

Conflict of Interest Policy and Recommended Governance Norms for *JCR*
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A conflict of interest (COI) occurs when someone in a position of authority has the opportunity to participate in decisions that may lead to a perception of bias or favoritism based on that person's relationship with an individual who would be affected by the decision.

At *JCR*, COIs typically involve decisions made by editors, associate editors, reviewers, members of the Policy Board, and authors that affect colleagues (former and current), co-authors, students/advisees, mentors/advisers, rivals, family members, classmates, or friends. Editors may also have conflicts because of their obligations to other journals or organizations.

This document aims to specify some circumstances in which a COI might occur and defines policy and governance remedies to address such conflicts.

1. Editors

The editorial management model may vary over time. In this document, the term “editor” refers to the editor-in-chief and others designated as editors or co-editors, and is intended to apply to those individuals who make final decisions on the disposition of a manuscript.

1.1 Conflicts

- 1.1.1 Editors may not serve as editors or associate editors for other journals during their term as editors at *JCR*.
- 1.1.2 Editors may not oversee the reviewing of manuscripts authored by colleagues from the same institution, current or former students, co-authors, or anyone with whom the editor has a personal or professional relationship. “Personal or professional relationship” is defined broadly to encompass any connection that a third party might reasonably perceive as compromising the impartial handling of a manuscript. Editors must also disclose if they have provided comments to the authors on earlier drafts of the manuscript. In cases with *potential* for such an actual or reasonably perceived conflict, editors are required to have manuscripts processed either by a co-editor or (if the co-editors also have COIs) by the special guest editor.

In cases where the existence of a COI is uncertain or unclear — such as co-authorship of a multi-authored manuscript where the editor had limited interaction with co-authors, or when substantial time has passed since their most recent collaboration — the editor is required to disclose their COI to the president of the Policy Board. The president will then decide whether the editor should process the manuscript or it should be assigned to a different editor.

1.2 Submission of Manuscripts for Publication

Editors are discouraged from submitting manuscripts for publication in *JCR* while they hold the position. Manuscripts authored or co-authored by editors may nevertheless be submitted, subject to the following conditions:

- 1.2.1 New submissions. All new submissions must be processed by a special guest editor who is appointed by the Policy Board;
- 1.2.2 An editor cannot be the sole or lead author on any new submission, and an editor cannot be the corresponding author on any new submission;
- 1.2.3 If the manuscript is accepted for publication, a note will accompany the published version describing the special nature of the review process;
- 1.2.4 An editor's manuscript may not receive any special promotional attention by the journal while the editor serves in that capacity with the journal. This includes publicity on the journal's website and special designation in the journal.

1.3 Manuscripts in Progress

If an incoming editor has a manuscript in progress (i.e., the manuscript has not been rejected outright) at the time they assume editorial responsibilities, the manuscript will continue to be processed by the same editor, and in a manner designed to assure the integrity of the anonymized review process. If the manuscript is accepted for publication, a note describing the special nature of the review process will accompany the published version.

1.4 Editors' Manuscripts Accepted by a Prior Editorial Team

If an editor's manuscript has been accepted for publication by a prior editorial team but has not yet been published in an issue, policies 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 will apply even though there is no COI. Decisions about the order of appearance in the issue will be made by the prior editorial team.

1.5 Awards

An article co-authored by an editor may be considered (if nominated) for one of the journal's two annual awards (Ferber and Best Article).

Because the editors oversee the Ferber Award, if an eligible article lists an editor as a co-author, the Policy Board will manage the award process, and the COI policies for the Best Article award will apply (e.g., a Policy Board member who is a co-author or colleague will not be able to vote).

1.6 Conflicts Regarding the Review Process

Editors are required to ensure that the review process is free of conflicts.

- 1.6.1 Editors should ensure that associate editors and reviewers are free of COIs with authors.
- 1.6.2 Associate editors and reviewers must notify the editor if they are assigned to a manuscript and have a COI with any author.

