

Conflicts of Interest in Applied Research & Innovation

A. Preamble

The Applied Research & Innovation (ARI) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed to guide responsible and ethical research and innovation activity at Humber College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. Canada's federal research and innovation granting agencies, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) - collectively, the "Tri-Agencies" - are committed to fostering and maintaining an environment that supports the ethical and responsible conduct of research. As an institution that is eligible for Tri-Agency funding, Humber, and by extension all Humber researchers, is bound by agreements that govern, support and promote positive research environments. The information in this SOP reflects Humber's obligations to comply with these agreements for management and administration of funding for research and innovation projects¹, as well as internal best practices that have been established to promote effective research operations.

B. Conflict of Interest: General Overview

Humber employees are expected to conduct themselves with integrity, honesty and diligence in performing their duties for the institution. Employees are required to support and advance the interests of the institution and avoid placing themselves in situations where there is an actual or potential conflict with the interests of Humber or any members of the Humber community.

C. Humber Employees

A conflict of interest refers to a situation in which private interests or personal considerations may affect an employee's judgment in acting in the best interest of an ARI project and/or Humber in general. This includes using one's position, confidential information, or corporate time, material or facilities for private gain or advancement or the expectation of private gain or advancement. A conflict may also occur when an interest benefits any member of the employee's family, friends or business associates.

Faculty and/or staff members who are applicants or co-applicants on an ARI project supported by Humber must have no financial or personal interest in any transaction chargeable against any funds received by ARI, whether a project is internally or externally funded. Examples of conflicts of interest include instances where a project lead or member of a project team has an ownership position in a company that is sponsoring a research project or is receiving payment for work that is already covered by his/her position at Humber. In situations where a potential conflict of interest exists or could arise,

¹ This includes the [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#); the [Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions](#); and with NSERC's [Policy on Intellectual Property](#), which includes the commercial activity of the industrial partner conforms to the university or college's established policies relating to the disclosure of commercial interest and conflict of interest. This SOP also adheres to NSERC's [Guidelines for Organizations Participating in Research Partnerships](#), for management and administration of funding for research and innovation projects.



ARI may request evidence that the company has objectively assessed the commercial potential of the research being undertaken and that the academic interests of the students are protected. This request may come at the beginning of or during the project, at any time when a real or perceived conflict of interest is identified.

D. Project Partners

In order to be an eligible ARI partner, the partnering organization must exist at arm's length from the applicant and co-applicant(s). The partnering organization is not at arm's length if any Humber member of the project team:

- Has an ownership position in the partnering organization;
- Is employed by the partnering organization in any role, whether salaried or not;
- Is a member of a governing board of the partnering organization; or
- Is related to a person who controls or who is a member of a governing board that controls the partnering organization (i.e. are connected by blood relationship, marriage or common-law partnership or adoption).

A researcher's own consulting company or sole proprietorship is not eligible as a partner to collaborate on a project in which the researcher is the applicant or co-applicant. All partnering organizations must be able to provide an objective assessment of the project progress. Therefore, the relationship between the partnering organization and the project lead and team must be sufficiently independent that it is unlikely to have undue influence on 1) how the research project is conducted and 2) the determination of whether the stated objectives are being achieved or not. There may be other requirements for partners, depending on funder requirements.

E. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

It is possible that, as a result of involvement in an ARI project, a member of the project team may be in a position to benefit personally, for example:

- Be named as a co-inventor on a patent application;
 - Become a shareholder or partner in an existing business;
- and/or
- Develop a new business with their collaborators

In such cases, the potential or real conflict of interest may be declared and managed in accordance with the terms of partners and funders.