

College of Reviewers Membership Policy

1. Effective Date

This policy takes effect September 1, 2015.

2. Application

This policy applies to all members of the College of Reviewers.

3. Rationale

Peer review is a core aspect of CIHR's business. Through the College of Reviewers ("College"), CIHR is committed to providing mechanisms to ensure excellence in peer review and to ensuring support for peer reviewers who contribute their time and energy to CIHR's peer review processes.

4. Definitions

Institution refers to all institutions or organizations, both academic and non-academic, that are involved in health research and/or related activities.

For more definitions of terms used in this policy, refer to Appendix A – Definitions.

5. Policy Statement

5.1 Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to outline the responsibilities and expectations of members of the College of Reviewers in order to promote and support excellence in CIHR's peer review system.

5.2 Policy Statement

Members of the College of Reviewers are expected to fulfill the requirements and expectations set out by CIHR in terms of membership, College learning requirements, performance monitoring activities, and conflict of interest and confidentiality obligations.

5.2.1 Membership

There are two membership types within the College of Reviewers, both with distinct roles and responsibilities: full membership and associate membership.

5.2.1.1 Full Membership

Individuals must be nominated in order to be considered for full membership within the College of Reviewers. CIHR, College members, and/or institutions may nominate potential members.

CIHR will consider all nominations, and will notify the prospective member of a decision following a review of the nomination submission.

Full members are required to sign and adhere to a set of terms and conditions (outlined in Appendix B) that details CIHR's expectations of College members.

College members must agree to participate in the College as full members for a specified term. Following each term, a renewal process will be enacted following a determination that the member has, and will continue to, meet the requirements stated in this policy.

CIHR reserves the right to terminate full membership at any time. Full members may terminate their relationship with the College at any time; however, CIHR will require that the member fulfill any outstanding peer review commitments prior to terminating their membership.

5.2.1.2 Associate Membership

Individuals who review for CIHR for a specific competition with the expectation that they will not participate in CIHR's peer review process on a regular basis may become an associate member in CIHR's College of Reviewers.

If there is a pressing need for an individual's expertise and insufficient time for the individual to become a full College member, CIHR may bestow upon him/her an associate membership status.

Associate membership status is approved by CIHR.

The term of an associate membership will be specified by CIHR and agreed to by the associate member on a case-by-case basis.

5.2.2 College of Reviewers Learning Requirements

College members are required to fully understand the competitions for which they are reviewing, their role within the College, and the role of the College in the larger health research landscape. Learning courses will be available to College members on a variety of topics.

5.2.2.1 General Reviewer Learning

Full members of the College of Reviewers are required to complete a number of learning modules prior to conducting peer review.

Associate members of the College of Reviewers are encouraged to complete the general learning modules; however, it is not a requirement of the associate member prior to participating in peer review for a specific competition.

5.2.2.2 Competition-Specific Learning

College members (full and associate members) are required to complete competition-specific learning modules prior to participating in the review process for certain competitions. CIHR will notify College members when competition-specific learning modules are required.

5.2.2.3 Role-Specific Learning

The College of Reviewers is made up of a variety of roles. For more information on the specific roles that make up the College, please see the Guidelines on College of Reviewers Membership ([link will be provided when available](#)). Prior to fulfilling the function of a particular role within the College, members are required to complete any role-specific learning modules.

5.2.2.4 Mentoring

An important component of the College of Reviewers is to support a strong mentorship program for reviewers. Mentorship programs will be available for new reviewers, for reviewers who are new to a particular College role, and for other reasons as specified by CIHR. Senior members of the College may be asked to act as a mentor. Completion of role-specific learning modules may be required.

5.2.3 Monitoring Review Quality and Reviewer Performance

To support continuous improvements of the Canadian peer review system, CIHR will monitor the performance of the College and of its members. These reviews will include assessments of peer review quality and reviewer performance.

College members are expected to participate in College performance review activities as deemed necessary by CIHR.

5.2.4 Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality

Because College members will have access to privileged and protected information by virtue of their membership status, College members are required to put in place mechanisms to ensure that privileged and protected information remains confidential.

