

# Foundation Awards Panel

## Terms of Reference

### Policy Declaration

These Terms of Reference establish the Foundation Awards Panel, detailing its memberships and responsibilities, and providing guidance as to its proceedings.

### 1. Interpretation

Where relevant, capitalised terms have the same meaning as defined in Part 11.9 of the RACGP Constitution.

To the extent of any inconsistencies under these Terms of Reference, the following order of interpretation will apply:

- these Terms of Reference;
- the Foundation Committee Terms of Reference;
- The RACGP Constitution.

### 2. Definitions

For these Terms of Reference and addendums definitions that apply are as follow:

- **Application** – A submission by an individual or organisation seeking funding through a Foundation-administered grant, award or scholarship.
- **Award** – A financial contribution provided by the Foundation through a competitive selection process, including grants, scholarships or recognition awards.
- **Conflict of interest** – Any situation where a Panel member's personal, professional, or financial interests could improperly influence, or be perceived to influence, their impartiality in assessing applications.
- **Cultural advisor** – An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with relevant cultural knowledge, recognised by the RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee, or equivalent body, as having appropriate cultural competency. Cultural advisors may be internal RACGP staff or external individuals.
- **Foundation** – The Australian General Practice Research Foundation, established by the RACGP to solicit, receive, administer, and apply donations, grants, bequests, and other contributions in support its charitable purpose of advancing health.
- **Foundation Committee** – The governing body appointed to oversee the Foundation's operations and make decisions related to the management and distribution of Foundation funds.
- **Foundation staff** – RACGP employees who support the Foundation's day-to-day operations. Final decision-making authority sits with the Manager of the Foundation team, or equivalent position.

- **Funding program** – An overarching initiative grouping multiple related rounds or awards, typically managed together and aligned to a broader goal or funding cycle (e.g. the Foundation’s annual research grants and awards program).
- **Funding round** – A single, specific call for applications for a specific award within a funding program, governed by set guidelines and criteria.
- **Moderation** – A process where panel members meet to discuss scoring variation and reach consensus on funding recommendations.
- **Panel** – A group of individuals convened by the Foundation to assess and score eligible applications for a particular funding round or program. ‘The Panel’ may refer to one or several working versions of the Panel.
- **Scoring variation** – The percentage difference in scores between Panel members for a single application.

### 3. Purpose

The Foundation Awards Panel is convened by the Australian General Practice Research Foundation to assess applications for Foundation-administered grants, awards, and scholarships.

### 4. Establishment

The Foundation Awards Panel is an advisory working group convened by the Australian General Practice Research Foundation with different versions of the Panel serving on a temporary basis for specific application rounds for Foundation-administered grants, awards, and scholarships.

The Foundation Awards Panel will report to the Foundation Committee.

### 5. Authority

The Foundation Awards Panel will conduct its business in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

The Foundation Awards Panel is an advisory committee that provides advice to the Foundation Committee.

Foundation staff will develop an annual workplan and budget for the Foundation Awards Panel for submission to the Foundation Committee.

### 6. Role & Responsibilities

The Role of the Panel is to:

- Review all applications transparently and fairly, in accordance with published guidelines, selection criteria, and the Foundation’s strategic objectives and funding priorities.
- To inform grant award recommendations which advance the Foundation’s commitment to research excellence, equity, and member value.

The Panel is responsible for:

- Reviewing, scoring and providing feedback on eligible applications and project change requests in accordance with the relevant program guidelines and selection criteria.
- Participating in moderation discussions to reach consensus where required.

- Making formal funding recommendations to the Foundation Committee for endorsement.
- Providing feedback to inform future assessment rounds, design, or process improvements.
- Supporting transparent eligibility assessment processes.

## 7. Panel Composition

The Panel is not a standing committee and does not have fixed membership. A version of the Panel will be convened as a working group with different members for each funding round. Multiple working Panels will be convened during a year and may serve concurrently.

Foundation staff are responsible for the composition of each version of the Awards Panel convened to work on a funding round.

Requirements for Panel composition include:

- The Panel must comprise an odd number of members to support balanced assessment and consensus-building, with no less than three members.
- Panel members may include general practitioners, GP registrars, researchers, consumer representatives, cultural advisors, RACGP employees, and representatives of funding partners.
- All Panel members must have demonstrable expertise, professional or lived experience, or cultural knowledge relevant to the objectives and focus area of the funding round or program.
- To ensure appropriate clinical insight and relevance, at least 50% of members must be general practitioners.
- For funding rounds or programs that include a research component (e.g. research grants, Higher Degree by Research scholarships and bursaries, or awards supporting or recognising researchers), at least 50% of Panel members must hold academic research qualifications and experience in a relevant field to ensure appropriate academic input.
- For funding rounds, programs or applications that focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health or are specifically intended to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, the Panel must comprise an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural advisor to ensure culturally safe, informed and representative assessment.
- Individuals who intend to apply, have applied or are a named investigator on an application for a grant, award or scholarship in a given funding round may not serve as a member of the Panel for that round under conflict of interest requirements.
- Members of the Foundation Committee or Foundation staff may not serve as a member of the Panel.

