

Conflicts of Interest Policy

January 2020

The purpose of the conflicts of interest process

The conflicts of interest process is designed to protect the integrity of CiLCA (Certificate of Local Council Administration) accredited and awarded by Ascentis. It ensures that the assessment process for CiLCA is honest and transparent and provides a layer of protection from any compromising situations that may arise. The qualification is owned by the Improvement & Development Board for the local council sector and is managed by the Society of Local Council Clerks (the Society). The Society is the named centre for the delivery of CiLCA. The assessors for CiLCA are not normally involved in the teaching of CiLCA and their identity remains anonymous to both candidates and their trainers.

In relation to CiLCA, a conflict of interest arises where an assessor's professional judgement is influenced by their personal interests. It is essential that all assessments for CiLCA are fair and that individuals for whom the Society is responsible (including both assessors and candidates) are protected from the influence of personal interests. The Society has a duty to identify, record and report any potential or perceived conflicts of interest. This policy explains how the Society minimises the potential for conflicts of interest and sets out the process by which conflicts of interest are recorded and reported.

Definition of a conflict of interest

Ascentis has adopted the definition used by the regulatory authorities in relation to conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest exists where:

- I. its interests in any activity undertaken by it, on its behalf, or by a member of its staff have the potential to lead it to act contrary to its interests in the development, delivery and award of qualifications in accordance with regulatory requirements
- II. a person who is connected to the development, delivery or award of qualifications at Ascentis has interests in any other activity which has the potential to lead that person to act contrary to his or her interests in that development, delivery or award and impact on our compliance with the requirements of the regulator's Conditions of Recognition
- III. an informed and reasonable observer would conclude that either of these situations was the case.

Conflicts of interest in relation to CiLCA

The Society must identify and monitor all conflicts of interest and any situation where it is reasonable to foresee that a conflict of interest may arise. In response to the requirements of Ascentis, the Society must identify and report potential conflicts of interest where

- a member of staff takes CiLCA
- a member of an assessor's family takes CiLCA
- an assessor's close friend takes CiLCA

As there is no other centre assessing CiLCA, the Society must ensure that the allocated assessor is completely independent of the identified member of staff, family member or close friend. Members of the family include partners, children, siblings, step-family, foster family and similar close relationships.

The Society also takes action to prevent conflicts of interest where

- a candidate for CiLCA comes from the same county
- an assessor is also a trainer

Candidates are not allocated to an assessor working in the same county since they are likely to know each other through professional contact. Where an assessor is also a trainer, candidates from that county are also allocated to an assessor from a different county.

The conflicts of interest process?

It is the responsibility of the Head of Conferences, Training & Education Centre to manage the conflicts of interest process. The process involves ensuring that:

- a Conflicts of Interest Policy is developed, maintained and implemented
- a Conflicts of Interest Log is prepared and maintained
- information is reported to Ascentis as required using its Centre Declaration of Conflict of Interest Form.

The Academic Leader is responsible for developing the policy. The CiLCA Administrator is responsible for preparing and maintaining the log and for reporting information to Ascentis as soon as any potential conflict of interest arises. The log must include details of what measures have been put in place to mitigate any potential risk to the integrity of CiLCA. When a potential or perceived conflict of interest is identified, the CiLCA Administrator enters it in the log and reports it to Ascentis using the Centre Declaration of Interest Form. The log is inspected by the External Quality Assurer (EQA) as part of their centre visit. The log might be requested in the event of concerns being reported to Ascentis. The log remains current until a deadline for the review of marking has passed or until any appeal or enquiry into malpractice or results has been completed, whichever is later. If the SLCC does not have a Conflicts of Interest Log, this will be monitored by the EQA and set as an action point for the EQA to review at the next verification activity.

For further information from the Society, please contact the CiLCA Administrator:

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Policy to be reviewed in January 2023 unless changes are introduced by Ascentis.