

Conflict of Interest Guidance For Academic Promotions Process 2024

1. Introduction

- 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 declare it using the Conflict-of-Interest Form and send it to academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk along with 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 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 using the using the Conflict-of-Interest Declaration Form, 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 inbox.

3. Process

- 3.1. The process is outlined in section 5 of the Academic Promotions Process document, but has been replicated here for ease of reference:
 - 3.1.2 In the interests of transparency since 2022, 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 declare it using the Conflict-of-Interest Form and send it to academic.promotions@sussex.ac.uk along with their application for promotion.
 - 3.1.3 On the form, applicants must detail how they believe a conflict of interest would arise, should the panel member in question evaluate their application for promotion as well as declaring whether or not the context/issue of the conflict of interest has already been raised on a formal basis.
 - 3.1.4 A Human Resources Business Partner will share the form, in confidence, with the relevant Head of School (except where the Head of School is the subject of the form, in which case the Provost will assume the Head of School role for the purposes of this process).
 - 3.1.5 Where the declaration form regarding conflicts of interest relates to an issue concerning Equalities, 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).
 - 3.1.6 The Head of School/PVC CEI/Provost (as appropriate) and HR Business Partner will review the form and will consider whether, based on the evidence presented, the SPC member in question should recuse themselves from considering the applicant's application form.
 - 3.1.7 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 application is considered by the SPC, including reference to any feedback and outcomes.
 - 3.1.8 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 inbox. Where this is the case the Head of School should discuss the matter confidentially (i.e. without giving specifics) with the HR Business Partner in the first instance to seek guidance on how to handle such a request.
 - 3.1.9 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 inbox.