## 8. Time Commitment & Honorarium

Time commitment will vary but typically includes reviewing and scoring applications over a period of at least two weeks and attending one moderation session during standard business hours.

The Foundation may offer an honorarium to panel members, except in cases where the member is an RACGP employee or a representative of a funding partner.

Panel members will be advised of the expected timeline, deliverables and honorarium in advance.

## 9. Conduct

Members of the Award Panel will comply with the RACGP Member Code of Conduct.

## 10. Conflicts Of Interest

The Panel operates in accordance with RACGP's Conflict of Interest and Related Party Transactions Policy, and the Foundation Conflict of Interest Policy and the Foundation Committee's Conflict of Interest Guidelines.

All panel members must declare any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest before reviewing applications.

Members with a conflict may be required to step down from the Panel or may be recused from assessing or discussing affected applications.

The Foundation Committee's Conflict of Interest Guidelines provides detail about different types of conflicts of interest with applications and requirements and options for managing them.

Conflicts of interest and their management will be recorded by Foundation staff and reported to the Foundation Committee.

Foundation staff are responsible for managing conflict of interest requirements for the Awards Panel, according to attached guidelines (Addendum C).

Foundation staff will escalate unclear conflicts of interest regarding Panel members and proposed actions to manage the conflict to the Foundation Committee Chair for approval. Management of COI will be reported to the Foundation Committee.

Breaches of conflict of interest requirements will be reported to the Foundation Committee Chair in the first instance and the next Foundation Committee meeting.

The Chair will also inform the relevant Awards Panel about any Foundation Committee declaration of conflict of interest with a grant application and resulting actions to manage the conflict of interest.

## 11. Confidentiality

Award Panel members will receive or have access to confidential, sensitive and personal information. They acknowledge they must only use or disclose such information to the extent necessary to satisfy their duties and responsibilities.

If there is uncertainty as to whether any information is confidential, such information is deemed confidential and not within the public domain.

Panel members must safeguard the confidentiality of any information received by adopting and maintaining reasonable precautions.

Panel members must notify the RACGP Company Secretary if they become aware of any actual, suspected or likely disclosure of confidential RACGP information.

Panel members may be required to enter into a confidentiality agreement may be required prior to participation.

## 12. Auditing & Continuous Improvement

Following the assessment of each funding round or program, Foundation staff and Panel members will be invited to provide structured feedback on the assessment process. This feedback will be reported to the Foundation Committee and used to identify opportunities for improvement in assessment guidelines, processes and Panel engagement.

Annual audit of the Panel processes and outcomes will be conducted by Foundation staff and an RACGP staff member independent to the Foundation and with the appropriate skills and knowledge. Results will be reported to the Foundation Committee. The audit will include Panel composition, conflict of interest processes, scoring consistency, and compliance with these Terms of Reference.

### 13. Review

The Foundation Committee will review these Terms of Reference annually, to ensure ongoing relevance and alignment with best practice, RACGP policy, and strategic objectives.

### 14. Amendments

These Terms of Reference may be amended or updated by the Foundation Committee at any time.

### 15. Amendments

**RACGP Member Code of Conduct.**

**RACGP Conflict of Interest Guidelines**

**Foundation Committee Terms of Reference**

Version:

Approved	Date	Version
		1

## Addendum A: Protocol for Appointing Panel Members

### Appointing Panel Members

- a) Prior to each funding round or program, Foundation staff will determine the required expertise, perspectives and cultural representation based on the set guidelines and criteria and the Panel composition requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference.
- b) Foundation staff will develop a shortlist of potential Panel members based on these requirements, drawing on experienced assessors and new candidates with relevant expertise or lived experience. New candidates may be identified through a call for expressions of interest or by direct appointment.
- c) Shortlisted candidates will be contacted to confirm interest and availability. Those confirmed will receive induction materials outlining their role, assessment guidelines and key policies.
- d) Following the close of applications, Foundation staff will conduct conflict of interest checks, assign applications to non-conflicted assessors, and provide secure access to the digital assessment platform.
- e) If a Panel member has a conflict of interest with an application which will be managed by the Panel member stepping down from the Panel, then Foundation staff may co-opt an appropriately qualified assessor to serve on the Panel in their place and review those specific applications.
- f) In cases where a Panel member has a conflict of interest which will be managed by recusal from specific applications then Foundation staff may co-opt an appropriately qualified assessor to review those specific applications.
- g) Any co-opted assessor must meet the relevant Panel composition requirements outlined in these Terms of Reference and will be bound by the same confidentiality, conflict of interest, and assessment obligations as Panel members.
- h) All assessors, including co-opted assessors, will be recorded in a register of assessors maintained by Foundation staff.

## Addendum B: Application Assessment

Requirements and processes for assessment of applications for Foundation funding by the Awards Panel supported by Foundation staff are:

### Application Eligibility

- a) Foundation staff will conduct and document an eligibility review for each application prior to Panel assessment.
- b) Applications deemed ineligible based on published criteria will be excluded and this will be communicated transparently to the applicant.
- c) Eligibility decisions will be recorded and available to the Panel for reference.

