

Guide to Addressing Common Conflicts of Interest in Resident Selection

When a potential conflict of interest (COI) is identified by a selection committee member, they should promptly inform and discuss with their Program Director (PD) or Selection Committee Chair to determine whether there is a need to modify or preclude their participation in the selection process.

The following table lists the most common COIs in the context of resident selection, indicates the seriousness of the conflict (“red” = avoid at all times vs. “yellow” = avoid whenever possible), and recommends the appropriate action(s) to mitigate the conflict. Some of these COIs will need to be considered and discussed on a case-by-case basis, as the details of the relationship or circumstances may dictate what is the most appropriate action to be taken.

Conflict of Interest	Flag	Recommended Action(s)
Participated in preparatory or advisory roles related to medical school or residency application offered by commercial organizations*	Red	Individual must not be allowed to participate as a selection committee member
Currently participating and/or participated within the last two years in the residency admissions and selection process of another university’s Faculty of Medicine	Red	Individual must not be allowed to participate as a selection committee member
Approached by a donor who attempted to influence you in your capacity as a selection committee member	Red	Recuse from the entire selection process Contact PGME for further advice
Applicant is a relative†, friend, or friend’s family member	Red	Recuse from the entire selection process
Has a current or former financial/business relationship with the applicant or applicant’s family	Red	Recuse from the entire selection process
Applicant previously cared for or currently being seen as a patient	Red	Recuse from reviewing the applicant’s file, interviewing the applicant, and discussing the applicant in the final ranking meeting‡
Worked closely with an applicant to support their residency application	Yellow	Recuse from the entire selection process or assign to a different CaRMS application stream
Wrote a reference letter for an applicant	Yellow	Recuse from reviewing the applicant’s file, interviewing the applicant, and discussing the applicant in the final ranking meeting

* Please refer to Temerty Faculty of Medicine’s *Statement on Admissions Advisory Work and Residency Program Selection*.

† Relative includes children, siblings, spouses/partners, parents, grandparents, uncles/aunts, cousins, and nieces/nephews.

‡ Depending on specific circumstances and details of the relationship, it may be most appropriate to recuse from the entire selection process.

Conflict of Interest	Flag	Recommended Action(s)
Acted as a primary supervisor for an applicant in a clinical elective (i.e., not just in an isolated occasion such as on call) or research project		Recuse from reviewing the applicant's file, interviewing the applicant, and discussing the applicant in the final ranking meeting
Participated in a mentorship role with an applicant that focused on general topics such as professional development and work-life integration		Recuse from reviewing the applicant's file, interviewing the applicant, and discussing the applicant in the final ranking meeting
Approached by a colleague who offered unsolicited feedback about an applicant		<p>At a minimum, recuse from reviewing the applicant's file, interviewing the applicant, and discussing the applicant in the final ranking meeting</p> <p>Recuse from the entire selection process if there is perception of an inappropriate attempt to exert influence</p> <p>Program should leave the unsolicited verbal information and feedback boxes unchecked on their CaRMS program description</p>
Currently in or recently held an education leadership or major assessor role in the U of T MD Program (e.g., course directors, Chief Examiner of Clerkship OSCE) that allows access to more granular information of an applicant's performance beyond the medical school transcript		<p>Recuse from reviewing files of U of T applicants, interviewing U of T applicants, and discussing U of T applicants in the final ranking meeting</p> <p>or</p> <p>Assign to the IMG selection process</p>

We recognize that some of the recommended actions are not always feasible in smaller programs and divisions. In such instances, we strongly recommend consultation with the Postgraduate Medical Education (PGME) Office to discuss, and the following measures should be considered:

- Use standardized criteria, questions and scoring rubrics as well as proper rater training to reduce bias and ensure reliability in scoring
- Diversify the selection committee by considering non-physician raters (e.g., allied health) or physician raters from another related specialty
- PD or Selection Committee Chair overtly acknowledges potential biases and conflicts of interest, and clearly outlines processes to reduce or mitigate these (e.g., adhere to the scoring rubric and assign ratings solely based on performance at the interview, what types of information are allowed as part of the discussion in ranking meetings vs. those that are not, explicit guidelines on how the rank order list should be finalized)

If you have any questions, including any specific conflicts of interest that are not listed in this guide, please contact [Dr. David Chan](#), PGME Faculty Lead, Admissions & Transitions.