



# University of Toronto

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT RESEARCH AND ASSOCIATE PROVOST

APPENDIX "B" TO REPORT  
NUMBER 147 OF THE  
ACADEMIC BOARD  
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TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

SPONSOR: John Challis, Vice President, Research and Associate Provost

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DATE: November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006

AGENDA ITEM: 4(c)

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

**University of Toronto Statement on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment**

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs reviews research policies on behalf of the Academic Board. The Academic Board is required by its terms of reference to consider research policies and forward recommendations to the Governing Council.

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:** None

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

The University of Toronto's policies and procedures aim to ensure the highest standards of integrity and accountability in all aspects of the University's activities. These policies reflect our commitment, and that of our faculty and other members of the University, to refrain from activities that could be interpreted as conflicts of interest or conflicts of commitment.

The University's memorandum of understanding with the Tri-Councils (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada) codifies, clarifies and harmonizes the roles and responsibilities of the Agencies and of recipient institutions in the management of federal grants and awards. The Tri-Councils now wish to address conflicts of interest in the memorandum of understanding and to engage the institutions in further development of policies and procedures.

The Tri-Councils are moving toward more specific and encompassing policies and procedures to identify and manage conflicts of interest for individuals at the institutions. In particular, it is expected that the Tri-Council memorandum of understanding will require institutional policies to encompass all researchers, whether funded or unfunded, including certain persons and activities not within the scope of the University's current conflict of interest policies.

The *Statement on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment* (the “COI Statement”) affirms the University’s current policies and procedures. It does not amend existing University policies and guidelines. An illustrative list of applicable policies and guidelines is provided as an appendix to the Statement.

The COI Statement will form the background for further consultation and the introduction of revised institutional conflict of interest policies that are responsive to the policies of the Tri-Councils, taking the following into account:

- respect for the fundamental values of the University and its community
- scope of application within the University community
- articulation of clear principles to identify conflicts of interest and commitment
- effective measures for disclosing and managing conflicts
- the identification and management institutional conflicts as the complexity of institutional relationships grows
- appropriate consistency between University policies and those of our affiliated institutions and funding partners

**FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:** None

**RECOMMENDATION:**

THAT the University of Toronto Statement on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment be approved.

### **Statement on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment**

The University of Toronto is dedicated to supporting and fostering research, teaching and learning, conceptualized, conducted and reported in accordance with the highest standards of academic integrity. As a leading public institution, the University recognizes that the public relies on the University and its members to uphold those standards.

These standards include freedom from conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment as well as transparency in all processes and relationships, ensuring that the public's confidence in the University, and in all activities carried out at the University, is maintained.

Continued growth in the variety and complexity of institutional activities, often conducted in partnership with external entities, has placed a renewed emphasis by funding agencies, the public sector, and the University itself on institutional policies and procedures regarding conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment.

The following statement affirms the commitment of the University to the identification and management of real and perceived conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment within a framework defined by the University's academic mission and its fundamental values.

- 1 At the heart of the University lies the commitment to academic freedom, as set out in the University's *Statement of Institutional Purpose*. Academic freedom is described in the University's *Statement on Freedom of Speech* and in article 5 of the Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association.
- 2 For academic freedom to have vitality, it is critical to encourage and strive for an environment in which academic activities can be undertaken with appropriate regard for the avoidance of conflicts of interest.
- 3 The University's *Policy on Conflict of Interest – Academic Staff* and *Policy on Conflict of Interest – Librarians* describe conflicts of interest and the procedures to be followed when faculty members and librarians engage in professional work from which they derive supplementary income, and establish procedures for other situations which could give rise to apparent conflicts of interest. Other conflict of interest policies, guidelines and practices govern other employee groups at the University. Some members of the University are also governed by related professional standards. Members who obtain research funding from not-for-profit agencies, or who wish to publish research results in scholarly journals or other publications, may also be guided by the policies of those agencies and publishers.
- 4 The University also expects of its members the highest standards of ethical conduct in every aspect of research, in accordance with the University's *Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research*. In the spirit of these standards and the principles of intellectual integrity, responsibility and accountability set out in the *Statement of Institutional Purpose*, ethical conduct necessarily requires the full disclosure and mitigation of actual or perceived conflicts of interest by all members engaged in research. Additionally, the University's policies and procedures with respect to the use of human subjects in research safeguard the rights of those subjects through disclosure of any real or perceived conflicts of interest on the part of the researcher.

- 5 The results of University research are fully disclosable in accordance with the University's *Publication Policy*. When publishing the finding of research, the *Policy on Conflict of Interest – Academic Staff* requires faculty members to disclose the source of funding in the publication unless the faculty member has obtained approval to do otherwise. The policies and practices of journals and other publishers may also require disclosure of potential conflicts of interest and the sources of funding for the published research results. These measures safeguard academic integrity and public accountability.
- 6 Integrity and honesty in the teaching and learning relationship are also central to the University's mission. Co-operation in all phases of this relationship is threatened when one member of the relationship forsakes respect for the other in favour of self-interest. These are areas in which teacher and student share a common interest and common responsibilities. The University's *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* is concerned with the responsibilities of faculty members and students as they co-operate in all phases of the teaching and learning relationship. Divisional policies and procedures also address the relationship of student and teacher, with a view to minimizing the potential for conflicts of interest and to maximize the benefits to all members in furtherance of the University's educational mandate.
- 7 As an institution in receipt of public funds operating with a high degree of autonomy and self-regulation, the University affirms the importance of financial accountability, the principles of freedom of information and the obligation to conduct its operations as much as possible in ways that are open to public scrutiny. Established University policies and guidelines with respect to financial administration, including procurement, set out procedures for the effective and accountable administration of funds with due regard for the avoidance of conflicts of interest. Further, applicable legislation makes much of the information in the University's records publicly accessible, balancing the interest of transparency with the need for protection of privacy.

## **Statement on Conflict of Interest and Commitment – Appendix: Relevant Policies and Statements**

Although not an exhaustive list, the following University of Toronto policies and guidelines are relevant to this statement and may be obtained from the Office of the Governing Council, Simcoe Hall, University of Toronto.

### **Academic Freedom**

- The University of Toronto Statement of Institutional Purpose
- The University of Toronto Statement on Freedom of Speech
- Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association
- Publication Policy

### **Access to Information**

- Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

### **Conduct of Research**

- Policy on Ethical Conduct in Research
- Policy on Research Involving Human Subjects

### **Conflict of Interest**

- Policy on Conflict of Interest – Academic Staff
- Policy on Conflict of Interest – Librarians
- Provost’s Memorandum on Conflict of Interest and Close Personal Relations
- Policy on Conflict of Interest for Administrative Non-Unionized Staff: Confidential
- Policy on Conflict of Interest for Administrative Non-Unionized Staff: Professionals/Managers

### **Financial Administration**

- Guide to Financial Management
- Purchasing Policy

### **The Teaching / Learning Experience**

- Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters