



CODE OF PRACTICE

For members of the Training Advisory Board

October 2016

Code of Practice for members of the Training Advisory Board

This code of practice sets out the basis on which members of the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Training Advisory Board (TAB) should seek to discharge their responsibilities.

The document sets out the context in which TAB operates and describes the terms of reference for TAB and the role and responsibilities of its members.

The role and operation of TAB

The **Training Advisory Board** is a the key source of advice to NERC on the strategic direction and success of NERC training investments, including NERC's role and strategy in meeting skills shortages and other training priorities within the environmental science community throughout the career pipeline. TAB advises on driving up the quality of training, how training is delivered, and on recommendations for the award of training funds.

TAB members act as an interface between NERC and its communities to ensure that training investments are appropriate, timely, support excellent research and training environments, and priority training needs.

Members sit on TAB as individuals, rather than representing a particular organisation or research area. TAB membership comprises a mixture of senior academics, early career researchers and end-user representatives, and as such members are well placed to provide assessments, advice and guidance across the full spectrum of NERC's training investments.

Terms of Reference

The TAB terms of reference are contained in Annex 1.

Terms and Conditions

The following terms and conditions apply to TAB members (including Chair):

1. Membership is for one year in the first instance, with expectation that membership will continue for a maximum of three years in total. In exceptional circumstances, members may be invited to serve for a second term. Membership will be kept under review to account for any changes in conflicts of interest and to ensure an appropriate spread of expertise. The appointment may be terminated by either party with a written submission of one month's notice.
2. All members must abide by NERC's policy on conflict of interests.
3. Members of TAB should not play a leading role or significant part in a NERC Doctoral Training Partnership or NERC Centre for Doctoral Training.
4. Members agree to attend up to two meetings per annum (of between one and two days each) and to complete associated meeting preparation work. NERC undertakes to ensure that meeting materials are provided in good time.
5. TAB members may also be invited to participate in other TAB or NERC activities on an ad hoc basis.
6. NERC will meet reasonable costs for travel (standard class only) and accommodation incurred as a result of meeting attendance, subject to receipt by NERC of the appropriate claim forms and receipts. Eligible members may claim an attendance fee of £170 per day (£230 per day for the Chair) for TAB meetings and a per-meeting attendance fee of £200 (a

two-day meeting is counted as one meeting) for attending NERC assessment or moderating panel meetings.

7. Members are expected to provide assessment, advice and guidance across the full spectrum of NERC's training investments. NERC commits to giving clear guidance on expectations and requirements. All required inputs must be returned within the period specified by NERC.
8. NERC will ensure that members are updated when necessary with developments which affect their role and responsibilities as a TAB member.
9. NERC will publish TAB membership details (member's name and research/other organisation, where appropriate) on the NERC website.

The role of the Chair

The Chair of TAB has particular responsibility for providing effective leadership to enable the Board to fulfil its terms of reference.

The Chair should set the style and tone of discussions at TAB meetings, encouraging a culture of inclusivity where all members can fully contribute to the Board's business.

The Chair should work with NERC to ensure that all new members of TAB are properly briefed on the terms of their appointment, and on their duties and responsibilities in line with the terms of reference.

The Chair will report to Council directly and will represent TAB at Council meetings as appropriate.

Collective responsibilities of TAB members

TAB's members must, at all times, collectively observe the highest standards of propriety involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to NERC's training investment policies, plans and decisions and stewardship of public funds.

TAB members should ensure that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times. They must be prepared to commit sufficient time to TAB to complete meeting preparation, attend meetings and keep in regular contact with NERC.

Responsibilities of individual members of TAB

Like others who serve the public, individual TAB members should follow the seven principles of public life set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (detailed at the end of this Code). Members have a duty to bring an independent judgement to bear on all issues considered by TAB, and must:

- comply at all times with this Code of Practice and rules relating to the use of public funds;
- act in good faith and in the best interests of NERC;
- not misuse information gained in the course of their public service for personal gain or for political purposes, nor seek to use the opportunity of public service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, businesses or other organisations; and
- ensure that they do not accept gifts or hospitality in any circumstances where it could impact on their ability to function as a TAB member or where it could give rise to questions of impartiality.

