

Document Number: CRMEC Policy 04

Document Name: Conflict of Interest

Scope

Members of the Canberra Region Medical Education Council (CRMEC) Ministerial Council, CRMEC Committees and the CRMEC Secretariat are expected to make decisions responsibly when representing the CRMEC and providing advice. All CRMEC representatives, including its accreditation survey team members are expected to make accreditation decisions responsibly and to apply the Australian Medical Council's (AMC) *National standards for prevocational (PGY1 and PGY2) training programs and terms* in a consistent and impartial fashion.

This policy applies to all work undertaken on behalf of the CRMEC, including the work of the Ministerial Council, the CRMEC Accreditation Committee, accreditation survey teams and the Secretariat.

Overview

A conflict of interest may be seen to exist on a particular issue if a person has a direct or indirect financial interest in the issue, or a direct or indirect interest of any other kind, where the interest could be seen to conflict with the proper exercise of the person's work or decision-making.

The CRMEC recognises that there is extensive interaction between health facilities and education providers in the Canberra region, so that individuals are frequently involved with several programs and undertaking different roles. There is potential that roles across different programs, organisations or committees can lead to conflicting obligations.

This policy provides guidance for situations that may give rise to real or perceived conflicts of interest and is consistent with requirements for management of conflict of interest on ACT Government Boards and Committees.

Process

Identification of conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest may arise from:

- other directorships,
- employment, particularly within facilities that the CRMEC accredits,
- appointments or memberships of other ACT Boards or Committees,
- professional, business or employment-related committees, interests and associations,
- investment interests, and/or
- family relationships.

The following questions may assist in identifying if a conflict-of-interest situation has or could arise:

- Do I have professional roles or obligations that may conflict, or be perceived to conflict, with my duty to the CRMEC?
- Do I have personal or private interests that may conflict, or be perceived to conflict, with my duty to the CRMEC?
- Could there be benefits for me now, or in the future, that could cast doubt on my independence or objectivity? (e.g., employment opportunities, staffing and resources, financial, etc.)

- How will my involvement in the decision or action be viewed by others? Are there risks associated for me or the CRMEC?
- Have I made any advice, promises or commitments in relation to the matter?
- Do I, or organisations I represent, stand to gain or lose from the proposed action/decision?

Examples of roles that could raise conflict of interest issues include:

- Engagement in a senior role in a facility that CRMEC accredits.
- Engagement in a role that has substantial influence over the delivery of programs accredited by the CRMEC.
- Engagement in a department seeking accreditation of training positions.
- Engagement in a role with conflicting or competitive interests to CRMEC's objectives.

A Ministerial appointee, Accreditation Committee member or accreditation survey team member has a duty to declare any potential interest in writing on appointment, and thereafter as new interests arise. When an issue arises, the appointee must, as soon as practicable, disclose full and accurate details of the interest or issue to the CRMEC Director, who will inform the relevant Chair.

Managing conflicts of interest in meetings

The following strategies are implemented to manage conflicts of interest:

- Standing declarations are provided on the agenda for all Ministerial Council and Committee meetings.
- All meeting agendas are to begin with a 'declaration of interests', in which members are requested to confirm that declarations provided on the agenda are correct and to declare any new personal or professional interests which might (or might be perceived to) influence their capacity to undertake their role.
- Meeting attendees will not participate in or remain present during conversations on matters in which they have an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Meeting agendas will identify known conflicts of interest and actions that will be taken to manage the conflict. The Chair is responsible for ensuring that meeting attendees with a conflict of interest leave the room prior to the relevant conversation.
- Ministerial Council members and Accreditation Committee members will not receive documentation related to issues in which they have a standing declaration of interest.
- Ministerial Council or Accreditation Committee members will not be involved in discussion or voting on matters on which they have a declared personal or professional interest.
- All declared interests will be recorded in meeting minutes, together with the action taken to manage the issue.

Managing substantial conflicts of interest

Other means may be more appropriate to the management of more substantial conflict of interest issues (e.g., where a CRMEC representative has a senior role in a program accredited by the CRMEC). When a Ministerial Council or Accreditation Committee member has a significant conflict, the appointee may be required to:

- resign from their CRMEC role (in an extreme case), or
- divest of the interest/issue that is creating the conflict.

Managing conflicts of interest in survey visits

Proposed members of accreditation survey teams are required declare any relevant personal or professional interest that may be perceived to conflict with their ability to undertake their duties as a surveyor impartially. Following receipt of conflict-of-interest declarations, the CRMEC Director will develop a proposed accreditation

survey team, which the Accreditation Committee Chair will review and approve. In some instances, perceived conflict of interest can be managed. The following issues will be considered:

- The level of responsibility of a surveyor within the facility.
- The ability of the surveyor to influence the outcome of the survey visit.
- The ability of the survey team leader to manage the conflict.
- The facility's perception of the conflict of interest and how it will be managed.
- The potential perception of people being interviewed by the survey team.
- The opportunity for surveyors to receive ongoing training and experience in surveying.
- The overall representation on the survey team.

The facility or health service being accredited has the right to formally object to the inclusion of a surveyor where it believes there might be a conflict of interest. Following receipt of a formal objection, the CRMEC Director will review the reasons for objection, undertake further fact finding as required and refer the objection to the Accreditation Committee Chair. The Chair will determine a course of action (e.g., uphold the objection or provide rationale to maintain the surveyor on the team). Any difference in opinion will be resolved by the Ministerial Council.

If a previously unidentified conflict of interest emerges for a surveyor during a survey visit, the lead surveyor will determine an appropriate course of action. This may entail:

- Changing the surveyor's responsibility during the visit (e.g., restricting who they interview).
- Requiring the surveyor to abstain from team discussions on certain topics during the visit and report writing session.
- Altering the survey program.

Any such conflicts, and the course of action taken, will be reported to the Accreditation Committee and Ministerial Council.

Where a member of an accreditation survey team has given recent formal or informal advice to a facility or health service outside the CRMEC accreditation process, that member must declare their interest.

Related Documents and Relevant Guidance

- CRMEC Form 11: Conflict of Interest Form
- CRMEC Conflict of Interest Register
- ACT Public Service Code of Conduct. Available: [Conflict of Interest Policy \(act.gov.au\)](#)
- ACT Government: Governance Principles: Appointments: Boards and Committees in the ACT (2021). Available: https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1045984/Governance-Principles-Appointments,-Boards-and-Committees-2021-FINAL-VERSION.pdf

Version Control

Review Date	Version	Updated by	Approved by	Changes made
May 2014	1.0	Director	CRMEC	
Sept2015	1.1	Director	CRMEC	Minor changes to process
Feb2016	2.0	Director	Not required	Formatting into new template
Aug2017	2.1	Director	Not required	Formatting
Jan 2020	3.0	CRMEC Admin	Director	Titles + processes updated
June 2020	3.1	CRMEC Admin	Director	Layout, minor changes to process
Dec 2021	4.0	Director	CRMEC	Inclusion of requirements for ACT Government Boards and Committees, increased guidance on identifying conflicts of interest, increased requirements for managing and documenting conflicts of interest
Feb2023	4.1	CRMEC Admin	Director	Formatting
Nov2023	4.2	CRMEC Director	Not required	Updated vocabulary to reflect new National Framework. No changes to processes.