' financial interest, however small. A conflict will arise if the interest might provide, or be reasonably seen by others, to provide an incentive to the individual which affects their actions and where he or she has the opportunity to affect a decision or other activity.

6. Non-Financial Conflict of Interest

- 6.1. Non-financial interests can also come into conflict, or be perceived to come into conflict, with a person's obligations or commitments to Courage Consultants UK Limited or to other bodies, for example the individual's college or other body of which he or she is a trustee. Such non-financial interest may include any benefit or advantage, including, but not limited to, direct or indirect enhancement of an individual's career, education or gain to immediate family.

7. Potential Conflict of Interest Involving the Assessment of a Student

- 7.1. Courage Consultants UK Limited will take all necessary steps to avoid a conflict of interest where any part of an assessment of a student (including by way of moderation) is undertaken by a person who has a personal interest in the outcome of that assessment.
- 7.2. A potential conflict of interest may arise where:
- Friends or relatives of Courage Consultants UK Limited staff or managers are enrolled as students at Courage Consultants UK Limited.
 - Friends or relatives of Assessors / Internal Verifiers used by Courage Consultants UK Limited are enrolled as students at Courage Consultants UK Limited.
 - Students enrolled at Courage Consultants UK Limited are employed in any capacity.

8. Data Protection under Dubai Data Law, No.26 (the Open Data Law) 2016

- 8.1. The information provided will be processed in accordance with the relevant data protection

principles and this information will only be disclosed when Northwest School of General Studies is in receipt of a formal, legitimate request.

9. Assessment Decisions

- 9.1. Courage Consultants UK Limited staff, assessors, internal verifiers and internal quality assurers should not be involved in any actions or decisions in relation to a student's assessment with which they have a personal interest. Any such interests should be declared at the earliest opportunity following which the relevant Courage Consultants UK Limited staff, assessor or internal verifier should withdraw from any subsequent action, decision or involvement in the assessment process until authorised to continue by the CEO.

10. Senior Management and Executive Board

- 10.1. Where there is a potential conflict of interest involving a member of the Senior Management Team the CEO will refer the matter to the Executive Board who will make a decision which will exclude the member of the Senior Management Team who is the subject of the referral.
- 10.2. All decisions where a conflict of interest has been declared will be recorded by the Chair and reported in the minutes of the meeting setting out:
 - The nature and extent of the conflict of interest.
 - An outline of the discussion.
 - The actions taken to manage and mitigate the effects of the conflict of interest.

11. Members of Staff, Assessors and Internal Verifiers

- 11.1. Where there is a potential conflict of interest involving members of staff, assessors or internal verifiers, the matter should be referred to the CEO who will ensure that appropriate actions are taken to manage and mitigate any actual conflict of interest including exclusion from further involvement in managing, monitoring, the assessment of students and any financial transaction in any contract in which an interest has been declared.

12. Procedure

- 12.1. It is the duty of every member of staff to accurately and promptly disclose:
 - a change in status of an existing actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest and/or commitment.
 - a new actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest and/or commitment.
- 12.2. Apparent or perceived conflicts of interest can be as damaging as actual conflicts of interest. Staff should consult their line manager if they are uncertain about whether a situation or activity presents a conflict of interest. The line manager shall evaluate the activity or situation and advise on the most appropriate course of action.
- 12.3. The general rule, with the exception of committee business, is that disclosure should be made at the time the conflict first arises, or it is recognised that a conflict might be perceived, in writing to the line manager. If the line manager has an interest in the matter to be discussed, the disclosure shall be made to the person at the next higher level of authority.
- 12.4. Disclosure in all cases shall include the type of potential conflict (conflict of interest or commitment), the nature of the activity, a description of all parties involved, the potential financial interests and rewards, possible violations of legal requirements, and any other information which the employee feels necessary to evaluate the disclosure.
- 12.5. External committee members and consultants to Courage Consultants UK Limited are also

required to divulge any personal or family financial holdings or situations that could create a conflict of interest and/or introduce bias into their professional judgement. Such disclosures should be made to Courage Consultants UK Limited's Executive Board, and appropriate determination shall be made on the management of any conflict.