College members have obligations to protect the confidentiality of personal and intellectual property information contained in any application they review for CIHR and to abide by the conflict of interest disclosure and compliance measures as described in the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations](#).

College members must adhere to the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Review Committee Members, External Reviewers, and Observers](#).

6. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

CIHR is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of this policy.

CIHR is committed to recognizing the significant contributions of College members to the peer review system and to the health research enterprise. College members must agree to allow CIHR to use their peer review activity data in annual reports that summarize their peer review participation and performance.

College members will be provided with reports that summarize their annual peer review activities.

Institutions (both academic and non-academic) will be provided with reports that include information regarding the College members who are affiliated with the institution (member names, annual participation in peer review activities, and member performance).

CIHR has the authority to issue, amend, and rescind directives, guidelines, and standards to support this policy.

This policy is reviewed at regular intervals, and will be updated as deemed necessary by CIHR.

7. Compliance and Consequences

It is the responsibility of all College members to comply with the requirements of this policy, and to report instances of perceived or actual non-compliance with this policy to CIHR.

CIHR is responsible for following up on reported instances of non-compliance with the identified individual(s). Failure of a College member to take corrective actions requested by CIHR will result in the consequences outlined in the Guideline on College Member Code of Conduct – Expectations which may include suspending or revoking of College membership.

8. References

In order to more fully understand aspects of this policy, this policy should be read in conjunction with the following material:

Policies

[Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations](#)

Agreements

[Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Review Committee Members, External Reviewers, and Observers](#)

College of Reviewers Terms and Conditions (Appendix B)

9. Enquiries

For questions regarding this policy, please contact FundingPolicy@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Definitions

College of Reviewers (“College”)

The College of Reviewers is a peer review resource designed to engender a shared commitment, across the Canadian health research enterprise, to support excellent peer review of the diverse and emerging health research and knowledge translation activities. Over time the College will serve CIHR and partners peer review needs and will be an internationally recognized and centrally managed resource for the Canadian research community.

Member

The term “member” refers to an individual who has accepted the College invitation and who has signed the terms and conditions of the College.

Peer Review

The term denotes the process used by CIHR to review applications submitted for funding. CIHR’s peer review process involves the evaluation of applications by a group of reviewers, who have (individually or collectively) the required experience and/or expertise, as determined by CIHR, to assess the quality and/or potential impact of the proposed research and/or the research related activities, within the context of the funding opportunity objectives. CIHR’s peer review process is supported by academic reviewers, as well as non-academic reviewers, including industry, government and community-based representatives.

Appendix B Agreement: College of Reviewers Terms and Conditions

1. Interpretation

1.1 Definitions

A capitalized term has the meaning given to it in this section

- “College” means the Canadian Institutes of Health Research College of Reviewers
- “Member” means the individual who has accepted an invitation to the College.

1.2 Term of Agreement

This Agreement will be effective the date agreed upon by the Member, and shall terminate five years following the date agreed upon. CIHR can terminate College membership at any time. Members can terminate their relationship with the College at any time by giving at least thirty (30) days’ notice to CIHR.

2. Purpose & Principles

2.1 Purpose of Agreement

The purpose of this Agreement is to set out the terms and conditions of membership to the College.

2.2 Principles

This Agreement was shaped by a set of core principles. In accepting to join the College, members agree to apply the principles listed below to any role they fulfill within the College.

Confidentiality - Confidentiality is at the center of maintaining trust in the peer review system. It is essential that all information acquired while participating in the peer review system is protected and handled with the utmost care and respect.

Excellence - Peer review is the internationally accepted benchmark for ensuring quality and excellence in scientific research. The College of Reviewers supports excellence in the practice and management of peer review by providing documentation, learning and support to enable members to apply their own expertise in the peer review system.

Impartiality, fairness and honesty - Success of the peer review system is critically dependent upon the willingness and ability of all reviewers to be fair and reasonable; to exercise rigorous scientific judgment; and to understand, and take into account in a balanced way, the strengths and weaknesses of each application. Peer review is intended to be fair, unbiased, with appropriate processes to manage real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.

