

**Module 7**

# **Conflict of Interest and Research Integrity**

September 2025

**Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University**

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# About the Module

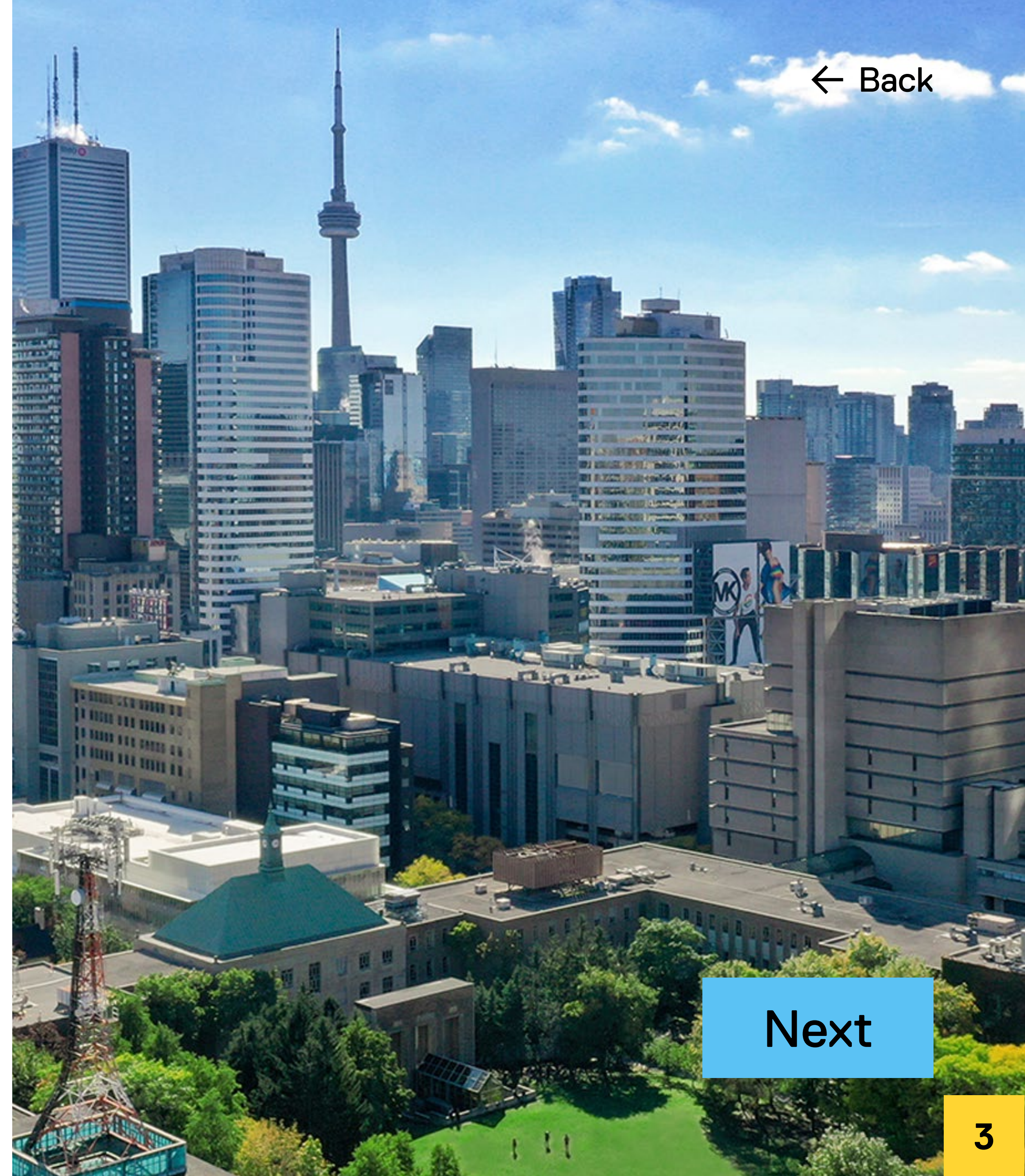
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## About the Module

At Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU), “SRC” refers to the full scope of Scholarly, Research, and Creative (SRC) activities. However, for consistency with the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research and the external guidelines and resources referenced in these modules, we will use the term “research” unless directly referencing TMU’s Senate Policy 118: SRC Integrity.

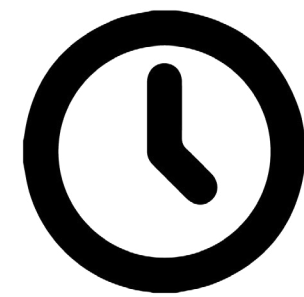
The case studies in the following modules are for educational purposes and do not necessarily represent the procedures, practices, or policies at TMU.



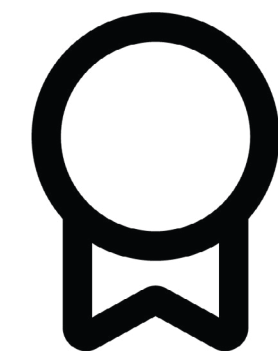
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The **training module** is self-paced and can be completed according to your own time and schedule.



If you require a **Certificate of Completion** please complete this module through the D2L platform. [Learn more on our Research Integrity eLearning page.](#)

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# Relevant Principles of Research Integrity

1



## Principle 1

Conduct research in an honest search for knowledge.

2



## Principle 2

Foster an environment of research integrity, accountability, and public trust.

10



## Principle 10

Acknowledge all contributors and contributions in research.

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# What is a Conflict of Interest?