- 12.6. To disclose any conflict of interest, the Conflict of Interest Declaration Form must be used (Annex 1).
- 12.7. Failure to follow the procedure set out in this policy or failure to comply with any stipulated management plan for managing the disclosed conflict will be considered a serious matter and may lead to disciplinary action being taken against the individual.

7. Resolution of conflicts of interest

- 7.1. Once a conflict has been disclosed, the Reviewer is responsible for resolving the conflict of interest as soon as is reasonably practicable. Until that time, the employee must take no part in the particular activity relating to the potential conflict. Every effort should be made to reach agreement with the employee regarding the solution. Resolution of the conflict may not go beyond the scope of the employee's contractual obligations (explicit or implicit) without the employee's agreement.
- 7.2. Advice should be sought from colleagues in the relevant professional areas, as appropriate, such as in the Centre Manager, Quality Internal Assurance and Internal Verifier Where the Reviewer is unable to decide how to resolve the conflict of interest, or, particularly in more significant cases, wishes to have the advice and authority of Centre Director who will then become the Reviewer.
- 7.3. Where a resolution cannot be reached within one working week, the Reviewer must make a preliminary decision, either:
 - To permit the employee to continue the activity in the interim, possibly with modifications, or
 - To require the employee to continue to suspend involvement in the relevant activity pending final resolution.

The employee should be notified of the preliminary decision within one working week and reasons should be provided where he/she is required to continue to suspend involvement in the activity.

- 7.4. In most cases, the solution will be one of the following:
 - Agreement that there is no conflict of interest, or that it is not sufficient to be of any concern to the Centre.
 - Agreement to allow the activity with modifications. Options for modifications include:
 - i. Disclosure of all pertinent information to other relevant individuals
 - ii. Exclusion from, or third-party review of, any decision-making/authorization
 - iii. Revisions to the assessment procedures or other plans
 - iv. Reduction of involvement in the activity
 - v. Close monitoring of the activity
 - vi. Termination of involvement by others (eg. a relative or friend) in the activity
 - vii. Divestiture of relevant personal interests
 - viii. Reimbursement by the employee to the Centre for indirect costs or for the use of facilities
 - For the employee not to be involved in any way, thus removing the conflict of interest. Where no alternative can be agreed upon, this will be the solution, by default, provided that does not go beyond the scope of the employee's contractual obligations.

In any meeting for the purpose of agreeing a solution to the conflict, the employee is entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague (employed by the Courage Consultants UK Limited).

- 7.5. Where agreement cannot be reached and the employee is not satisfied with the decision, he/she may take the matter up through the Grievance Procedure.
- 7.6. In all cases, in order to protect the interests of the employee and the Reviewer, the Reviewer should keep a record of the disclosure and solution to the conflict of interest. Where a conflict of interest is ongoing and it is important that the current and future line managers are aware of it, the line manager (if different from the Reviewer) should be informed and should keep a record to pass to his/her successor (normally on the local personal file), with the knowledge of the employee.

13. Failure to disclose a conflict of interest

- 13.1. Failure to disclose an actual or perceived conflict of interest, or to cease involvement in the situation until the conflict has been resolved, constitutes a breach of the employee's contract of employment and may result in disciplinary action, and in serious cases could result in dismissal. In determining whether disciplinary action is appropriate, consideration will be given to the extent to which the employee was aware of the actual or perceived conflict of interest and/or made a reasonable decision not to declare it.

14. Complaints and Grievances

- 14.1. Courage Consultants UK Limited staff, assessors and internal verifiers may invoke the provisions of the Courage Consultants UK Limited Complaints and Policy where there is a grievance regarding any decision made in accordance with the terms of this Policy.