Liability

The Government has indicated, by analogy with normal directors' and officers' liability cover, that individual members of TAB who have acted honestly and in good faith will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution or purported execution of their TAB function, save where the persons have acted recklessly.

Members of TAB should ensure that they understand fully the terms of their appointment, and their duties and responsibilities. The secretariat for TAB should be consulted if further advice is required.

Conflicts of interest

To observe the high standards of integrity expected by the public and Parliament, the proper conduct of public business requires the Chair and members of TAB to avoid situations in which their duties and other interests conflict or where members of the public might reasonably think that an interest could influence the judgement of the individual or of others present.

All personal and business interests of an individual, including actual, potential or perceived, which conflict with his or her responsibilities as a member of TAB must be declared and will be recorded in a register. The register of interests is available to the public and is updated regularly. TAB members are required to notify the TAB secretariat of any changes to their interests as they occur.

It is NERC policy that:

- the Chair of TAB will be briefed on interests using the register of interests, and will draw attention to any possible conflicts of interest before the meeting starts;
- members with conflicts of interest should normally leave the meeting while the proposal or issue is being discussed or considered;
- if TAB agrees, the Chair may use their discretion to allow members with conflicts of interest to remain in the meeting if their absence will compromise TAB's expertise or if they are invited to speak on 'matters of fact';
- NERC will remove all papers and background information relating to a conflict of interest from the respective member's meeting papers;
- all conflicts of interest declared, and actions taken, should be recorded in TAB's minutes, ensuring a proper audit trail.

Where, in accordance with the above, TAB members do not participate in the discussion or determination of a matter, they should normally withdraw from the meeting. This is because the continued presence of someone who had declared a conflict of interest might be thought likely to influence the judgement of the other members present.

NERC has safeguards to prevent conflicts of interest arising from the acceptance of appointments during or after employment, with which TAB members are expected to comply. Further information is available from the TAB secretariat.

A fuller exposition of this subject, including details of the procedures to be followed in handling conflicts of interest, and the proforma for registering interests, are included in Annexes 2 and 3 of this Code, respectively.

Confidentiality and protective marking

All TAB papers and correspondence must be treated in confidence unless otherwise stated. When, exceptionally, a higher classification is necessary, special circulation arrangements will normally be made. Members of TAB must respect such classification.

Members of TAB should observe the requirement for confidentiality and are asked to keep secure all documents that come to them in their official capacity, including in electronic form, and, when their term of office has come to an end, to make sure that all papers are returned or destroyed, and report any losses to the TAB secretariat.

The seven principles of public life

The Committee on Standards in Public Life set out seven principles that apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference – NERC Training Advisory Board

The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) Training Advisory Board (TAB) is responsible for providing advice to NERC Council and the Executive on the strategic direction of NERC's investment in postgraduate, doctoral and non-doctoral training (including skills) and support for the Research Careers pathway. This will include putting forward recommendations for the award of training funds. NERC Council and the Executive will retain responsibility for how such advice is used.

In particular, TAB will:

1. Advise on development of the NERC Training Strategy and how to ensure its execution.
2. Advise on development and implementation of changes to NERC's training and skills portfolio so that it meets the agreed outcomes of the [NERC Training Review](#), including ensuring that training and skills investments meet the agreed [Success Criteria](#). This will include advice on tensioning of available funding between activities.
3. Advise on the skills and training requirements of NERC's environmental sciences community throughout the career pipeline.
4. Contribute to the peer review of proposals made to NERC for doctoral and non-doctoral training funds and provide recommendations on the allocation of funding resources.
5. Have a proactive role in post-award monitoring and evaluations, and undertake institutional visits to training award holders as necessary.
6. Advise on and foster the development of international and cross-Council collaborative activities.
7. Advise on, and foster the development of, user and stakeholder engagement.
8. Advise on achieving impact via training investments through knowledge exchange.
9. Monitor and report to Council on implementation of the NERC training strategy by evaluating outputs and their potential impacts.
10. Maintain clear and effective lines of communication with Science Board, Joint Capital Advisory Group and Innovation Advisory Board.

Members sit on TAB as individuals, rather than representing a particular organisation or research area and as such members are expected to provide assessments, advice and guidance across the full spectrum of NERC's training investments. NERC commits to giving clear guidance on expectations and requirements.

