



معهد الدوحة الدولي للأسرة
Doha International Family Institute

البحوث لدعم السياسات الأسرية
Research to advance family policies

عضو في مؤسسة قطر
Member of Qatar Foundation

Code of Practice


DIFI Code of Conduct, Conflict of
Interest and Confidentiality Policy

October 2023

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1. Record of Amendments

Rev	Approval Date	Document ID Code	Description of Change
00		XX-DD-POL-000	Initial Release

2. Purpose

DIFI seeks to ensure the quality and integrity of the research it funds by developing, implementing, coordinating, and overseeing policies and procedures that provide fair standards, and transparent and consistent processes for receiving, evaluating, and monitoring research proposals under OSRA Research Grant. Furthermore, DIFI aims to preserve public confidence in the scientific research it funds and to sustain public trust in its professional judgement in distributing the funds allocated for developing research in Qatar.

This document describes the standards of transparency and equity by which DIFI abides in processing the proposals it receives and the research projects it awards. Moreover, this document lays out the standards of integrity and confidentiality expected from all those involved in the processes of submitting, assessing, and managing research proposals and projects.

2.1 Objectives


In fostering scientific integrity, DIFI ensures that:

- Equal opportunity is strictly observed, and fair treatment is guaranteed to all applicants and awardees.
- Scientific claims and findings are credible.
- Conflict of interest disclosure and management processes are transparent for all grant applicants, awardees, reviewers, DIFI's employees, and partnering/joint institution employees.

3. Scope

This document describes the practices and guidelines that shall apply to all those involved in the processes of submitting, assessing, and managing research proposals and projects. This includes applicants, awardees, reviewers, DIFI employees, or partnering/joint funding institution(s) employees (as determined by the agreement between DIFI and the partnering/joint funding institution employees, as applicable).



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4. Terms and Abbreviations

Term	Definition
COI	Conflict of Interest (see section 5 below)
DIFI	Doha International Family Institute
Reviewer	A qualified person who is assigned by DIFI to evaluate submitted research proposals for OSRA Grant Program. This person can be a DIFI employee or an expert in a relevant research area. This term refers to both peer reviewers and panelists.
CFP	Call For Proposal

5. DIFI Code of Conduct

5.1. Equal Opportunity

DIFI is committed to a policy of equal opportunity in that eligible applicants will receive equal treatment regardless of race, color, religion, disability, age, gender, and nationality (except where the conditions of the scheme specify otherwise).

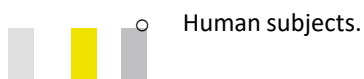
5.2. Transparency of Information

In outlining the application procedures, DIFI issues guidelines on the information to be supplied by applicants in support of requests for funds, details of the criteria against which applications will be assessed, and the process and timescale for review of the application. Also, DIFI is committed to organize public sessions whenever it deems fit to clarify details of the program. To ensure transparency, accuracy, and equal opportunity, DIFI will accept queries and questions submitted in writing through email to difigrants@qf.org.qa.

5.3. Ethics Standards

DIFI requires that all research funded through its portfolio of programs shall be conducted in an ethical manner. The following considerations shall apply to all proposals, progress and final reports it receives:


- Accurate reporting of findings and a commitment to enabling others to replicate and use results where applicable.
- Fair treatment in respect of other researchers and their intellectual property.
- Accuracy in declaring the purpose, methods, and intended use of the research, and any risks involved.
- Confidentiality of information supplied by research subjects and anonymity of respondents (unless otherwise agreed with research subjects and respondents and as determined by the relevant ethical reviewing committee(s) (Peer Reviewers and Programmatic Reviewers).
- Independence and impartiality of researchers to the subject of the research.
- Wherever necessary, appropriate consent should be obtained from, or on behalf of participants or others affected by the research for research projects involving:



Human subjects.

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- Research involving use of sensitive social, economic, or political data.
- While DIFI recognizes that researchers are allowed to benefit from their work and expertise, their prime aim should be focused on benefiting the society and advancing knowledge. Therefore, DIFI recognizes the conflict of interests such competing responsibilities may generate and expects its researchers and reviewers to manage and disclose such matters in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures (*please see section 5 below for DIFI's COI policy*).

