

Faculty Office
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Rules related to conflict of interest and internal regulations related to conflict of interest within PhD studies

Regulations on conflict of interest within PhD studies

There are eight different grounds for conflict of interest in the Administrative Procedure Act, see appendix 1. There are a number of different situations during the PhD programme in which a conflict of interest situation can occur. One example is between a supervisor and a doctoral student. The supervisor and the doctoral student should maintain a professionally helpful relationship and avoid personal relationships that may cause the parties to become biased, thus creating a conflict of interest in the workplace. Another example is between supervisors who are supervising the same doctoral student. If a personal relationship does develop, however, it is the responsibility of the supervisor and the doctoral student to promptly initiate a change of supervisor.

There is also a risk of conflict of interest in the examination of PhD studies. In this case, it is between the supervisor/doctoral student and the examining committee members/external reviewer. Grounds for conflict of interest can be based on previous collaborations that may be in the form of joint publications, research funding and applications, shared supervision or similar.

The Research Studies Board has identified a number of situations in PhD studies and the parties between whom a conflict of interest may arise. Below is a description of these situations and how a conflict of interest is to be managed and documented.

Situations in which a conflict of interest may arise	Between which parties the conflict of interest may arise	How conflict of interest is to be managed/ documented
When establishing a project plan	A conflict of interest can occur between the supervisors (<i>close relationship/relation</i>).	All supervisors are to declare that there is no conflict of interest between the supervisors.
At admission	A conflict of interest can occur between	All parties are to declare on the

	supervisors or between the supervisor/the doctoral student (<i>close relationship/relation</i>).	admission form that there is no conflict of interest.
When changing/adding supervisors	A conflict of interest can occur between supervisors or between the supervisor/the doctoral student (<i>close relationship/relation</i>).	All parties concerned are to declare on the change of supervisor form that there is no conflict of interest.
Assessment of courses and portfolio	A conflict of interest can occur between the examiner and the doctoral student (<i>close relationship/relation</i>).	The parties concerned are to report the conflict of interest themselves by contacting the chair of the Research Studies Board.
Halfway review	A conflict of interest can occur between the reviewer and the doctoral student/supervisor (<i>close relationship, relation, shared supervisor roles</i>).	The parties concerned are to declare that there is no conflict of interest on the halfway review certificate.
<p>Public defence/licentiate seminar</p> <p>Prior to public defences and licentiate seminars, the Faculty of Medicine applies the Swedish Research Council's rules on conflict of interest. The Swedish Research Council's rules state the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a conflict of interest when research collaboration and co-authorship has taken place during the last five years. A co-authored article is 	<p>A conflict of interest can occur between the external reviewer/examining committee and the doctoral student/supervisor. (<i>close relationship/relation, co-publication or collaboration</i>).</p> <p>A conflict of interest can occur if the supervisor is the editor of a journal in which the doctoral student has published a paper.</p>	<p>The doctoral student and supervisor are to certify that there is no conflict of interest in the request for a public defence/licentiate seminar.</p> <p>The supervisors state in the supervisory report attached to the request if they are the editor of any journals in which the doctoral student's papers have been published. It does not necessarily constitute a conflict of</p>

<p>considered enough to constitute co-authorship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict of interest may last for more than five years if close collaboration has taken place. • A relationship between the doctoral student and supervisor is considered a conflict of interest regardless of how long ago the collaboration took place. • Exceptions to the five-year rule can be made for collaborations in the form of multi-centre studies, which are judged on a case-by-case basis. In this case, the parties concerned are to certify in writing that there is no conflict of interest. <p>The members of the examining committee and the external reviewer are therefore to be completely independent from both the doctoral student, supervisor and the project.</p>		<p>interest, but is to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, particularly if it is systematic in any way.</p>
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For all the situations described above, the following applies to Assistant Heads of Department with responsibility for PhD studies and the chair of the Research Studies Board:

- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not assess their own project plans. In these cases, the assessment task is passed on to the Head of Department.
- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not assess admissions of their own doctoral students. In these cases, the assessment task is passed on to another Assistant Head of Department in charge of PhD studies.
- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not assess their own doctoral students' individual study plans. In these cases, the

chair of the Research Studies Board takes decisions.

- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not act as reviewers at the halfway review for their own doctoral students. In these cases, the task is passed on to another Assistant Head of Department in charge of PhD studies.
- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not assess their own doctoral students' portfolios at the halfway review or assess them prior to the public defence. In these cases, the assessment task is passed on to the course director, Assistant Head of Department in charge of PhD studies or the chair of the Research Studies Board.
- Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD studies do not assess the request for a public defence for their own doctoral students. In these cases, the assessment task is passed on to the Head of Department.
- The chair of the Research Studies Board does not assess project plans, admissions or public defence requests for their own doctoral students. In these cases, the assessment task is passed on to the vice chair of the Research Studies Board.

A conflict of interest can also arise during PhD studies in the periods that occur in between the aforementioned assessment instances. In accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, it is primarily the person with the disqualifying conflict of interest who is to report the conflict of interest and they are to do this by contacting the Assistant Heads of Department in charge of PhD and disclosing the conflict of interest.

Appendix 1.

What is a conflict of interest?

According to the Administrative Procedure Act, a conflict of interest is a circumstance that can discredit the impartiality/objectivity of the handling of a matter by a decision-maker, member or officer. The rules on conflict of interest apply to the handling of all matters within the University, which includes decision-making. Decision-makers and officers at all levels within the University must always consider the objectivity of their handling of matters in which they can influence the outcome.

In Section 11 of the Administrative Procedure Act, there are eight different grounds for conflict of interest, divided into five different groups.

1. Direct, indirect and familial conflict of interest

A direct conflict of interest occurs when the matter to be handled directly concerns the person handling the matter. An indirect conflict of interest refers to circumstances in which the outcome of a matter may result in significant benefit or damage to the person handling the matter or someone close to them. A familial conflict of interest occurs when the outcome of a matter may result in significant benefit or damage to a person close to the person handling the matter. An example of a familial conflict of interest is to assess your own children or other person close to you. In these cases, the conflict of interest covers both the design of exams and the implementation of exams.

2. Deputy

A conflict of interest arises if the person handling the matter or someone close to them is a deputy for the person to whom the matter relates or for someone who may receive significant benefit or damage from the outcome of the matter.

3. Conflict of duty

Conflict of duty is limited to appeals and supervisory matters. The same person must not handle a matter in two bodies, e.g. a faculty board and the Higher Education Appeals Board.

4. Representative or agent

A conflict of interest occurs if the person handling the matter has acted as a representative of a party in the matter. A conflict of interest occurs if the person handling the matter has been paid to act as an agent of a party in the matter.

5. Non-financial or personal conflicts of interest

This type of conflict of interest aims to cover the situations not covered by the other grounds for conflict of interest. Examples of circumstances that may fall under this category is close friendship with or a relationship of dependency with the person to whom the matter relates or co-authorship with a person applying for a position if the collaborations have been numerous and recent.

What should you do in a conflict of interest situation?

The Administrative Procedure Act states "a person who is aware of a circumstance that could be assumed to cause him or her to have a disqualifying conflict of interest is obliged to report this".

A person who has a disqualifying conflict of interest in a matter to be handled at a meeting is not only to refrain from speaking or participating in voting but should also leave the meeting when the matter is to be discussed.

It is primarily the person with a disqualifying conflict of interest that is to disclose the conflict of interest. It is everyone's responsibility to do this. If another party raises a conflict of interest issue, the public authority is obliged to take a decision on the conflict of interest issue as soon