NERC will ensure that members are updated when necessary with developments which affect their role and responsibilities as a TAB member.

Annex 2: Declarations of Interest of Members of TAB

1. All members of TAB are required, on taking up their appointments, to declare any private, professional or commercial interests that might conceivably conflict with the interests of NERC. These interests may be direct or indirect, monetary or non-monetary, which members of the public might reasonably think could influence judgement. Such interests will include company appointments, directorships, consultancies, honorary appointments, and significant shareholdings. Indirect interests can arise from a member's connections with organisations or individuals who have a direct interest or from being a partner of, or being employed by, a person with such interests. Non-monetary interests can also arise from membership of clubs and other organisations. Any declaration should include the interests of immediate family members and any persons living in the same household. Members should also consider whether they need to disclose relevant interests of other connected persons.
2. In most cases only current interests need to be declared, but it is possible that, on occasions, past interests will or could influence present behaviour in which case a continuation of a declaration of that interest may be appropriate. When an interest that has been declared ceases to have any effect or influence, it should be removed from the register of interests.

Personal Remuneration

3. The key test must be to relate the remuneration and its source to the activities of NERC. Members of TAB should declare the names of the body or company concerned where they receive personal remuneration from:
 - any appointment at a university or research institute or similar body;
 - any directorships or employment or other connection with companies in any field where the company might benefit from support by NERC either as a collaborator or in some other way;
 - any position of authority in charities or other bodies providing research funding.

In all cases, interests in bodies which are directly supported by NERC, or benefit as collaborators or licensees etc. from which income is received, should be declared however small the amount.

If a member receives a pension (and possibly, where it is to be received at some point in the future), either from any body that falls within the above categories or from a closely related body that manages its pension scheme, the name of the body and the fact that a pension is received (or to be received) should be declared.

Shareholdings

4. Members of TAB should declare shareholdings or other financial interests in any company involved or planning to be involved in scientific or technological areas that fall within the remit of NERC.

Shareholding, options etc. in a single company listed on the main market of a recognised stock exchange with a market value of less than £10,000 need not be disclosed unless they

are known to benefit as a participant in collaborative research or other projects funded by NERC or are known to be significant suppliers of goods and services.

Holdings in unit trusts, investment trusts, pension schemes or other similar arrangements under which the investor has an interest in a large number of enterprises need not be disclosed unless they specialise in scientific or technological areas within NERC's remit and have a market value of greater than £10,000. Share portfolios need not be disclosed if the management arrangement is in the form of a blind trust or similar arrangement where the individual has no control whatever over management.

Non-Financial Interests

5. In line with the advice on personal remuneration, members of TAB should declare any unremunerated involvement with any other body or company which has connections with NERC-funded activities. This should include:

- appointments at a university or research institute or similar body;
- directorships or employment or other connections with companies in any field where the company may benefit from support by the Research Council either as a collaborator or in some other way;
- position of authority in charities or other bodies providing research funding;
- membership of clubs and associations should be registered if they come within the scope of the above.

In addition members should declare the university and department or institute or similar body with whom they are significant collaborators outside of the member's own institution or organisation. The nature of the relationship should also be stated e.g. research collaboration. Members will need to make a judgement to what is "significant". As a general rule the smaller the number of collaborators and the larger the project the greater the need for disclosure. For example, fellow investigators in major projects should be disclosed, but in most cases there would be no need to disclose the names of collaborators in large multi-collaborative projects, including the names of all industrial partners, unless the collaborator was involved in a specific or significant piece of research with them.

Research Income

6. In all cases bodies from which research income is received should be declared, particularly those supported by NERC or which benefit as collaborators or licensees from whom income is received. The size of the sum does not need to be quantified or declared.

Family Interests

7. The above should also be taken to apply to close family members, e.g. spouse, parent, child.

Publication

8. Declarations of interest will be held centrally. Members are approached annually to confirm their declaration of interest, but any new interests should be reported to the Secretariat Officer for TAB as and when they occur.
9. Corporate governance best practice suggests that declarations of interest should be placed in the public domain. Once you have returned your declaration of interest form, the Secretariat Officer for TAB will place your current register of interests on the NERC website. If you have any objections to this, please let the secretariat officer know.

