

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF VARIOUS COMMITTEES OF SERB**

The Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) has a duty to ensure that applications for funding are assessed expertly, objectively and impartially. Review by an appropriately constituted body is therefore seen as an essential element of the Board's decision-making process. For this reason, the SERB delegates authority to make recommendations on applications to an appropriate Committee. The Board relies heavily on the willingness of members of the scientific community to spare their time to serve these Committees and the Board is most grateful to them for the vital role they play in our grant-giving process.

The Board also recognizes the need to protect and preserve the integrity of the SERB's grant-giving processes, and is concerned that members may not breach confidentiality and provide information on Committee discussions, decisions and recommendations especially when under pressure. To assist the Committee members in these situations, a code of conduct has been drawn for members of the Committee.

For the protection of Committee members and referees, and to ensure the impartiality of the peer-review process, if the SERB has reason to believe that a member of the Committee has breached the following code of conduct, then he/she may be asked to resign his/her membership. If concerns of a serious nature come to the attention of the SERB, then an enquiry will be constituted and appropriate decisions taken.

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. The Committee Members should be aware that:
  - 1.1 They are covered by the Policy on Conflicts of Interest<sup>1</sup> and are required to declare any interests that could give rise to a conflict of interest with their role.
  - 1.2 They should not offer advice to members of the scientific community on the SERB/Committee policy and practices; for example on application procedures - all such enquiries should be directed to the concerned staff of the SERB.
2. **The following are strictly confidential:**
  - 2.1 The Committee discussions (including the reasons for decisions to fund or not to fund)
  - 2.2 The contents of papers and correspondence relating to applications for funds.
3. The Committee members and referees also have a right to expect that their comments will be treated in confidence; by both the SERB staff and other members of the Committee and that the granting system is fair.

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<sup>1</sup> The conflict of interest policy is given separately.

**For these reasons:**

- 3.1** Papers and electronic material must be kept secure and not disseminated to anyone but those authorised.
- 3.2** Proposals must not be discussed with others (including colleagues at the member's organization or referees) without prior permission from the SERB.
- 3.3** Members of the Committee must not inform applicants of the composition of the Committee or details of other applicants. The SERB will provide details or make them publicly available as appropriate.
- 3.4** Members of a Committee are not allowed to submit research proposals to the Committee as Principal Investigators or Co-Principal Investigators. Proposals from members will be reviewed by another relevant committee, with *ad hoc* experts if necessary.
- 3.5** Members of the Committee who are connected<sup>2</sup> in any way with a proposal must absent themselves from the meeting room during discussion of the proposal and must not be informed of the outcome of the application by other members. The SERB will inform them in due course if appropriate.
- 3.5** No aspect of the deliberations or recommendations regarding the proposal should be discussed with applicants, either in connection with their own proposal, or any other proposal. Feedback will be provided as appropriate by the SERB, in accordance with the practice. Should this feedback require interaction with a Committee member, this will be conveyed to the member by the SERB. The Committee members should refuse any requests for information or for an explanation of how a particular decision was reached – all such requests must be referred to the SERB
- 3.6** The identity of referees must be kept confidential at all times.

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<sup>2</sup> An individual will be connected with a grant application if he or she is: A relative or member of the household of one of the applicants (including but not limited to spouse, child, sibling or parent), a business partner of one of the applicants, the applicant's thesis or postdoctoral mentor, or scientific collaborator in the preceding 5 years, a member or employee of the same Department or Institution ( Refer conflict of interest policy for details)