



Preamble

Because the activities of the International Mathematical Union (IMU) are many and complex, involving large numbers of individuals, potential conflicts of interest inevitably arise in innocent and unexpected ways. The IMU must be vigilant, and be seen to be vigilant, by having in place effective and transparent measures to ensure fairness of its processes and minimize the risk of harm to its reputation. In particular, this applies to prize selection committees, the activities of which must always be beyond reproach. The IMU is aware that conflicts of interest may result from one's life's path, and they may or may not influence one's ability to make impartial assessment. However, it is essential that the IMU processes would be deemed fair by any reasonable third person who is aware of the circumstances.

At its 78th meeting in 2009, the IMU Executive Committee (EC) issued guidelines on the handling of conflicts of interest in its prize selection committees. Revised by the EC in 2014, the Guidelines below were endorsed by the 17th IMU General Assembly in 2014. The EC has decided that these Guidelines apply to all IMU activities, including those of the IMU committees and commissions, as well as all committees formed by the IMU, e.g., prize committees and program committees.

To ensure that the IMU committees and commissions, both individually and collectively, know about and abide by the spirit of these Guidelines, it is requested that committee and commission members confirm in writing that they have read, understood, and accept the Conflicts of Interest Guidelines before agreeing to serve.

The Guidelines

All members of the committees and commissions of the IMU are asked to take reasonable steps to assess, declare and avoid any conflict of interest. Any circumstances that may be conflicts of interest should be declared without delay before the deliberations of the committee or commission commence in order to find a reasonable solution. In the following we use the word «committees» to cover all committees and commissions of the IMU.

Since some committees are active for several years, conflicts of interest may arise during its term. The IMU therefore recommends that the chairs periodically invite, at the start of all formal discussions, everyone involved to review possible conflicts of interest and declare changes that may have occurred.

To be considered as a conflict of interest (non-exhaustive list):

- A committee member is a nominee.
- There is a close personal relation with a nominee, for example, close relative, spouse, ex-spouse, partner, etc. A more distant but still relevant relationship should be disclosed to the committee chair and, if necessary, discussed with the committee.
- A committee member is a major co-author of a nominee.
- A committee member is the former advisor of the nominee or a former student of the nominee.

- A committee member is a current, recent (since the last ICM), or the known future departmental colleague of a candidate.
- A committee member is an employee or beneficiary of a body that is being proposed to carry out work or to supply services for the IMU.

No committee member with such a conflict of interest should be asked to write evaluation letters for such nominees.

When there is a perceived conflict of interest, the committee member involved should, after reporting the circumstances, take no further part in the discussions, leaving the room, if necessary, until the matter is resolved by the rest of the committee.

In addition to the above, a member of an IMU award¹ committee who has a perceived conflict of interest with a candidate may remain on the committee during the stages of the selection process leading to the shortlist but will normally be asked to resign from the committee if the candidate remains on the shortlist.

When committee members disagree on the importance of a potential conflict of interest, the committee chair should ask the IMU President to resolve the issue. The IMU EC has given the President authority to make final decisions, for instance, to remove a person from a committee or to replace a committee member by someone else. When the IMU President has a conflict of interest, the EC shall designate a conflict moderator with extensive IMU experience, e.g., the IMU Secretary General or one of the IMU Vice-Presidents.

Freedom of Science

It is essential that the IMU in all its activities and through its committees and commissions, abides by the principle of freedom of science in all its ramifications.

The International Science Council (ISC), of which the IMU is a member, has as a mission to «Defend the free and responsible practice of science». In Article 7 of the ISC Statutes, the ISC clearly outlines its aim to support the principle of freedom and responsibility in science.

Article 3 in the IMU Statutes reads:

The Union adheres to the International Science Council's principle of embodying the free and responsible practice of science, freedom of movement, association, expression and communication for scientists, as well as equitable opportunities for access to science, its production and benefits, access to data, information and research material; and actively upholds this principle, by opposing any discrimination on the basis of such factors as ethnic origin, religion, citizenship, language, political or other opinion, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, disability or age.

Members of all IMU committees and commissions will have to subscribe to this principle in all activities related to the IMU.

¹ Fields Medal, IMU Abacus Medal, Carl Friedrich Gauss Prize, Chern Medal Award, and Leelavati Prize.