

Research Grant Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Policy

Overview

Scientific Advisory Panel for the MSA Trust operates according to a Code of Conduct that lays out how Panel members should behave, including declaring vested interests.

The MSA Trust aims to ensure that research proposals are assessed objectively and impartially. Review by an appropriately constituted group is seen as an essential element of the decision-making process. The Board of Trustees relies heavily on the willingness of members of the neurological and lay community to give time to participate in its grant review process through membership of the Scientific Advisory Panel, and appreciates their willingness to do so.

As part of its commitment to impartiality of the independent review process, the Trust has set down the following Code of Conduct. If the Trust has reason to believe that a member of the Panel has breached this Code of Conduct, then he or she may be asked to step down as a reviewer in order to ensure the integrity of the grant review process.

Code of Conduct

1. As a condition of participation, reviewers agree that documents and correspondence relating to applications for funds and funding are strictly confidential and therefore:
 - Should not be discussed with anyone else during review, or either before or after Panel meetings.
 - Anonymised feedback to applicants (successful or unsuccessful) will be provided by the Trust only to avoid confusion. Panel members should not, under any circumstances, provide feedback directly to applicants.
 - Any printouts should be kept securely and disposed of in a secure manner after the decision has been reached.
2. Should a reviewer have a vested interest (organisational, collaborative, personal or other) in the outcome of a grant application they should declare it to the Chair of the Panel and the Chief Executive of the Trust prior to commencement of the review process.
3. Reviewers have a right to expect their comments will be treated in confidence by the Trust's staff, Trustee Board and other members of the Panel.
4. While membership of the Panel will be publicly available, the identity of reviewers in relation to specific grants will be kept confidential.

Conflict of Interest

The Trust makes every effort to ensure its grant decisions are fair, objective and transparent and the following Conflict of Interest stance is applied:

Scientific Advisory Panel

1. When a Panel member is connected with a research grant application, he or she must declare an interest to the Panel Chair and Chief Executive and withdraw from any consideration of that application.
2. That member will not receive documents pertaining to the application, learn the identity of its referees or receive its referees' reports, and will not score the application.
3. He or she must retire from the meeting when the application is assessed.
4. Details of discussion of that application must be removed from any papers the member receives.

Trustees

Trustees are asked by respective Chairs at the beginning of each meeting to declare any conflict of interest concerning items on, or potentially rising from, that meeting's Agenda. This will be formally noted in the record of the meeting and the individual will not take part in any discussions or voting on the item(s) subject to conflict. A conflict of interest is any situation in which a personal interest or loyalties and those of the charity/research issue, arise simultaneously or appear to clash.

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