

CONDUCTING RESEARCH RESPONSIBLY

HANDBOOK

FOR WHOM? WHY?

This document is meant to serve as an introduction or reminder to students, post-doctoral fellows, researchers and professors conducting research as part of IVADO of the principles framing responsible conduct in research, including issues of integrity and management of conflicts of interest, research ethics, and the processes governing the allocation of funds and running of competitions at IVADO.

IVADO is affiliated with three institutions: Université de Montréal, Polytechnique Montréal and HEC Montréal. Given that context, all staff members (professors, researchers, executives, support employees, etc.) and students (at the undergraduate and graduate levels, including post-doctoral fellows) are subject to the policies and regulations of their respective home institutions, and potentially to those of other institutions in the case of collaborative projects.

This document recaps the main rules applicable at Université de Montréal, Polytechnique Montréal and HEC Montréal, as a reminder of the aspects to which staff members and students must pay attention in the course of their research projects conducted as part of IVADO.

INTEGRITY AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

WHAT IS A CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

A conflict of interest (COI) is not an accusation; nor is it corruption or fraud. Rather, it refers to a situation, circumstances or a context in which a member of the university committee runs the risk of altering their judgment, neglecting an obligation, or preferring personal interest. Being in a COI situation does not mean one is guilty of anything whatsoever. A COI is a risk situation, not a guilty verdict.

A COI may arise when activities or situations place an individual or an organization in the presence of interests (personal, institutional or otherwise) that conflict with the interests inherent to the duties and responsibilities of their status or function.

These interests include business interests as well as financial or non-financial interests (e.g., religious beliefs, values) relating to the organization and/or to the individual, their family members, or their friends or associates, past, present or future.

Examples of COI in university settings include:

- A student member of auxiliary teaching staff correcting and grading work by friends.
- A researcher neglecting to publish negative results so as not to harm the company funding their work.
- A researcher providing access to privileged research data in return for co-authorship of a published paper.
- A professor promoting use of their materials by employees of a company they run that is a project partner, instead of use by their students.
- A professor hiring their spouse for a position in their laboratory.
- An executive with responsibility for awarding contracts accepting a gift from a tendering company.
- A researcher taking part in a scientific evaluation for purposes of a funding decision for a project on which they are a collaborator.

Management of COI varies depending on your status and your home university. At certain institutions and depending on job category, a yearly declaration is mandatory. The information below provides more specific guidelines based on your current situation at IVADO.

MEMBERS OF THE IVADO MANAGEMENT TEAM AND COMMITTEES

General principles: Members of IVADO management and members sitting on the various IVADO committees must act with integrity, independence, loyalty and good faith, in the best interests of IVADO, and with care, diligence and competency, as any reasonable person would do in such circumstances.

Confidentiality: Members of management and members sitting on the various committees have a duty to respect the confidentiality of all information identified as such and that is brought to their attention in the course of their duties. Written and verbal information to which they have access, and that is recognized as being confidential, must not be disclosed. However, a committee member is not bound by the duty of confidentiality if the information is generally accessible to the public, or if disclosure of the information is required by law or a court order, The duty of obligation survives the end of the committee member's mandate.

Conflicts of interest: In the event of a real, perceived or potential COI, members of management and committees must immediately declare it to the committee of which they are a member, and request that their declaration be entered, as applicable, in the committee meeting minutes. Furthermore, any person who is in a real, perceived or potential COI with respect to an item tabled for committee discussion or deliberation must abstain from participation in any such deliberation and from the vote pertaining to said item, and withdraw from the meeting.

PROFESSORS, POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS AND STUDENTS

Management of declarations of interest by staff members (professors, post-doctoral fellows, students, etc.) is the responsibility of their official home institutions, each of which has its own policy on COI management applicable to its employees and students. Depending on the home institution and the processes in effect there, employees and students may be responsible for making yearly declarations of interest to their institution. Management of all COIs must be conducted according to the processes implemented in each institution; IVADO is not empowered to replace such bodies.

If, in the course of their activities, an IVADO staff member should become aware of a perceived or real COI, they must inform IVADO management. IVADO management will then contact the person involved and remind them in writing of their obligations toward their home university. IVADO management may also directly contact the head of research unit involved to inform them of the perceived or avowed COI, with an eye to ensuring that the management of the conflict is officially evaluated and performed by the competent authorities of the university involved.

TOOLS

- Université de Montréal (all documents in French)
 - [Regulation on conflicts of interest \(10.23\)](#)
 - [Guidelines on application of Regulation 10.23 on conflicts of interest, Université de Montréal](#)
 - Process and link to declaration of interests form: [Déclaration d'intérêts](#)
 - Online training: "[Les conflits d'intérêts, bien plus qu'une affaire de politique,](#)" by [Bryn Williams-Jones, Professor, Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, School of Public Health, Université de Montréal](#)
 - [Policy on reporting of wrongdoing, Université de Montréal](#)
 - [Platform for reporting of wrongdoing](#)
 - [Policy on prevention and combating of sexual misconduct and violence](#)

- Polytechnique Montréal
 - [Policy on Integrity and Conflicts of Interest in Research](#) (in English)
 - Process and link to form: [Integrity and Conflicts of Interest in Research](#) (in French)

- HEC Montréal
 - [Policy on Conflicts of Interest in Research](#) (in English)

EMPLOYEES OF IVADO

Per the standards in force at Université de Montréal, IVADO management is responsible for conducting annual evaluations of the declarations of interest filed by its employees (members of administrative and support staff). Employees must therefore submit to IVADO management their duly completed annual declaration on the date determined each year by the person responsible for enforcement of the regulation (usually in February), in accordance with the university's regulations and guidelines.

