

## **Guidelines for handling conflicts of interest in an IMU prize selection committee**

At its 78<sup>th</sup> meeting in April 2009, the IMU Executive Committee issued the following guidelines on “conflicts of interest” in IMU prize selection committees. The IMU EC urges the members of these committees to observe the guidelines below and requests the committee chairs to contact the IMU President in case there is dispute about how to judge or handle such a case.

Conflicts of interest occur in activities of the International Mathematical Union often and in many ways. IMU has always made sure that problems of this kind were handled properly. It is particularly important that potential conflicts of interest in IMU prize committees are identified as early as possible, that they are discussed openly, and that even the least indication thereof is avoided.

The IMU EC is aware that there can be no precise and exhaustive definition of a conflict of interest and therefore it wants to alert every committee chair and every committee member to review his or her scientific or personal involvement with a nominee.

Appearance of conflicts of interest is different in the various committees and, thus, needs different handling.

In a previous decision, the IMU EC has ruled that, for the Fields Medal Committee, a committee member shall not continue to serve on the committee for its final decision when a former student (PhD thesis only) is considered, see <http://www.mathunion.org/general/prizes/fields/details/>.

This implies that a committee member who has a former or current PhD student on the candidate list can remain on the committee during the initial selection process leading to the list of finalists. However, a committee member with a PhD student on the list of nominees should not take part in any vote on this nominee.

The same rule also applies to the Nevanlinna Committee since, for the Nevanlinna Prize, similar selection criteria apply.

In the case of prizes for which there is no age limit, the situation is more subtle, and other forms of conflict of interest possibly appearing should be avoided, too.

Obviously, a member of a committee cannot be a nominee for the prize. (Members of the Fields and the Nevanlinna juries are (naturally) selected in such a way that they are not eligible for the prizes itself.)

The IMU EC makes out a possible conflict of interest if a committee member is a major coauthor of a nominee. What “a major coauthor” exactly means is not easy to define, and the EC hopes that a committee member reveals to the committee that he or she is a significant coauthor of a nominee.

A committee member, and this is valid for all prize committees, who has a special personal relation with a nominee (relative, spouse, partner, etc.) should also withdraw. If the relationship is more distant, it should be revealed to the committee chair and, if necessary, discussed in the committee.

In case the committee members disagree on whether there is a conflict of interest or not, the committee chair is asked to seek the IMU President's authority to resolve the problem. The IMU EC has decided that the IMU President is empowered to make final decisions, for instance, to remove a person from a jury or to replace a committee member by another person.

The IMU EC has refrained from making rules that are too precise. It counts on the "common sense" of members of IMU prize committees.

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