



Guidelines on impartiality and confidence Norwegian Health Association

These guidelines applies to external experts who perform services such as assessment of grant proposals.

For the purpose of these guidelines, The Norwegian Health Association follows the Norwegian Public Administration Act regarding the definition of “Party”: *a person to whom a decision is directed or whom the case otherwise directly concerns. This will also encompass a person who is directly identified in a grant application and who will play a central role in a project.*

The task of assessing impartiality will often require the exercise of a certain measure of discretion. When considering the question of disqualification the essential question has to be: How does this look from the outside? The Norwegian Health Association apt for transparency in all their work. Being an organization funding research on top international level requires openness about the evaluation process so that no action will diminish confidence in the decisions taken.

The following points have to be considered for members of the reference panels:

1. Have a professional cooperation with the applicant, are partners in the proposal or have been a supervisor for someone participating in the proposal

- In general, there must be weighty arguments in play for a situation involving collaboration in a work situation to lead to disqualification. Normal collaboration in a work situation or contact based on work in the same field will not ordinary lead to disqualification. A person who has, or until recently has had, close professional collaboration with a person or institution that is part to a case, may be rendered disqualified because a close professional collaboration may affect the individual’s ability to remain impartial.

2. Have published together with persons participating in the proposal

- In cases where the criteria for credited authorship are fulfilled based on the VANCOUVER CRITERIA, a collaborative relationship may be said to exist, but it is not automatically given that this will lead to disqualification. The numbers of contributors to a publication and the role played by the individual in question may provide some indication of the likelihood that the collaboration is close enough to render the individual disqualified. Co-authorship based on collaboration that took place > 3 years in the past will not lead to disqualification.

3. Are connected with someone taking part in the proposal via employment

- Normal collaboration in a work situation or contact based on work in the same field will not ordinarily lead to disqualification.



- To be disqualified, any special circumstances that may apt to impair confidence should be considered.

4. Are in a personal or professional conflict with persons participating in the proposal

- A person who is, or recently has been, involved in a personal or professional conflict with a party to the case, beyond that which is considered to be normal disagreement, may be disqualified in relation to that party. An example of this could be a situation in which a strongly negative personal characterisation has been expressed in the public media.

5. Have a close personal relationship with persons participating in the proposal

- To be disqualified, a person or someone with whom he or she has a close relationship must have a certain degree of personal interest in the outcome of the case affect the individual's ability to remain impartial.

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