



Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia

Conflict of Interest Policy

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1.0	COI policy	Branch Liaison	Governance Committee	CEO	01/07/2025	01/07/2028

For further information, please email ceo@pacfa.org.au

Proposals for amendments or additions to this document should be sent to the CEO via ceo@pacfa.org.au

PACFA acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of this nation. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work and live. Our office is on the land of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin nation in Naarm/Melbourne and we thank them for their enduring and continuing contribution to the life of this place. We recognise that First Peoples' sovereignty was never ceded. □

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to help members of the Board, Committees and Leadership Groups (Branches, Colleges and Interest groups) as well as staff of Psychotherapy and Counsellors Federation of Australia (PACFA) to effectively identify, disclose and manage any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest to protect the integrity of PACFA and manage risk.

2. Objective

The policy aims to ensure that all volunteers and staff are aware of their obligation to disclose any conflicts of interest that they may have, and to comply with this policy to ensure they effectively manage those conflicts of interest as representatives of PACFA.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers of PACFA including the Board, Committees, Leadership Groups (including Branches, Colleges and Interest groups henceforth referred to as 'Sections') and staff of PACFA.

4. Definition of Conflicts of Interests

A Conflict of Interest occurs when a person's personal or professional interests' conflict with their responsibility to act in the best interests of the organisation.

Personal or professional interests include direct interests, as well as those of family, friends, or other organisations a person may be involved with or have an interest in (for example, as a shareholder, investor, employee or contractor). It also includes a conflict between a Board member's duty to PACFA and another duty that the Board member has (for example, to another organisation).

For PACFA most common potential conflicts of interest include:

- Conflict between responsibilities for commissioning CPD as part of a PACFA Leadership Group and provision of CPD on a commercial basis.
- Conflict between involvement in PACFA accreditation and employment with a Training Provider.
- Conflict between assessment of individuals seeking certification and personal relationships.
- Conflict between the best interests of PACFA and the interests of other organisations an individual is also a member of.

A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived and may be financial or non-financial. These situations present the risk that a person will decide based on, or affected by, these influences, rather than in the best interests of the organisation. Therefore, these situations must be managed as risks to the organisation regardless of whether the risk is financial or reputational.

5. Policy

This policy has been developed to address conflicts of interest affecting PACFA.

Conflicts of interest are common, and they do not need to present a problem to the organisation if they are openly and effectively managed.

It is the policy of PACFA, and the responsibility of staff and volunteers, that ethical, legal, financial or other conflicts of interest be avoided and that any such conflicts (where they do arise) do not conflict with the obligations to PACFA.

PACFA will manage conflicts of interest by requiring staff and volunteers to:

- avoid conflicts of interest where possible
- avoid situations where financial reward relates to any activity that could be understood to be a conflict of interest
- identify and disclose any conflicts of interest at each Section meeting
- carefully manage any conflicts of interest, and
- follow this policy and respond to any breaches

In several areas of PACFA activity, policies have been established to reduce the likelihood of problematic conflicts of interest. These include policies regarding remuneration for Community CPD, criteria for CPD endorsement, and development and implementation of Accreditation. Adherence to these policies protects individuals and PACFA from concerns from members and the community about possible conflicts of interest.

5.1 Responsibility of the Board

The Board is responsible for:

- establishing a system for identifying, disclosing and managing conflicts of interest across the organisation
- monitoring compliance with this policy, and
- reviewing this policy on a biennial basis to ensure that the policy is operating effectively.
- PACFA must ensure that its Board members are aware of the ACNC governance standards, particularly [Governance Standard 5](#), and that they disclose any actual or perceived material conflicts of interests as required by Governance Standard 5.

5.2 Identification and disclosure of conflicts of interest

Once an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest is identified, it must be entered into PACFA's register of interests, as well as being raised with the Board.

Where every other committee member shares a conflict, the Board should refer to ACNC Governance Standard 5 to ensure that proper disclosure occurs.

The register of interests must be maintained by **each Committee Chair/Convenor**. The register must record information related to a conflict of interest (including the nature and extent of the conflict of interest and any steps taken to address it).

5.3 Confidentiality of disclosures

The register is managed by the Chair/Convenor of their Section, shared with the Section, and lodged with the CEO or their delegate. It is updated at each meeting. All information disclosed is accessible to the CEO and President in their roles as related to governance, and at their discretion to other members and staff as deemed necessary.

All conflicts of interest by staff and at Board level are similarly registered in a single register. This is updated at each Board meeting. All information in this document is accessible to all Board members.

6. Action required to manage conflicts of interest

6.1 Conflicts of interests of volunteers

Once the conflict of interest has been appropriately disclosed, the committee (excluding the committee member who has made the disclosure, as well as any other conflicted committee member) must decide whether those conflicted members should:

- vote on any matter that relates to the conflict,
- participate in any debate, or
- be present in the room during the debate and the voting.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a conflict is significant, or likely to prevent a member from regularly participating in discussions, or has not been disclosed appropriately, the committee should alert the CEO and consider if it is appropriate for the person conflicted to resign from the committee.

In deciding what approach to take, the committee will consider:

- whether the conflict needs to be avoided or simply documented
- whether the conflict will realistically impair the disclosing person's capacity to impartially participate in decision-making
- alternative options to avoid the conflict
- the organisation's objects and resources, and
- the possibility of creating an appearance of improper conduct that might impair confidence in, or the reputation of, the organisation.

The approval of any action requires the agreement of at least a majority of the committee (excluding any conflicted committee member/s) who are present and voting at the meeting.

The action and result of the voting will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and in the register of interests, including:

- the date of the meeting
- the nature of the conflict
- the decision of the committee in relation to the conflict; and
- the outcome of the decision.

6.2 Conflicts of interests of staff members

Once a conflict of interest by a staff member has been disclosed and recorded it is up to the CEO to manage the conflict. This should include:

- disclosure to the Board and any relevant Leadership Group
- consideration of any alternative options to avoid conflict
- regular review of potential conflicts to ensure treatment is still appropriate.

6.3 Compliance with this policy

If a person suspects that a volunteer or employee has failed to disclose a conflict of interest, they must contact the CEO in the first instance via ceo@pacfa.org.au. If this is not considered to be appropriate further contact can be made with the President via president@pacfa.org.au or with the Chair of the Governance Committee.

If there is a reason to believe that a person subject to the policy has failed to comply with it, the relevant Section or the CEO will investigate the circumstances.

If it is found that a person has failed to disclose a conflict, the Board may act against them. This may include removing them from the Section. If severe, a referral could be made for a breach of the Code of Conduct in line with the requirements of the Volunteer Agreement.

Further resources

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Volunteer Agreement](#)

[Board Terms of Reference](#)

CPD development policy (in development)

[ACNC Standard 5 \(Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission\)](#)