A conflict of interest is “...when an employee has a personal interest, or incurs an obligation, in a business transaction or professional activity, which is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of the employee’s duties and responsibilities in the best interest of the university, or otherwise affects the integrity and confidence in the university, or the appearance of the above...”<sup>1</sup>

- May arise when activities or situations place an individual in a real or potential conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, personal, institutional, or other interests.
- Interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial, or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current, or prospective professional associates.
- All persons engaged in research activities at the university have a duty to manage, including to report, any conflicts of interest or possible conflicts of interest.

1. TMU Policy 118 (2025)

# Leading with Integrity



- Review institutional policies<sup>2</sup> about conflicts of interest, including identifying institutional authorities and the necessary processes to manage conflicts of interest.
- Define roles and responsibilities in research project teams to minimize and manage the potential for conflict of interest.
- Require individuals involved in the conduct of research to declare their conflict of interest as per the policy guidelines. Alternatively, withdraw from roles and/or functions if there is any real, potential, or perceived conflict.

2. Adapted from: Government of Canada (2022a)

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# Case Study

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### **Allegation:**

Mismanagement of conflict of interest.

### **Findings:**

R1 and R2, faculty members at the Institution, and an industry partner, failed to manage their conflicts of interest in an Agency-funded research project. R1 hired R3, the senior official of the industry partner, as a research professional to work on a separate non-Agency funded project while the adjudication process of the Agency application was underway. R3 continued to be under R1's employ even after the Agency grant was awarded to R1, R2 and R3. The Institution's investigation concluded that R1's hiring of R3 while the adjudication process of the Agency application was underway, and keeping R3 under R1's employ after the Agency grant was awarded, constituted a breach of research integrity. Although no research activities associated with the Agency grant occurred while R3 was employed by R1, the Institution concluded that the conflict of interest was not appropriately managed, even if the conflict existed for a very limited period.<sup>3</sup>

### **Breach:**

Mismanagement of conflict of interest.

<sup>3</sup>. Adapted from: Panel on Responsible Conduct of Research (2019), File 79



### Institutional disposition:

- Established an internal institutional validation process regarding future hirings by R1 and R2 for a period of 24 months without adding unjustified delays to the research activities of R1 and R2.
- Decided that R3 would no longer be employed by the institution as a research professional while owning an enterprise that could receive research grants with the Institution.
- Enhanced its training of all professors regarding research integrity and Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR).
- Made the completion of Module 7 of the TCPS 2 Tutorial Course on Research Ethics (CORE) mandatory for all its faculty.

### Agency recourse:

- Declared R1 and R2 ineligible to participate in Agency review processes for a period of two years and reminded them to appropriately identify and address their conflicts of interest when working with industry partners.
- Issued a letter of reprimand to R3 reminding him/her, as the president of an industry partner, to appropriately identify and address conflicts of interest prior to engaging in work with institutions or researchers, whether as a research professional or as an industry partner.



# Reflection Questions

- 1.** Are you aware of what constitutes a conflict of interest? Can you recall a time where you felt unsure? If so, what did you do?
- 2.** Are you aware of the steps you must take to effectively manage and disclose conflicts of interest to the university?
- 3.** Do diverse research settings, including collaborations with foreign institutions, the private sector and civil society, for example, complicate the management of conflicts of interest? In what ways?



# Test for Understanding

Begin

According to Policy 118, one way that a conflict of interest arises is when an employee:

- A** Fails to appropriately include collaborators as authors in a joint publication
- B** Lists co-applicants in a grant application without their agreement
- C** Has a personal interest that substantially conflicts with their professional duties
- D** Publishes previously published research results

 **Incorrect**

**A “Fails to appropriately include collaborators as authors in a joint publication” is incorrect.**

This would be addressed in Policy 118 through breach 6.15: Misleading publication and/or invalid authorship.

Try again



 **Incorrect**

**B “Lists co-applicants in a grant application without their agreement” is incorrect.**

This would be addressed in Policy 118 through breach 6.17: Misrepresentation in a grant application or related document.

Try again



**C “Has a personal interest that substantially conflicts with their professional duties” is correct.**

A conflict of interest may arise when activities or situations place an individual in a real or potential conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, personal, institutional, or other interests.

These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial, or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current, or prospective professional associates. See Section 7.0 in Policy 118 for more information.

**Advance >**

 **Incorrect**

**D “Publishes previously published research results” is incorrect.**

This would be addressed in Policy 118 through breach 6.4: Self-plagiarism.

Try again

A conflict of interest must involve financial gain to be considered a breach.

True

**or**

False



**✖ Incorrect**

**“True” is incorrect.**

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**Try again**

 **Correct****“False” is correct.**

A conflict of interest may arise when activities or situations place an individual in a real or potential conflict between the duties or responsibilities related to research, personal, institutional, or other interests.

These interests include, but are not limited to, business, commercial, or financial interests pertaining to the individual, their family members, friends, or their former, current, or prospective professional associates.

**Advance >**

## References and Other Resources

**Panel on Responsible Conduct of Research (2019).** [Summaries of RCR Files Involving a Confirmed Breach.](#)

**Medical Publishing Insights and Practices (2020).** [How to Disclose Relationships, Activities, and Potential Conflicts of Interest.](#)

**Government of Canada (2022a).** [TCPS 2 – Chapter 7: Conflicts of Interest.](#)

**Government of Canada (2022b).** [Safeguarding Your Research.](#)

**Organization for Economic and Cooperation Development (2022).** [Integrity and Security in the Global Research System.](#)

**TMU Policy 118 (2025).** [Policy 118: Scholarly, Research and Creative \(SRC\) Integrity Policy.](#)

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# Module Complete



**Thank you** for reviewing the university's Conflict of Interest and Research Integrity Module.

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Research Integrity eLearning resources