1.7 Recommendations Regarding Governance

- 1.7.1 Editors should be sensitive to perceptions of bias on the part of readers, authors, and reviewers of *JCR* manuscripts when creating their Editorial Review Board (ERB). Editors should consider an individual's history of quality and timeliness of reviewing, publications, scholarly expertise, citations, and similar objective criteria of excellence when selecting ERB members. Editors should also consider the ability of ERB members to contribute to the diversity mission of the journal.
- 1.7.2 Editors should be sensitive to perceptions of bias on the part of readers, authors, and reviewers of *JCR* manuscripts, as well as other nominees when selecting outstanding reviewer award recipients. Criteria such as quality of reviews as judged by the editor and associate editor (or authors), timeliness of reviews, and workload should serve as inputs into these decisions. It is recommended that criteria for awards be made public prior to the selection of awardees.

2. Associate Editors

The COI guidelines for overseeing the processing of manuscripts apply to both editors and associate editors. Associate editors may not oversee the reviewing of submissions authored by colleagues from the same institution, current or former students, co-authors, or anyone with whom they have a personal or professional relationship. "Personal or professional relationship" is defined broadly to encompass any connection that a third party might reasonably perceive as compromising the impartial handling of a manuscript. Associate editors must also disclose if they have provided comments to the authors on earlier drafts of the manuscript. When a COI exists, the associate editor is required to notify the handling editor, who will then assign the manuscript to a different associate editor in order to secure objectivity.

In cases where the existence of a COI is uncertain or unclear — such as co-authorship of a multi-authored manuscript where the associate editor had limited interaction with co-authors, or when substantial time has elapsed since the most recent collaboration — the associate editor must disclose the potential COI to the editor. The editor will then determine whether the associate editor should be assigned to the manuscript.

3. Reviewers

Although the review process is anonymous, it is not uncommon for reviewers to become aware of an author's identity, which may present a COI.

When a manuscript is sent out for review, the assignment letter should instruct the reviewer to notify the editor if: 1) They are aware of the identity of the author(s), and 2) A potential COI exists as defined in the guidelines for editors and associate editors. Specifically, reviewers should disclose if one or more authors are colleagues from the same institution, current or former students, current or former co-authors, or individuals with whom the reviewer has a personal or professional relationship. Reviewers must also disclose if they have provided comments to the authors on earlier drafts of the manuscript.

In addition, reviewers must notify the editor if they have previously reviewed the manuscript for *JCR* or another journal.

4. Authors

Authors are expected to adhere to the COI policy and should not suggest potential editors, associate editors, or reviewers with whom they may have a COI. This includes colleagues from the same institution, current or former students, current or former co-authors, or those with whom they have a personal or professional relationship. When submitting a manuscript, authors should acknowledge everyone who has provided comments on earlier drafts of the manuscript and may not recommend any of these people to serve as associate editor or reviewer on the manuscript.

The submitting author is responsible for consulting with all co-authors prior to submission to ensure that they meet this requirement.

5. Policy Board

JCR's Policy Board is composed of representatives appointed by the journal's thirteen sponsoring organizations. The Policy Board is responsible for the development and implementation of editorial direction and policy. The Policy Board is also responsible for the business affairs of the nonprofit corporation that owns the journal.

5.1 Conflicts

5.1.1 Editor Selections. One of the major functions of the Policy Board is to select new editors. Policy Board members must reveal potential or obvious COIs (e.g., editor candidates are colleagues (former and current), classmates, relatives, advisees/students, advisers/mentors, co-authors, rivals, friends) prior to the onset of final deliberations regarding the editor candidates. If such conflicts exist, the Policy Board member will be recused from voting during the editor selection.

- 5.1.2 **Other Decisions.** Similar COIs should be considered in other deliberations made by the Policy Board, such as awards, allocations of resources, and ethics discussions.
- 5.1.3 Policy Board members may not serve as associate editors during their terms on the Policy Board. If a Policy Board member is selected and wishes to serve as an associate editor, they must resign from the Policy Board. If an associate editor is selected and wishes to serve as a Policy Board member, they must resign from the associate editor position.

5.2 Submission and Publication by Policy Board Members

Although members of the Policy Board are not involved in the day-to-day operations of *JCR*, they are responsible for appointing editors and providing annual feedback to the editors. Hence, editors processing Policy Board members' manuscripts constitutes a COI. Policy Board members may submit manuscripts to the journal, but subject to condition 1.2.1, these submissions must be processed by the special guest editor.