Managing conflicts of interest

10. The register of interests will be used to provide briefing, to the Chair of a meeting, on any potential conflicts of interest that may be generated by items on the agenda. The Chair will draw attention to any potential conflict of interest at the beginning of each agenda item. Members must also declare any potential conflict of interest which has not been identified by the Chair. In certain cases, perhaps due to a change of job that creates a substantial and on-going conflict, it may be appropriate for a member to tender their resignation from TAB.
11. Members should not take part in, and normally should not be present for, discussions or decisions if they have a monetary interest in the matter under consideration or some other interest which is clear and substantial. The issue to be addressed in deciding whether a member should be excluded from participation is whether a member of the public, knowing the facts of the situation, might reasonably think that the particular interest could influence the judgement of other members present. In the case of studentships, grant or other funding applications it will be normal practice for any member whose own application is under consideration or who is from the same department as an applicant, to be asked to withdraw from the meeting for that item. Note that whilst a conflict of interest does not necessarily apply in the case of a member from a different department in the applicant's university, it will still be a matter to be drawn to the Chair's attention and for the meeting to decide what action to take.
12. The minutes of the meeting will record decisions about conflict of interest, any withdrawal from the meeting for particular items and the reasons for them.
13. It is the responsibility of the Chair of a meeting to ensure that these foregoing procedures are followed.

Advice

14. We are aware of the sensitive and confidential nature of some aspects of these declarations particularly those involving personal remuneration, shareholdings and other financial interests. If you are particularly concerned about this we are prepared to consider merely stating the nature of the interest and the parties involved, without revealing sensitive information. Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this, please contact the Secretariat Officer for TAB.

Annex 3: Form for Registration of Declared Private, Professional, Commercial and Other Interests

Please refer to Annex 2 before completing this register entry. In addition to guidance on each section, examples of information required are also provided. Where you have no relevant interests in the relevant category, please enter 'none' in the register entry.

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| Name: | |
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| Please list all NERC bodies you are a member of: E.g. Council, Science Board, Expert Panel etc and your position (e.g. chair, member). |
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| Main form of employment: Name of University and Department or other employing body (include location), and your position. |
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| Research group/department web page: Provide a link to any relevant web pages for your research group or individual page on your organisation's web site. |
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Please give details of any potential conflicts of interests arising out of the following:

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| 1. Personal Remuneration: Including employment, pensions, consultancies, directorships, honoraria. See section 3 for further guidance. |
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| 2. Shareholdings and Financial Interests in companies: See section 4 for further guidance, noting the £10,000 cut-off. |
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| 3. Research Income during current session (1 April 2016-31 March 2017): Declare all research income from bodies supported by the NERC and research income from other sources above the limit of £50k per grant for the year. See section 6 of the guidance for further information. You do not need to provide the total value of the award or your total anticipated grant income within the year though you may wish to do so. |
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| 4. Major academic collaborators [national and international]: Declare all significant collaborations outside your primary institution or organisation. |
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5. Non-Financial Interests: In line with the advice on personal remuneration, members of Council, its committees and panels should declare any unremunerated involvement with any other body or company which has connections with Research Council funded activities. See *section 5 for further guidance.*

6. Political/pressure group associations: Members are expected not to occupy paid posts, or hold high-profile unpaid roles within a political party, pressure group or similar organisation. Any political/pressure group association should be declared.

7. Family: Provide details of any potential conflicts that may arise out of any known interests of immediate family. See *section 7 of the guidance for further information.*
Please indicate which section (1–6) above applies. Family members do not need to be identified, either by name or their relationship to you.

Declaration

I have read the NERC Code of Practice for members of the Training Advisory Board and agree to abide by the principles and terms of the Code.

I have read the NERC policy on Declarations of Interest for members of NERC boards, advisory groups and peer review panels and undertake to declare at meetings on NERC business any private, professional, commercial, financial, political or other interests that might be perceived to conflict with NERC interests and which have not been listed above. I agree to update this written declaration on an annual basis over the term of my appointment and provide further interim updates as circumstances change.

I note and accept that the NERC will hold these details I have provided in the Register of Interests, which is open to public inspection and subject to inspection by auditors. I note and accept that the information provided here will be published (other than any sections I have identified as being confidential) on the NERC’s website and that it will be retained in line with the NERC’s retention and disposal policy for records.

Signature: **Date**