
Conflict of Interest in Research Policy

Policy Sponsor:	Provost and Vice President Academic
Policy Contact:	Manager, Research Services
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Approval Group:	The Governors of Athabasca University
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Procedure:	Conflict of Interest in Research Procedure

Purpose

To delineate the process for identifying, disclosing and managing real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in research at Athabasca University (AU).

These procedures apply to Athabasca University (AU) faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral fellows and other personnel involved directly or indirectly in research, including but not limited to research assistants/associates, technical and support staff, adjunct professors, visiting scholars, institutional administrators, and officials representing the university.

Definitions

Conflict of interest The incompatibility of two or more duties, responsibilities or interests (personal or professional) of an individual or institution as they relate to the ethical conduct of research, such that one cannot be fulfilled without compromising the other.

Conflict of interest may arise in research when activities or situations place an individual in a real, potential or perceived conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to the research, and personal, institutional or other interests. These interests include, but are not



limited to, business, commercial or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current or prospective professional associates.

Human	Includes living human participants and human biological material derived from living and deceased individuals.
Institution	Universities, hospitals, colleges, research institutes, centers and other organizations eligible to receive and manage Tri-Agency grant funds on behalf of grant holders and the Agencies.
Participant	An individual whose data, or responses to interventions, stimuli or questions by a researcher are relevant to answering a research question.
REB	AU Research Ethics Board.
Researcher	Anyone who conducts research activities.
Research sponsor	An external entity that enters into a formal agreement with AU to provide financial or other support for research.
Tri-Agency	Canada's three federal research councils: the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Policy Statements

Athabasca University (AU) has an obligation to ensure that the ethical conduct of research is not compromised by real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

Conflicts of interest shall normally be avoided or prevented; when it is not possible to do so, action shall be taken to manage the conflict of interest.

Researchers are obliged to identify and disclose to the Research Ethics Board (REB) any real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in research that cannot be avoided or prevented and that may jeopardize the integrity of research or the protection offered to participants.

The REB shall, in discussion with the researcher, decide how the conflict of interest will be managed. Decisions shall be context-related and commensurate with the degree of risk.

Prospective research participants shall be informed about real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest so that they can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate in the research.



The Associate Vice President, Research is responsible for notifying an external funding agency or research sponsor of any conflict of interest that may affect a decision about a specific grant or award application.

Every reasonable effort shall be made to disclose and manage conflicts of interest prior to any commitment or expenditure of research funds. If disclosure occurs after funds have been allocated, the Associate Vice President, Research has the authority to protect the funds until such time that the conflict of interest has been appropriately managed.

Undisclosed conflicts of interest in research shall be addressed under the AU Research Integrity Policy and the related Breach of Research Integrity Procedures.

AU reserves the right to recover any financial benefit gained by an individual as a result of undisclosed conflicts of interest.

Lack of awareness of this policy and related procedures will not mitigate AU's response to a failure to disclose a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest.

Applicable Legislation and Regulations

[Terms and Conditions of Agreement between AUBG and AUFA](#)

[Collective Agreement between AUBG and AUPE](#)

[Collective Agreement between AUBG and CUPE](#)

Related References, Policies, Procedures and Forms

[Athabasca University Conflict of Interest in Research Procedures](#)

[Athabasca University Conflict of Interest Policy](#)

[Athabasca University Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Policy](#)

[Athabasca University Research Integrity Policy](#)

[Athabasca University Protected Disclosure \(Whistleblower\) Policy and Procedures](#)

[2nd edition of Tri-Agency Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans](#) (2010) and as amended from time to time.

<http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) [Memorandum of Understanding on Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Federal Grants and Awards](#) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.

http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/MOURoles-ProtocolRoles/index_eng.asp



[Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (*The Framework*) (2011, December) and as amended from time to time.
<http://www.rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/framework-cadre/>

History

The Governors of Athabasca University, Motion # 180-13; January 11, 2013 (Revised)
Athabasca University Academic Council, Motion 184-13; September 15, 2004 (Revised)
Athabasca University Academic Council, Motion 172-7; September 25, 2002. (Approved)