

## **Conflict of Interest Guidance For Academic Promotions Process 2022**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. In the interests of transparency, schools are required to publish the names of all those who will sit on the School Promotion Committee (SPC). Applicants, may refer to this list and where they believe a committee member may have a conflict of interest, should email the [academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk) inbox detailing how they believe a conflict of interest would arise should the panel member in question evaluate their application for promotion.
- 1.2. The following document sets out the principles upon which reported Conflict of Interest cases may be considered. The process for recusal is outlined in the Academic Promotions Procedure document.
- 1.3. Whilst the principles set out will be applied, it should be noted that each request for recusal will be considered on its own merits and having regard to the particular facts pertaining. The decision of those considering the recusal request is final and will not be subject to appeal.

### **2. Principals of Conflict of Interest claims**

- 2.1. This new element of the Academic Promotions Process is intended to increase transparency and ensure that applications are considered on their inherent merit. It is upon this foundational principle that claims of a conflict of interest will be considered.
- 2.2. Applicants who raise a conflict of interest claim (through whichever route as outlined in the Academic Promotions Process 2022), must provide sufficient detail to enable those considering the claim to come to a reasonable conclusion and subsequently be able to advise the SPC accordingly.
- 2.3. It is acknowledged that reasons for raising a conflict of interest claim may be numerous and varied, as such it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of reasons for which recusal may be considered, each case will be considered on its own merits.
- 2.4. Recusal may be appropriate where any of the University's formal procedures have been triggered (i.e. Disciplinary, Capability, Grievance). Where a conflict of interest claim related to any of these formal processes is raised, but where the formal process has not been triggered, this is unlikely to lead to recusal.
- 2.5. Where a conflict of interest claim is submitted and the basis of the claim is a previously rejected application for promotion, this will not be considered for the purposes of requesting recusal.
- 2.6. Applicants are encouraged to talk to their Head of School in the first instance. However it is acknowledged that this may not be appropriate in all cases, hence the creation of this process. Where applicants speak to their Head of School but are unhappy with the outcome they should raise the issue by emailing the [academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk) inbox.

### 3. Process

- 3.1. The process is outlined in section 6 of the Academic Promotions Process document, but has been replicated here for ease of reference:
  - 3.1.1. In the interests of transparency, schools are required to publish the names of all those who will sit on the SPC. Applicants, may refer to this list and where they believe a committee member may have a conflict of interest, should email the [academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk) inbox detailing how they believe a conflict of interest would arise, should the panel member in question evaluate their application for promotion.
  - 3.1.2. A Human Resources Business Partner will share an incoming email, in confidence, with the relevant Head of School (except where the Head of School is the subject of the email, in which case the Provost will assume the Head of School role for the purposes of this process).
  - 3.1.3. Where the email regarding conflicts of interest explicitly relates to an issue concerning Equality, Diversity or Inclusion issues, the HR Business Partner will liaise with the PVC Culture, Equality and Inclusion (PVC CEI) instead of the Head of School (or Provost).
  - 3.1.4. The Head of School/PVC CEI/Provost (as appropriate) and HR Business Partner will review the email and will consider whether, based on the evidence presented within that email, the SPC member in question should recuse themselves from considering the applicant's application form.
  - 3.1.5. Should recusal be the recommended outcome the HoS/Provost/PVC CEI will notify the SPC member confidentially that they will be required to recuse themselves when consideration of the relevant candidate's question is considered by the SPC.
  - 3.1.6. The applicant may, if they so wish, discuss their concerns over a conflict of interest with the Head of School prior to emailing the [academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk) inbox. Where this is the case the Head of School should discuss the matter confidentially (i.e. in general terms, and need not give full details) with the HR Business Partner in the first instance to seek guidance on how to handle such a request.
  - 3.1.7. The applicant will be informed of the outcome of these confidential discussions prior to their application being considered. There is no right of appeal against the decisions made by those considering the conflict of interest claim.
- 3.2. Should applicants have questions regarding this document they should email the [academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk) inbox.