



NET Conflict of Interest Policy

Document History

Version History

Issue Date	Author	Summary of changes	Date of next review
26/06/2019	W Lockyer	Reviewed	26/06/2020
29/03/2021	W Lockyer	Updated	29/03/2022

This policy supersedes any current or existing policies for the monitoring and quality assurance of NET Licensed Assessment Centres.



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1 Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect NET's integrity as a business and the integrity of our assessments. It is designed to support stakeholders by providing guidance on handling possible conflicts of interest that may happen as a result of our role as an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).

This policy:

- Highlights and illustrates potential situations where conflicts of interest may arise
- Identifies the principles that NET will adopt in the management of conflicts of interest
- Sets out what actions should be taken by individuals who encounter conflicts of interest
- Sets out how NET will manage and monitor identified conflicts of interest.

As an EPAO, NET must make every effort to avoid any potential or actual conflict of interest and/or collusion in the delivery of our Assessments of Competence (AOC) and end-point assessment services.

Any actual or perceived conflict of interest will undermine the outcome of an assessment and potentially the credibility of staff. Therefore, where a potential conflict emerges, NET will take appropriate action to ensure that the integrity and validity of the assessments and end-point assessments are not compromised. This may mean, for instance, removing individuals from any involvement in the quality assurance and/or assessment process where a risk of conflict may exist.

Responsibility

This policy applies to any person who carries out any role or activity, for or on behalf of, NET. This includes:

- All NET staff
- External consultants and contractors
- Third Party providers (recognised centres).

Other Relevant Policies

The following policies are relevant to this policy:

- Licensed Centre Agreement
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Maladministration and Malpractice Policy

2 Definitions of Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists where either NET or an individual to whom this policy applies has competing interests or loyalties in the same matter.

Here are some examples of Conflict of Interest (this is not an exhaustive list):

- When an individual has a position of authority in one organisation that conflicts with his or her interests in another organisation.
- An assessor at a centre is assessing an EPA or AOC where a family member is one of the candidates.
- NET's interest in any activity that could potentially lead NET to act contrary to its interest in developing, delivering and awarding its products and services
- When an individual has interests that conflict with his or her professional position.
- Where an individual is undertaking the end-point assessment of apprentices, and have previously trained, managed or assessed the same apprentice(s), during the 'on programme' phase of their apprenticeship.

Conflicts of interest can:

- Inhibit free discussion.
- Result in decisions or actions that are not in the interests of the centre, candidates, EPAO or the employer.
- Put at risk NET's reputation, that it may have acted improperly.

A conflict of interest can appear in the form of:

- Direct financial gain.
- Indirect financial gain e.g. a service or contract is awarded to a relative.
- Non-financial gain when the beneficiary of a service, award or donation is an employee, candidate, contractor or trustee

3 Identifying Conflicts of Interest

All stakeholders within the scope of this policy must actively consider and notify NET where a conflict of interest exists or may arise within a suitable timescale.

Licensed Centres

NET Licensed Centres are required to manage conflicts of interest in relation to assessment under the terms of the agreement and to bring any issues to the immediate attention of NET. To be effective, a declaration of interests should be completed on initial employment/contract, and then updated at least annually and when and if any changes occur. These will be uploaded and stored on the MMS system. Stakeholders who fail to do so will be prevented from operating or conducting assessments controlled by NET.

NET Centre Licence Requirements requires Centres to identify and resolve potential conflicts of interest and confirm that Centres must have arrangements in place for their own staff, sub-contractors, sister companies and parent organisations.

Centres may raise any issues with NET Operations Manager in the first instance. The query will be directed to the appropriate NET department/staff for review.

NET Staff and External Consultants / Contractors

Potential and actual conflicts of interest must be identified and managed effectively by NET staff. It is the responsibility of all staff to bring any conflicts to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.

All personnel delivering products and services on behalf of NET are required to declare their interests, in connection with their role. A declaration of interest form will be provided for this purpose and will be stored against the individual on the management system.

NET Quality Assurance staff can be allocated to centres where they have had a previous connection or involvement in some capacity, once confirmation that all assessment and quality assurance activities have been fully completed and candidates certificated.

NET maintains a conflict of interest register to list all potential and actual conflicts of interest in the development, delivery and quality assurance of assessments. The impact and probability of each conflict will be considered, and appropriate mitigating actions are implemented to ensure conflicts are managed effectively where appropriate.

Apprenticeship - End Point Assessment

NET will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all staff and assessors involved in end-point assessment are required to declare any interest of friends or family sitting upcoming assessments and it will be necessary to complete and sign a revised declaration of interest form.

If a member of NET independent assessment staff (Licenced Centre) is undertaking end-point assessment and identifies a conflict of interest on the day of the end-point assessment; that previously has not been identified through the declaration; the independent assessor is required to contact the EPAO (NET) immediately before any assessment takes place. NET, in consultation with the Licensed Centre, will discuss an alternative provision for the end-point assessment of the apprentice(s). It will be the responsibility of the Licensed Centre to rearrange the assessment in consultation with the Training Provider/Employer.

4 Monitoring the Management of Conflicts of Interest

The management of potential conflicts of interest is monitored as follows:

- NET TDM/IQA will monitor conflict of interest at Centres through Centre visit and audit.
- NET Managers are responsible for monitoring and managing any potential and actual conflicts that are identified.
- All current and potential conflicts of interest are kept under review as part of the remit of the NET general meetings.
- Conflict of Interest declarations are sought from stakeholders involved in the development, delivery and assessment of the AOC/End Point Assessment and logged with the NET management system.

5 Regulatory Requirement

This policy is written in accordance with the regulatory requirements including:

- Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition August 2018 - Condition: A4
- Qualifications Wales Standard Conditions of Recognition – Condition A4
- CCEA General Conditions of Recognition February 2016 – Condition A4
- EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements

6 Privacy Statement

It is necessary for NET to collect and hold personal information about individuals in order to manage Conflict of Interests correctly. NET will hold the information individuals provide securely and use it to help NET to handle and process any conflict of interests. More information can be found in the NET Privacy Statement at our website.



What personal data do NET collect and who has access to it

NET will ask for individuals name, contact details, organisation's name and dates of employment, if relevant. To ensure NET manages conflicts of interest correctly, all conflicts of interest including those sent to other personnel in NET, including Board members, will be forwarded to the Operations Team for recording and action. Your information will be shared internally with limited NET staff in relevant departments.

7 Review Arrangements

NET will review the policy annually as part of our self-assessment arrangements. Amendments may be made in response to feedback, best practice or guidance issued by regulators, to align with their policies and processes.

8 Contact Us

If you have any queries about the contents of this policy, please contact NET on 0207 250 8511 or via email to info@netservices.org.uk or submit in writing to NET, CAN Mezzanine, 49-51 East Road, London, N1 6AH