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EVALUATION OF GRANT AND SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND

As part of its activities, IVADO awards research grants and scholarships to researchers in the academic community working in the fields of data science, operations research and artificial intelligence. All grants are competition-based with scientific peer assessment. Project titles and the identities of grant and scholarship recipients are made public.

PROCESS

The Executive Committee, upon recommendation from the Scientific Committee, approves the programs. The Scientific Committee approves the competitions, including project deadlines and funding. The Scientific Committee then informs the Executive Committee of the results.

The team at the Office of the Director of Scientific Programs manages the organization and running of the various competitions. Among other things, it ensures that the program is broadly disseminated among the target audience (website, newsletters and other appropriate means) and trains the various evaluation committees. It also ensures that evaluations are conducted in a reasonably timely manner. Each competition announcement must include the detailed competition rules, including the title, the application deadline, the eligibility criteria, the list of documents to be provided, the evaluation criteria, all potential obligations of selected applicants stemming from acceptance of the grant/scholarship, and the IVADO commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

Evaluation of applications is systematically conducted by a peer committee made up of internal evaluators plus, in the case of grants, outside evaluators. The Scientific Committee validates the recommendations to grant and establishes the final ranking of projects submitted. The results are communicated to the Executive Committee. The competition results are then made public, with details provided on the projects selected.

GENERAL EVALUATION PRACTICES

Decisions to award funds are founded primarily on the scientific quality of the application and the ability of the researcher (or research team) to complete the project on time and on budget. Given that context, evaluation is systematically conducted by peer committee. In the case of grants, outside evaluators are used to complement the internal evaluations. The applications are distributed among the various evaluators according to their respective scientific expertise, all while avoiding COI situations (a researcher cannot, for example, take part in evaluating a project that they are directing, or in which they are participating as a co-researcher, contributor or consultant). Each evaluator is reminded of the evaluation criteria and process at the time the application dossiers are sent, and at the start of each committee meeting.

In the event of conflicts of interest: Evaluators must immediately and systematically declare any COI situation and withdraw from the process of evaluation of the application in question. If the COI is declared during a committee meeting, the information must be entered, as applicable, in the minutes of the meeting. Any evaluator who is in a COI situation with regard to an application being evaluated must abstain from participating in any and all deliberations regarding that application and withdraw from the meeting room during all discussions of the application. The Office of the Director of Scientific Programs keeps a record of all COI situations declared and of the management process applied in each case of COI, and provides that information to the Board of Directors during the meeting for evaluation and approval of the recommendations of the Scientific Committee.

RESEARCH ETHICS

ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMANS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

In research, the acquisition of certain kinds of knowledge requires the participation of people, whether via interviews, consultation of personal information, medical examinations, questionnaires, or observations of people in their surroundings. Contributions by people taking part in research are thus vital to the missions of each university and of IVADO. In return, the university and IVADO have a duty to respect the dignity of persons participating in research and to ensure respect of their rights.

Université de Montréal and the other IVADO partner institutions have adopted standards to ensure that human participants in research are treated according to the core principles of ethics in research projects, namely:

- Respect for persons;
- Concern for welfare; and
- Justice.

All research activities involving human participants led by a professor, researcher, student, staff member, or any other person with a university status must be subjected to an ethics review and approved by a recognized research ethics committee *before* research begins. These committees vary from one institution to the next, but in all cases the obtaining of a valid certificate of ethics is a condition for accessing research funds or being awarded a degree. Institutional requirements also exist for research involving animals or that may result in information technology risks.

IVADO does not directly manage evaluations or attribution of certificates of ethics or other requirements; these management processes, from evaluation to the release of research funds, are conducted by the home university of the lead researcher or the student.

TOOLS

- Legislation governing personal information – [Commission d'accès à l'information du Québec website](#) (in French)
 - [Act Respecting Access to Documents Held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information](#) (in English)
 - [Act Respecting the Protection of Personal Information In the Private Sector](#) (in English)
- Rules applicable to the Canada First Research Excellence Fund grant, awarded to IVADO
 - [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 \(2018\)](#) (in English)
 - [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research \(2016\)](#) (in English)
 - [Canada First Research Excellence Fund Administration Guide](#) (in English)
- Université de Montréal (all documents in French)
 - [Policy on intellectual integrity in research \(60.11\)](#)
 - [Policy on research involving persons \(60.1\)](#)
 - Process and information on ethics committees: [Ethical conduct in research involving humans](#)
 - [Examination of allegations of scientific misconduct \(60.11.1\)](#)
- HEC Montréal
 - [Policy for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#) (in English)
 - [Policy on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#) (in English)

- Polytechnique Montréal (all documents in French)
 - Requirements for research work involving humans
 - Requirements for research work involving animals
 - Requirements for research work involving information technology risks