5.4. Applications' Data Protection

Applicants are required to formally submit their application forms to indicate that the information provided therein is, to the best of their knowledge, complete and accurate. Applicants should be aware that information they provide would be stored and circulated as necessary for evaluation procedures to be conducted. Awardees should be aware that the information they provide on the application form may be copied by the relevant research office of their employing institution as necessary for award procedures to be followed. Furthermore, information on the status of their award may be made available to the relevant authorized officer(s) in their employing institution by DIFI as necessary for the conditions of award to be fulfilled. Application records will be retained for at least ten years for successful applications, and for five years for unsuccessful applications. These records may be consulted by DIFI in the event of future applications being submitted. To that end:

- Details about the applicants (including but not limited to name, institution, project summary and amount of award, collaborators) will be used to compile lists of award-holders, and to produce statistical and historical information on DIFI awards. Submitting the application by applicants and vetting it by the submitting institution constitute their consent to all terms and conditions of the application. Once DIFI has received the final applications, it will respect the integrity of these applications and not alter them in any way.
- Data Usage by DIFI shall comply with the Qatari Law No. (13) of 2016 Concerning the Protection of the Privacy of Personal Data and all applicable laws.

5.5. Evaluation Process

DIFI is committed to follow a thorough merit review process. To that end, it will recruit appropriate and qualified experts to evaluate all eligible applications on their merit through a sound and robust review process. Recommendations are passed to the relevant reviewing committee and DIFI higher management for final decision on awards. Records of the evaluation process will be kept with restricted access in DIFI's databases.


5.6. Outcome of Applications

- Applicants will be notified through DIFI-Grants Portal or via email about the outcome of their applications together with narrative in the form of anonymous comments from reviewers as DIFI deems fit.
- DIFI shall not accept any appeal concerning its final award decision. However, appeals are allowed for the outcome of the initial screening process of the proposals; in such a case, DIFI will provide a reasonable period of time for submitting such appeals and applicants will be informed in writing whether feedback can be expected as a feature of the scheme.



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- Recipients of awards will be notified DIFI-Grants Portal or via email about any requirements and/or conditions governing the award in which they have been successful and are required to adhere to them.

5.7. Information for Reviewers

Confidentiality

Reviewers who undertake the evaluation of applications are required to give assurance that all information which they acquire in the discharge of their duties be kept confidential and not be transmitted to any persons other than in accordance with the prescribed procedures for the selection process. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that such information is kept in a secure place and in due course disposed of in a secure fashion (or returned to DIFI). Information provided to reviewers in an application for funding must only be used for the purposes of evaluating the proposal in accordance with DIFI's guidelines.

Conflict of Interest (COI)

DIFI aims to ensure that all employees and reviewers are aware of their obligations to disclose any conflict(s) of interest that they may have, and to comply with the policy set forth in section 6 below to ensure effective management of such conflicts of interest. Hence all employees and reviewers are required to:

- Declare actual or potential conflicts of interest, and
- Observe the guidelines stated in section 5 of this document.

Reviewers

Reviewers involved in the review and members of DIFI internal committee(s) must abstain from applying to the call/program in question. If reviewers are unsure whether their ability to assess a proposal is compromised in any way, they should inform DIFI of the relevant circumstances so that guidance can be sought on individual cases. A log of such incidents shall be retained by DIFI.

Fair Evaluation

DIFI is committed to ensure that all its reviewers are drawn from experts in the subject of the research area reviewed and/or its application and are capable of objectively evaluating research proposals in their respective fields. For its part, DIFI will make sure that all details of the review process are available in the relevant CFP documents of the program/call.

6. Conflict of Interest


Conflict of Interest (COI) is defined as: "Any financial or other interest which conflicts with the services of the individual because it: (1) could significantly impair the individual's objectivity or (2) could create an unfair competitive advantage for any person(s) or organization(s)".

