

# Guidelines for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

At each stage of the proposal process, the DFG Head Office examines whether any appearance of bias, favouritism or conflict of interest may exist. However, the DFG is not able to investigate all circumstances that could be interpreted as such. To avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interest, bias or favouritism (hereinafter referred to as "conflicts of interest"), the DFG relies on your assistance.

Please carefully read the DFG's rules for avoiding conflicts of interest presented below. Should circumstances exist that may be interpreted as conflicts of interest, please inform the responsible DFG division before submitting your written review or prior to participating in a meeting. This will enable us to contact another person to participate in the review process or to consider with you whether your participation is advisable. If you submit a written review to the DFG or participate in a DFG meeting without first having contacted the DFG about a possible conflict of interest, the DFG assumes that, to the best of your knowledge, no apparent conflict of interest exists. If, after submitting a written review or following a meeting, you realise that there may be - or may have been - an apparent conflict of interest, you should also contact the DFG Head Office immediately.

## DFG Rules for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

Below you will find a list with examples of criteria that may give the appearance of a conflict of interest. The criteria are classified into two categories: "exclusion" and "individual case decisions". This classification applies to both written and oral review procedures and includes committee meetings.

## Exclusion

If any of the exclusion criteria (items 1-7) listed below apply to you, you will be excluded from the review, evaluation and decision-making processes with respect to the proposal in question. During a meeting, you will be asked to leave the room during proceedings related to that project.

## Individual Case Decisions

If any of the criteria listed under 8-15 apply to you, the DFG's Head Office will examine your case individually. Upon disclosure of the circumstances relating to the potential conflict of interest, the DFG's Head Office will decide whether or not you may participate in the written review process or upcoming meeting. Should such a circumstance become apparent during a meeting, the meeting leadership will decide according to the applicable administrative practice.

During meetings, the following also applies:

If, within the scope of the review and decision-making processes, discussions on the project as a whole or comparative discussions regarding all projects being reviewed in a meeting take place, you may participate, even if you were required to leave the room during the discussion of individual projects. However, during the discussion you may not comment on projects that were addressed in your absence.

During a vote on individual projects, you may not be present if you were excluded from participating during the discussion of these projects. During en bloc voting, on the other hand, you may vote, even if you were required to leave the room during the discussion of one or more of the projects that are being voted on.

## Conflict of Interest Criteria

As a rule, the following circumstances result in **exclusion**:

1. First-degree relationship, marriage, life partnership, domestic partnership
2. Personal financial interest in the proposal's success or financial interest by persons listed under no. 1
3. Current or planned close scientific cooperation
4. For proposals from universities: Spokespersons from research associations are excluded from participating in the peer review panel for proposals that are decided upon in the same meeting as their own proposal.

5. Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship (e.g. teacher-student relationship up to and including the postdoctoral phase) extending six years beyond the conclusion of the relationship
6. a) For proposals from legal persons: The affiliation or pending transfer to this or to a participating institution.  
b) For proposals from natural persons: The affiliation or pending transfer to the same department or to the same non-university research institute.
7. For proposals from universities: Researchers who are active in a university council or similar supervisory board of the applying university are excluded from participating in the review and decision-making process for proposals from this university.

As a rule, the following circumstances must be handled on an **individual case basis**:

8. Relationships that do not fall under no. 1, other personal ties or conflicts.
9. Financial interests of persons listed under no. 8.
10. For proposals from natural persons: The affiliation with or pending transfer to the same university or to the same non-university research institution.
11. Participation in university bodies other than those listed under no. 7, e.g. in scientific advisory committees in the greater research environment.
12. Research cooperation within the last three years, e.g. joint publications.
13. Preparation of a proposal or implementation of a project with a closely related research topic (competition).
14. Participation in an ongoing appointment process or one that has been completed within the past 12 months as an applicant or internal member of the appointment committee.
15. Participation in mutual review processes within the past 12 months.