

## **Guidance for Alexander von Humboldt Foundation peer reviewers on how to address impartiality issues arising from conflicts of interest**

You must be excluded from the peer review process if you have a conflict of interest or may be perceived to have a conflict of interest in the eyes of a third party. If the case is clear cut, please decline the peer review. If you have any doubts, you should clarify the matter with the Humboldt Foundation prior to the start of the peer review process.

1. Impartiality issues arise when there is a danger that unrelated considerations could influence the outcome of your peer review. These may include family or close personal connections, dependent relationships or personal advantages or disadvantages.

If you have reservations or notice anything that causes you concern with regard to scientific ethical issues or breaches of the law or the rules of good scientific practice, this does not constitute a conflict of interest. However, you should document your concerns and if necessary contact the Foundation.

2. Please note that impartiality issues may exist in relation to:
  - the research project
  - the applicant (nominee), his/her mentors or his/her institution<sup>1</sup>
  - the host (nominator) or his/her institution<sup>1</sup>
3. Circumstances leading to impartiality issues may include:
  - a family relationship, close personal ties or personal conflicts
  - existing, planned or recently concluded close academic cooperation, such as undertaking a joint project or a joint publication within the last 3 years
  - direct academic competition with your own projects or plans
  - membership of the same academic institution or an imminent transfer of the peer reviewer to the respective institution or vice versa, including honorary professorships or joint appointments
  - employment related dependency or supervisory relationships (e.g. teacher / pupil relationship) within the last 6 years
  - involvement in ongoing or very recently concluded appointment procedures (professorial or other) relating to the applicant or nominee (e.g. as applicant or member of an appointment panel)
  - ongoing participation in an advisory body of the respective institutions, e.g. an academic advisory board
  - personal financial or commercial interests in the funding decision

Should we not receive any indication from you that there are pertinent impartiality issues, we will assume that it is your belief that no such impartiality issues exist. In any event, please declare your connections to the institutions and individuals concerned in your review.

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of applications by individuals, "institution" is taken to mean the university faculty, the same department of a non-university research institution, or the same university hospital but also cooperation in supra-disciplinary structures such as interdisciplinary centres of excellence or similar. In the case of applications by institutions (e.g. the Alexander von Humboldt Professorship), "institution" is taken to mean the institution in its entirety.