COI may also include instances where an individual's opinion may be biased due to personal beliefs, gender, nationality, etc. COI could occur when individuals have secondary interest(s) (including financial gain, desire for professional advancement, recognition for personal achievement, favors to friends, family, students, or colleagues) that is different from the institute's best interest(s). COI could also be defined if an outside observer could reasonably think that a person's judgement or objectivity could be biased by a



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situation. In addition to the above, DIFI expects all employees and reviewers to acknowledge and remain conscious of their bias(es) and ensure objective evaluation of their proposals and reports. All reviewers are required to sign or acknowledge online the COI form before starting any review.

To this end, DIFI fosters this COI Policy to assure the scientific integrity of the proposals it receives, and the research projects it manages by adopting appropriate steps to disclose and manage conflict of interest. This COI policy also promotes objectivity in research by establishing standards that provide a reasonable expectation that the design, conduct, and reporting of research performed under OSRA Research Grant will be free from bias or partial judgment.

This policy presents rules governing the management of COI, prejudice, bias, or predisposition with respect to individuals involved in the following:

- The selection and use of individuals participating as reviewers.
- Individuals participating as reviewers.
- Participating DIFI employees based on each of their different roles in all stages of DIFI review, funding and monitoring of proposals /projects, such as but not limited to: reviewers, program managers or administrators involved in the grant life cycle.
- Partnering/joint funding institutions involved in joint funding programs, steering committees, when reviewing proposals, monitoring project progress or developing a program white paper and other master documents, e.g., CFP, ...etc.

6.1. Types of Conflict of Interest:

Conflict of Interest-Real (COI-Real):

Regardless of the level of financial involvement or other interest, if any of the above individuals feels unable to provide objective advice, they are expected to inform the relevant designated program officer through completing the conflict-of-interest form and/or recuse themselves from the review of the application at issue. Furthermore, a DIFI employee who has a COI-Real with an application may not participate in its review unless an approved COI management plan has been completed.

Conflict of Interest-Apparent/bias (COI-Apparent):

When the appearance of the above COI is identified, the DIFI designated officer will evaluate the appearance of COI and determine, in accordance with this policy, whether the conflict of interest would likely lead to bias in the evaluation of the application by a reviewer. A DIFI employee/reviewer who has an apparent COI with an application may not participate in its review unless a waiver is granted based on approved COI management plan as stated below.

Providing/Offering Consultation/Lectures, or Receiving Compensation from DIFI Grant

DIFI employees who are involved in the different stages of DIFI review/funding decisions and monitoring process (from pre-award till project completion) shall not receive any remuneration (tangible and/or intangible) either directly or indirectly from DIFI grant. In addition, all DIFI employees shall not receive any form of monetary compensation for consulting, lecturing, writing, or participating in public discussions concerning the responsibilities, programs, or operations of DIFI.


Waivers (Deviations)

- The assigned reviewer committee by DIFI may waive application of the confidentiality rules of the established DIFI policy and authorize use of non-public information for the public interest.



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Any such authorization must be in writing.

- The Reviewing Committee is authorized to waive (upon obtaining approval or delegation from DIFI's internal committee) the requirement for recusal due to COI-Real or COI-Apparent, as defined in this policy, when the responsible official at DIFI determines that there are no other practical means for securing appropriate expert advice to provide a competent review of a grant. Authorization for granting a waiver may be delegated to the designated DIFI officer who will document the incident and the adequate justification (submitted by the employee/reviewer in question) for the waiver. DIFI's internal committee (or the authorized DIFI officer) will determine whether the COI is not substantial as to likely affect the integrity of the advice to be provided by the reviewer, a decision made by DIFI, or a partnering/joint funding institution's employee/reviewer who is involved in the application or proposal review process of a relevant grant.