Integrity - Peer review is essential in helping to maintain the integrity of research and its scientific quality. The College of Reviewers’ formalized structure contributes to the integrity of the peer review system, by providing consistency in actions, methods,

measures, principles and expectations. College members are expected to act in good faith and in the best interest of Canada, CIHR, and the research community for the purpose of supporting the creation of new knowledge and its translation.

Participation - Peer review depends, by definition, on the willingness of peers to participate in the peer review system. Receiving peer-reviewed funding for research includes the responsibility to provide the reciprocal benefit of reviewing the work of peers. Participation in the peer review system provides members an opportunity to share ideas, learn from others, and embrace the collective effort to move science forward. The success of the peer review system hinges on the participation of members and the pool of expertise available to review applications.

Transparency and Accountability - The peer review system ensures accountability, not only to the Government of Canada, but to the research community at large. Transparency assures that health research projects are reviewed with the best interests of Canadians in mind. Transparency is demonstrated through open communication, published policies, standards and procedures as well as measurement and reporting of results. Applications for funding will be reviewed in accordance with published criteria for each funding opportunity.

3. Obligation of Member

3.1 Participation

The Member agrees to:

- i) Participate actively in the peer review system when they are called upon;
- ii) Maintain an up-to-date College profile by updating/validating their profile information;
- iii) Provide quality reviews, useful feedback to applicants, and participate in both online discussions of applications and in peer review committee meetings; and
- iv) Abide by CIHR's peer review policies including the CIHR [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement](#); the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations](#); and consider the spirit of the [CIHR Code of Conduct](#) when undertaking activity at the behest of CIHR.

3.2 Learning and Mentoring

The Member agrees to:

- i) Complete the necessary College learning programs; and
- ii) Participate in mentorship activities as required by the College.

3.3 Quality Assurance

The Member agrees to:

- i) Actively participate in the evaluation of reviews completed by members of the College of Reviewers as required; and
- ii) Authorize CIHR to conduct evaluations on the quality of their reviews and their participation in the review process.

3.4 Sharing of Information

The Member agrees to:

- i) Allow CIHR to share their validated College profile with other members of the College of Reviewers;
- ii) Allow CIHR to provide data to their primary institution regarding their participation and performance in peer review; and,
- iii) Allow CIHR to use their peer review activity data in annual reports that summarizes their peer review participation and performance.

3.5 Confidentiality

The Member agrees :

- i) That all information received through or related to his or her involvement with the College is hereby deemed “Confidential Information” and includes, without limitation, applications, proposals, meeting materials, College deliberations, discussions, evaluations, peer review documents,
- ii) To not share or disclose Confidential Information with anyone, including not with his/her employer or organization;
- iii) To not use Confidential Information for the benefit of the Member or of any other individual or organization;
- iv) To not grant access to any College computer system or College-related committee meeting to anyone;
- v) To indemnify CIHR, its employees and agents against any losses and liabilities arising out of any breach of the obligations of this section 3.5 by the Member and against any disclosure or use of Confidential Information by the Member other than as expressly authorized in this agreement;
- vi) That if the Member breaches any of the obligations under this section 3.5, CIHR shall be entitled to pursue any available legal remedy against the Member.

4. Obligation of CIHR in conducting activities related to the College

4.1 Participation

CIHR agrees to:

- i) Manage requests and queries centrally; and
- ii) Manage and monitor member’s workload and activities in relation to CIHR peer review.

4.2 Learning and Mentoring

CIHR agrees to:

- i) Offer opportunities for learning and mentorship to the Member.

4.3 Quality Assurance

In its administration of the College, CIHR is committed to:

- i) Using results from the College evaluations to improve the College’s learning programs and to evaluate the general effectiveness of the peer review system;

- ii) Providing personalized activity records to each member on an annual basis. These records will summarize quantitative details on the Member's College participation; and
- iii) Monitor the adequacy of the College's expertise base.

4.4 Sharing of Information

In its administration of the College, CIHR is committed to:

- i) Recognizing members' contributions to the peer review system;
- ii) Providing institutional activity records to institutions;
- iii) Strengthening support of peer review activities from institutions; and
- iv) Safeguarding entrusted information in accordance with the [Privacy Act](#) and the [Access to Information Act](#).