

Cochrane Conflict of Interest Panel

TERMS OF REFERENCE



1 Purpose

The Conflict of Interest (COI) Panel arbitrates on potential breaches of the [Cochrane Conflict of Interest Policy for Cochrane Library Content](#) and provides general guidance on how the policy should be applied.

2 Scope

The panel will make decisions about specific cases in which it is believed that a declared interest contravenes Cochrane's COI policy or where there is some doubt about the policy breach. It will also respond to queries from anyone seeking general advice on interpretation of the COI policy.

3 Remit

3.1 Duties of the panel

The panel will:

- Review cases and make decisions on individual cases referred from Cochrane Review Groups (CRG) according to the procedure and time frames shown below
- Respond to queries about the COI policy generally
- Comment on revisions of the COI policy
- Provide advice when the Editorial and Methods Dept (EMD) conducts an audit of compliance to the policy
- Prepare an annual report of Panel activity for the Editor in Chief (EiC)
- Participate in training activities that support those creating Cochrane Library content to adhere to the policy
- Assist in the development of supporting materials (e.g. FAQs)

3.2 Referral process

All referrals will be received through the COI inbox and reviewed by the Editorial & Methods Dept (EMD), Research Integrity Editor. Management of cases will be as follows:

- a) Where it is clear that a policy breach HAS occurred cases are managed by the Research Integrity Editor
- b) Where it is clear that a policy breach HAS NOT occurred cases are managed by the Research Integrity Editor
- c) Where there is doubt about a policy breach the Senior Research Integrity Editor will help to either manage the case or refer it to the COI Panel Chair.
- d) The most complex or ambiguous cases will be referred to the COI Panel (see below)

For cases in section d) the chair will generally refer to the full panel, however the decision to refer rests with the chair. In cases where there is disagreement within the panel over the existence of a breach and consensus cannot be achieved, the Senior Research Integrity Editor will make the final decision.

Time frames for CRGS to receive an initial response to their referral are as follows:

- An initial response to cases managed by the EMD Research Integrity Editor – 3 working days

- Cases escalated to the Senior Research Integrity Editor for a ruling or decision to refer to the panel – a further 2 working days
- Cases escalated to the panel chair or the full panel – up to a further 10 working days

3.3 Appeals

The following rules apply if a CRG appeals the decision:

- For cases managed by the Research Integrity Editor, appeals will go to the Senior Research Integrity Editor
- For cases managed by the Senior Research Integrity Editor, appeals will go to the COI Panel and EiC

4 Membership

The panel will be appointed by the Editor in Chief. The panel members will then select a chair who will be responsible for convening the panel for a defined period (See Section 6). The panel will have a maximum of four persons including the panel chair.

5 Accountability and key relationships

The Conflict of Interest Panel reports to the Editor in Chief of the Cochrane Library and will receive administrative support from Editorial and Methods Department.

6 Terms of office

The term of office for COI Panel members is limited to two years, with the possibility of another two-year term, to a maximum of four years, with the agreement of the Editor in Chief and the Editorial Board. The panel chair will be appointed for a period of one year, with the possibility of further year, with the agreement of the Editor in Chief and the Editorial Board. No two panel members should leave the panel at the same time or within twelve months of each other, i.e. panel membership should be staggered so that there is continuity within the panel.

7 Recruitment process

The panel members will be identified through an open, expression of interest process. The Editor in Chief will form a selection committee to select suitable candidate(s).

8 Qualifications

Taken as a whole the panel members must represent a range of skills and experience both inside and outside of Cochrane. Further detail about desirable qualifications is available [here](#).

9 Review

These terms of reference will be reviewed when a review of the Cochrane Conflict of Interest Policy for Cochrane Library Content takes place and on an ad hoc basis when necessary.

Last updated July 2020