Managing (COI) in DIFI's grant "OSRA Grant"


Each reviewer, employee, or employee of a partnering/joint founding institution involved in the application or award administration process, or in the decision-making process must certify to the best of their knowledge that they have disclosed all conflicts of interest that they may have with any of the proposals/awarded projects they are involved with. For a given proposal/grant, COI- Real is defined as any of the following situations:

- **Direct financial benefit:** A reviewer, employee, employee of a partnering/joint funding institution involved in the application or award administration process a particular study must disclose if they or their close relative could receive direct benefit from any proposal/grant reviewed or managed [that equals or exceeds QR 500].
- **Indirect financial benefit:** A reviewer employee, employee of a partnering/joint funding institution involved in the application or award administration process of a particular study must disclose if they or their close relative could receive indirect financial benefit, from any of the multiple KI(s) institution with applications under review or being managed by the individual in question [that equals or exceeds QR 500].
- **Received/Receiving and/or retained/retaining an honorarium or award** from the institution(s) they are involved in reviewing or administering their awards within the last 12 months.
- **Major professional roles:** A reviewer, employee, or employee of a partnering/joint funding institution involved in the application or award administration process of a particular study must disclose if they are contributing to the scientific development or execution of any project under review in a substantive, measurable way (as key personnel, or in other significant role as a contributor, collaborator, or consultant).
- **Employment:** A reviewer or employee of a partnering/joint funding institution who is a salaried, full or part-time employee of any of the investigators, or any of the institutions submitting an application may not participate in the evaluation of that grant application.
- **Conflicts of commitment/conflicts of effort or obligation:** A reviewer, employee, or employee of a partnering/joint funding institution who is involved in the application or award administration and at the same time they process a particular study must disclose if their paid or unpaid outside activities could interfere or have the appearance of interfering with the commitment to one's primary employer.
- **Previously employed (within the last 24 months);** or being considered for employment or re-employment with a grantee institution.



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- **Other current employment with the institution**, such as consulting or an advisory arrangement.
- **Current membership on any committee(s)** or similar body at a grantee institution (only for proposals that the internal committee or similar body advises).
- **Any office, governing board membership, or relevant committee** chairperson in the institution (ordinary membership in a professional society or association is not considered an office).
- **Formal or informal re-employment arrangement** with a grantee institution.
- **Ownership of securities** of firms involved in the proposal or application [that in aggregate exceeds or equals 5% of the firm(s)' value].
- **Professional associates:** A reviewer, employee, or employee of a partnering/joint funding institution involved in the application or award administration process must disclose if a professional associate (colleague, scientific mentor, student, collaborator, etc., within the last four years) plays a major professional role on a grant application may not participate in the evaluation of that application; OR if they write a reference letter for an applicant or candidate to accompany a fellowship or career award application and that application is the one in question; OR if they write a letter of general support for the application in question but play no substantive role in the proposed work; OR if they serve as a member of a Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) for the project or investigator(s); OR if they are named as a speaker in a conference grant application.
- **Relationships between a doctoral student/Ph.D. adviser:** represent a lifelong COI.
- **Collaboration on a project or co-author** of a book, article, report, patent, or paper within the last four (4) years.
- **Co-editor of a journal, compendium, or conference proceedings:** within the last two (2) years.
- **COI-Apparent:** occurs in situations where a reasonable individual (with all the relevant facts) may question the impartiality or objectivity of an employee, reviewer, or panelist. It also includes instances where a reasonable person (with all the relevant facts) may perceive that the professional's judgment is likely to be compromised due to their personal beliefs, former/present relationships, biases, or prejudice. COI-Apparent is treated in the same manner as a COI-Real unless otherwise determined by the responsible individual.

7. Disclosures

Each DIFI reviewer, employee, or employee of a partnering/joint funding institution involved in the application or award administration process, or in the decision-making process must also certify that they fully understand the confidential nature of the review process and award administration process, and agree to:

- Disclose all potential conflicts.
- Not to disclose or discuss the materials associated with the review, the evaluation with any other individual except as authorized by the designated DIFI officer.
- Maintain the confidentiality of others (reviewers, applicants, and awardees); and
- Refer all inquiries concerning the review to the designated DIFI officer.

