



Policy on Declaration of Interests

Background

1. LSHTM is a global leader in public health education and research, and is incorporated as a charity run for public benefit, with most of its money coming from public and charitable sources. LSHTM is committed to the highest standards of probity in its governance, to satisfy its responsibilities to its beneficiaries, its partners and its regulators, and to minimise the risk of procurement challenges.
2. Whilst working for the public benefit, LSHTM staff engage in external activities, working with governments, NGOs, businesses, the public, local and international media, health service providers, and (most usually) international projects and collaborations with other academic institutions and/or commercial organisations. The interactions may include research and development, consultancy, services, licensing of intellectual property (IP) and the activity of companies in which the School has an interest, such as spin-out companies.
3. These activities are in the public interest, and they also benefit the School and the individuals concerned.
4. However, the School is also mindful that engaging with other organisations directly or through its staff's activities may give rise to the risk of actual or perceived conflicts of interest.
5. For this reason, LSHTM considers it important that staff recognise and disclose activities that might give rise to perceived or actual conflicts of interest and to ensure that such conflicts are visibly and properly managed or avoided.
6. When properly managed, most external activities, once declared, can proceed in a way that allows the person to continue to meet their obligations to LSHTM, as well as any regulatory or other external requirements (for example to funders). In many cases, simply declaring the interest is all that will be required.
7. The relatively low burden of declaring interests is far outweighed by the benefit of mitigating the significant risk to the School of conflicts which are not managed effectively. These could jeopardise LSHTM's credibility and public standing, and may seriously harm the reputation of LSHTM (or the individuals concerned).

What is a conflict of interest?

8. The National Audit Office has defined a conflict of interest as "a set of circumstances that creates a risk that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act in one role is, or could be, impaired or influenced by a secondary interest. It can occur in any situation where an individual or organisation can exploit a professional or official role for personal or other benefit".



9. It is not necessary for the individual's judgment actually to be impaired or influenced – it can be equally damaging for the conflict of interest to exist or to appear to exist or even have the potential to develop into an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

The implementation of this policy will help to protect

LSHTM employees against criticism or compromise by ensuring that they recognise and disclose such conflict situations, so that steps can be taken to avoid and manage them. Examples of the many ways that the risk of a conflict could arise are in the Appendix below.

Scope

10. This policy applies to all academic and research staff, support staff at or above Grade 5, and any students who are also employees of the School. The Policy also applies to honorary and emeritus staff actively involved in the work of LSHTM. However, the broad principles of the policy apply to all staff: if a conflict of interest applies in the case of a member of staff in a category other than those specified above, this should be referred to their Department Operating Officer or the head of their professional service office.
11. If an individual is uncertain about how this policy might affect his or her activities or has any questions about its application, he or she should contact the Head of Legal Services for guidance.

Declaring and registering interests

12. There will be an annual mandatory survey of interests, but the rule is that a disclosure of an interest should be made at the time the interest first arises, or it is recognised that a conflict might be perceived. When a conflict arises before the next annual survey, the declaration should be made to the Secretary of the School for entry into the Register of Interests.
13. Staff who are within the scope of this policy must register interests in any of the following:
- Directorships (executive or non-executive) in any companies;
 - Trusteeships of any charities;
 - Shareholding of 10% or more in any company;
 - Participation in funded research and/or clinical trials not being managed by the Research Operations Office;
 - Consultancy and advisory activities, paid or unpaid, to any for-profit organisation;
 - Membership of research council or external policy advisory panels; and
 - Any activity that has been declared as an interest to another body, such as a funding council, journal or professional organisation.
14. In addition, staff will be asked to declare any other potential conflict of interest, where the commitments and obligations they owe to LSHTM or to other bodies (e.g. a funder), could be compromised, or appear to be compromised, by:
- that person's personal gain, or gain to immediate family (or a person with whom the person has a close personal relationship), whether financial or otherwise; or
 - the commitments and obligations that person owes to another person or body.
15. There can be situations in which the appearance of conflict of interest is present even when no conflict actually exists. It is the responsibility of each individual to recognise situations and



activities in which he or she has a conflict of interest, or might reasonably be seen by others to have a conflict, to disclose that conflict to the Secretary.

16. Conflicts of interest may be financial or non-financial or both:
 - a. Financial interest refers to anything of non-trivial monetary value, including, but not limited to, pay, commission, consultancy fees, equity interests, forgiveness of debt, property, royalties, and intellectual property rights;
 - b. Non-financial interest refers to any non-financial benefit or advantage, including, but not limited to, enhancement of an individual's career, education or professional reputation; access to privileged information or facilities.
17. Further information and illustrative examples of conflicts are given in the Appendix below.
18. Many situations will require nothing more than a declaration of the interest and/or activity, so that it can be noted by the relevant department and on the Register of Interests.
19. If the Secretary considers it necessary, further steps may be required, such as an express authorisation by a Head of Department or Dean of Faculty who is not affected by the same interest, and/or agreed steps to mitigate the risk of a conflict arising. A record of these further steps will be provided to the individuals affected and a copy lodged on their HR file, and a copy held centrally on the Register of Interests. Some instances will, however, need to be dealt with by agreeing how the conflict can be managed.
20. Where an interest relates to an externally funded research project (i.e. where the interest influences, potentially influences, or could be perceived to influence, the design, conduct or reporting of such project), any steps agreed on how to declare and manage the interest must be compatible with the terms and conditions of the award and any applicable funder-specific conflict of interests policy.
21. Any unresolved matter shall be referred to the relevant Dean (or more senior officer depending on the circumstances).
22. Each Dean of Faculty will receive an annual report to enable the maintenance of an overview of external activities including where no declarations have been made.
23. This policy is linked to a number of other LSHTM policies and documents, including:
 - Financial Regulations
 - Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy
 - Public Interest Disclosure Policy
 - Promotions and Rewards procedures
 - Recruitment and Selection procedures
 - Good Research Practice Policy
 - Research Operations Office policies and procedures
 - Assessment handbook