Annex 1 – Courage Consultants UK Limited Conflict of Interest Declaration Form

Please fully complete Section A and Section B. State N/A if not applicable.

Section A: Personal and/or financial interests of trustee/employee/agent/officer/member

To the best of my knowledge and belief, I have the following interests of the kinds set out under the following headings:

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| Q1. Employment |
| Do you have any remunerated appointments/roles which may cause a conflict of interest? If you are a council or committee member then all appointments/roles must be given, not just those which create a conflict of interest. |
| |
| Q2. Directorships |
| Do you have any Directorships which may cause a conflict of interest? If you are a council or committee member then all directorships must be given, not just those which create a conflict of interest. Please provide company registration number. |
| |
| Q3. Shareholdings |
| Do you have any significant shareholdings, amounting to one percent (or greater) of the share issue; in a public company or a private company or body which might give rise to a conflict of interest? |
| |
| Q4. Political Interests |
| Do you have any political interests which are a matter of public record, for example, election to a local political office, which may cause a conflict of interest? |
| |
| Q5. Connections to Government departments |
| Do you have any connections, whether paid, unpaid and/or advisory, with government departments, which may cause a conflict of interest? |
| |

Q6. Connections to other Higher Education (HE) institutions or funding bodies

Do you have any connections to HE institutions or funding bodies which may cause a conflict of interest? It is not necessary to register appointments as external examiners with other HE institutions.

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Q7. Charities

Are you a trustee of any charities which may cause a conflict of interest? Include positions that are paid, unpaid and/or advisory. Please provide charity registration number. If you are a council or committee member then all trusteeships must be given, not just those which create a conflict of interest.

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Q8. Personal relationships

Do you have any personal relationships with employees/officers of any organisation which may cause a conflict of interest?

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Q9. Connecting to other organisations

Do you have any specific connections, whether paid, unpaid and/or advisory, with other organisations which may cause a conflict of interest?

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10. Other Factors

Are there any other factors, such as posts (paid, unpaid and/or advisory), honorary positions or other connections which might give rise to a conflict of interest?

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Section B: Personal and/or financial interests of spouse/partner/cohabitee and immediate family members

To the best of my knowledge and belief my spouse/partner/cohabitee and immediate family members (parents, siblings and children) have the following interests of the kinds set out under the following headings. Please ensure the name of the relevant individual, and their relationship to you, is listed:

Q11. Employment

Is there a potential conflict of interest with the employer(s) of your spouse/partner/cohabitee and members of your immediate family?

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| Q12. Directorships |
| Does your spouse/partner/cohabitee and members of your immediate family have any Directorships which may cause a conflict of interest? Please provide company registration number if required |
| |
| Q13. Shareholdings |
| Does your spouse/partner/cohabitee and/or members of your immediate family have any significant shareholdings, amounting to one percent (or greater) of the share issue; in a public company or a private company or body which might give rise to a conflict of interest? |
| |
| Q14. Personal relationships |
| Does your spouse/partner/cohabitee and/or members of your immediate family have any personal relationships with employees/officers of any organisation which may cause a conflict of interest? |
| |
| Q15. Connections to other organisations |
| Does your spouse/partner/cohabitee and members of your immediate family have any specific connections, paid, unpaid and/or advisory, with other organisations which may cause a conflict of interest? |
| |

General declaration I have declared in Sections A and B all activities and interests which may present a conflict between my private interests and my duty to Courage Consultants UK Limited. I declare that to the best of my knowledge and belief the answers I have given are truthful, accurate and complete. There are no other activities or personal relationships that may present a conflict between my private interests and my duty to Courage Consultants UK Limited. I understand that it is my responsibility to discuss and review this declaration with the CEO; and to update this declaration. I undertake to inform the CEO of any change to these answers within ten working days of becoming aware of them.

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|------------|--|
| Name: | |
| Signature: | |
| Date: | |