### Application Assessment Process

- a) Eligible applications will be reviewed individually by Panel members, who will score them according to program-specific guidelines and selection criteria. .
- b) Where the total value of an award does not exceed \$100,000 and an application for that award is rated highest by all Panel members, that application will be recommended for funding. If, however, a co-opted assessor is involved in the assessment of that application, the scoring variation between members for the highest-rated application for that award must also be less than 15% to ensure consistency and reliability in scoring.
- c) Where the total value of an award exceeds \$100,000, or where the above condition is not met, the Panel must reach consensus on the final recommendation, either through a moderation meeting or email circular
- d) Recommendations may include full, partial, conditional funding or no funding, depending on the merits of the application, project budget, and program funding limit.
- e) If an application recommended by the Panel focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and/or involves research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, it must be reviewed by an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural advisor prior to final submission to the Foundation Committee. The advisor's feedback must be documented and included with the Panel's recommendation for consideration by the Committee.

### Moderation

- a) Panel members may be required to attend a moderation meeting, depending on the value of the award and scoring variation between members, in which the Panel must come to an agreement on a funding recommendation through discussion and consensus.
- b) Moderation meetings will typically be held via videoconference.
- c) Moderation meetings will be facilitated by Foundation staff to support structured discussion and ensure consistency with RACGP and Foundation policies and processes. A lead panel member may be nominated to assist to guide panel discussions to reach consensus.
- d) Foundation staff do not assess applications or participate in moderation discussions and funding decisions.

- e) Foundation staff will attend moderation meetings in a secretariat capacity to support administrative and coordination functions and ensure appropriate documentation of funding decisions.
- f) In the event that consensus is not reached, a new panel will be appointed to reassess all applications in the round.

#### **Recommendations to the Foundation Committee**

- a) Foundation staff will document the Panel's funding recommendations, including COI management, scoring outcomes and any relevant feedback or commentary.
- b) These recommendations will be submitted to the Foundation Committee for review and endorsement.
- c) The Foundation Committee may request additional information or clarification from Foundation staff or the Panel where required to support decision-making.
- d) Foundation conference awards will be awarded at the conference based on recommendations from the Foundation Awards Panel, and reported to the next Foundation Committee meeting.



## Addendum C: Conflict of Interest Guidance for Awards Panel Members

### Guidelines for Conflict-Of-Interest Disclosure

Before allocating expressions of interest (EOIs) or applications for assessment, the Foundation team undertake a screening process to identify and manage potential Conflicts of Interest (COI) for each Panel member against each EOI or application.

The team automatically consider a COI exists for any EOI or application on which a potential Panel member is a named investigator.

The team then request that potential Panel members self-disclose further potential COIs which may include:

- Involvement with the EOI/application under review.
- Working relationships.
- Professional relationships and associations.
- Social relationships or associations.
- Collaborations, teaching or supervisory relationships.
- Involvement in the research topic.
- Financial relationships, interests or pecuniary benefit (including immediate family members and other associates).
- Affiliation or association with an organisation involved or benefiting from the research.
- Institutional interests and relationships (eg parties to research have another relationship with affiliated or associated organisation).
- Other relevant interests or relationships.

Potential panel members are provided with a list of application titles, applicants and institutions for their review. They are asked to indicate if they believe they have an actual or perceived COI with any project or investigators.

### Guidelines for Assessment of Conflict-Of-Interest

The following guide is used to support self-assessment of COI and level of COI.

High level COI: you would not be appointed to assess applications in a round where you have a high level of COI.

As a guide, the following will typically be regarded as a HIGH level COI:

- Any COI you feel you cannot fairly and impartially judge the application.
- Any COI which involves a financial or pecuniary interest in the application.
- Any application on which you are an investigator, or have made a substantial contribution (including writing, reviewing or advising on sections of the application, beyond the provision of brief, general advice).
- Any application where you have been actively involved in a research collaboration within the last three years with any Chief Investigator in the application.

- Any application where you currently work in the same team as the Applicant/ Chief Investigators (eg. Same Department of General Practice).
- Any application where or your immediate family member has a close personal or supervisory relationship with any investigator (including direct report, mentoring or research supervision/co-supervision).

Low level COI: you would be recused from assessing applications where you have low COI.

As a guide, the following will typically be regarded a LOW level COI:

- Any application where you are planning future research collaborations with any investigator but are not actively involved currently in seeking funding or otherwise pursuing the research.
- Any application where you are a co-author on a recent or pending publication with the applicant or any investigator but has not been actively involved in a research collaboration within the last three years.
- Any application where you have been actively involved in a research collaboration within the last three years with an Associate Investigator (AI).

Actions to manage COI will be managed by Foundation staff and approved by the Manager of the Foundation team. COI issues which are unable to be resolved through the current guideline will be raised to the Chair Foundation Committee.