Appendix – examples of potential conflicts of interest

A. Funded Research

1. A member of academic staff is funded by a publisher to investigate the future of journals and publishes an article which concludes that Open Access is a serious threat to the viability of the medical publishing industry and should not be adopted by universities. The funder of the research is not declared by the member of staff. A perceived conflict with the staff member's LSHTM role may occur because non-disclosure of the funder may be seen to compromise the integrity of the findings, and because LSHTM as a higher education institution endorses Open Access publishing.
2. A member of staff supervises PhD students on an industrially funded project. Initial results suggest that protocols adopted by another study are more likely to solve the research problem. They are unsure whether to report their real findings to their supervisor, in case it compromises their continued funding. A conflict therefore exists for the supervisor between their responsibilities to the sponsor and the ability of the students to complete their PhD research.
3. LSHTM staff accept research sponsorship from a company in which they have a significant financial interest. The risk of perception of a conflict is clearly high. This particularly applies to small and privately-owned companies. It should not normally prevent a member of staff from receiving research support from a large, publicly-listed company just because they or a family member owns some shares in the company.
4. Staff may hold a financial interest in a company as a consequence of commercialisation of their research through a company. In these circumstances, disclosure of interests and any mitigating arrangements is particularly important. The resulting project or activity should involve, directly or in an oversight role, a member of staff of suitable seniority who is not connected with the sponsoring company.
5. Similarly, a member of staff receiving research support would be in conflict if they were in a position to have influence over the sponsor's funding decisions or acceptance of LSHTM terms in a licence or contractual agreement.
6. Other areas in which conflicts could arise include:
 - a. A PI or Co-I being jointly employed by LSHTM and the funder (or a recipient of funding under a collaboration agreement or sub-contract);
 - b. the dissemination of research findings (e.g. their timing and content);
 - c. the use of LSHTM resources (e.g. unfunded use of staff or facilities); or
 - d. technology licensing (e.g. undisclosed inventions or negotiation of licensing terms).
7. This policy does not affect the separate duty for authors submitting a publication arising from sponsored research to disclose any 'significant financial interest' or other relationship with the manufacturers of any commercial products or providers of commercial services discussed in the publication and any financial supporters of the research. The intent of such disclosures is not to



prevent an author with a significant financial or other relationship from publishing a paper, but rather to provide readers with information upon which to make their own judgments.

B. Consultancy and advisory activities

1. This policy interacts with the employment contract, and staff should ensure that any consultancy work they undertake does not affect their ability to meet their obligations to LSHTM as an employer. For example, teaching staff must ensure that they are able to balance their commitments to students and colleagues against their commitments to those receiving the benefit of their consultancy and advice.

C. Clinical trials

1. LSHTM and local/external ethical review processes will seek to identify any potential conflict of interest in the protocol of a clinical trial, and LSHTM staff should assist in this process.
2. For example, a member of staff is Principal Investigator in a clinical trial investigating efficacy of a new drug treatment for the Zika virus. They own shareholdings in a spinout company set up to exploit the Intellectual Property from the product under investigation. There is therefore a potential conflict between conduct of the trial, including possibly the welfare of patients during the trial, and the potential financial benefit to the member of staff. This should be declared and mitigating arrangements put in place.

D. Equity Holdings and Directorships

1. Members of staff who are founding companies should not personally negotiate IP licensing terms with LSHTM. A solicitor or a company executive with no connection to LSHTM should be appointed for this task.
2. Members of staff with equity in or who hold positions on the board of any company should not be involved in or attempt to influence the LSHTM licence or contract terms to that company.
3. The holding of directorships and other executive and non-executive positions in third party organisations and companies can place a member of staff directly in a position of conflict, and hence should be handled carefully from the outset.
4. Membership of external boards brings with it an obligation (and sometimes a statutory duty) to act in the best interests of the external body. These duties may overlap with those duties and obligations as employees of LSHTM. LSHTM's knowledge of such an appointment does not absolve the employee from ensuring that he or she continues to give their primary commitment to LSHTM.
5. Members of staff may hold non-executive positions in third party organisations and companies, or in LSHTM-owned or partially-owned companies, as a representative of LSHTM. In such situations, where the member of staff is in a senior position, they should not be solely



responsible for any LSHTM decisions relating to that company, as this could put them in conflict with their legal responsibilities as a director.

6. Any member of administrative staff nominated by LSHTM to serve as the Director of a company shall be deemed to accept the nomination in the discharge of his or her duties as an employee of LSHTM and shall decline to accept any Director's fee.

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