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Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-CRI-P	 Policy on Ethic and Conflict of Interest	Page3 of 8
Doc. Type: Policy		Valid From: July 2024
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Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-CRI-P	 Policy on Ethic and Conflict of Interest	Page4 of 8
Doc. Type: Policy		Valid From: July 2024
		Revision No. 0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest (EIZ-E-17-P) 5

 1. Guiding Principles and Authority..... 5

 2. Scope of Conflict of Interest..... 5

 3. Specific Restrictions for EAC and Evaluation Visit Team Members..... 5

 4. Governance and Structural Safeguards..... 6

 5. Compliance and Reporting..... 6

Declaration and Recusal Process 6

 1. Mandatory Conflict of Interest Declaration 7

 2. Identifying and Reporting a Conflict 7

 3. Recusal Procedure 7

 4. EAC Chairperson's Role 8

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Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-P/001	 Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest	Page5 of 8
Doc. Type: General Procedure		Valid From: July 2024
		Revision No. 0

Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest (EIZ-E-17-P)

This document details the **Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest** governing the activities of the **Engineering Accreditation Committee (EAC)** and its associated personnel, as mandated by the **Engineering Institution of Zambia (EIZ)**. This policy is designed to ensure the impartiality, integrity, and credibility of the engineering programme accreditation process.

1. Guiding Principles and Authority

The EIZ, through its EAC, is an **independent statutory and professional body**, legally and operationally distinct from all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) whose engineering programmes it accredits.

- **Statutory Basis:** This independence is enshrined in the **Engineering Institution of Zambia Act No. 17 of 2010**, which mandates EIZ to **regulate the engineering profession** and to **accredit engineering programmes** on behalf of the State, **without interference** from any university or training provider.
- **Purpose:** The primary purpose of this Conflict of Interest policy is to maintain **objective, fair, and unbiased accreditation decisions** that serve the public interest and uphold the standards of the engineering profession in Zambia.

2. Scope of Conflict of Interest

A **Conflict of Interest** arises when a member of the EAC or an Evaluation Visit Team (EVT) has a personal, professional, or financial relationship that could, or could be perceived to, influence their ability to render an impartial and objective decision regarding the accreditation of an engineering programme.

3. Specific Restrictions for EAC and Evaluation Visit Team Members

As per **Schedule B1 1(g)** of this policy, the following restriction is strictly enforced to eliminate potential or perceived conflicts of interest:

Affected Role	Type of Conflict	Prohibited Action
EAC Member	Academic or HEI Affiliation	Must not take part in any aspect of decision with regard to accreditation of programmes from their own HEI.
Evaluation Visit Team (EVT) Member	Academic or HEI Affiliation	Must not take part in any aspect of decision with regard to accreditation of programmes from their own HEI.

Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-P/001	 Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest	Page6 of 8
Doc. Type: General Procedure		Valid From: July 2024
		Revision No. 0

- **Definition of "Own HEI":** This includes the Higher Education Institution where the individual is currently employed, was employed within a specified cooling-off period (as defined in separate EAC operational procedures), or with which they have had **substantive links** (e.g., as a student, significant benefactor, or ongoing consultant).

4. Governance and Structural Safeguards

The **structure of the EAC and its governance** incorporates systemic safeguards to eliminate the possibility of undue influence and ensure that no academic can influence accreditation decisions relating to their own HEI.

- **Independence:** The EAC operates as an independent body under the EIZ mandate.
- **Composition and Rotation:** The EAC composition is designed to include a balance of expertise from academia, industry, and the public sector, with members selected to prevent institutional dominance.
- **Declaration and Recusal:** All members of the EAC and EVT are required to **formally declare any potential conflicts of interest** prior to commencement of any evaluation or decision-making process.
 - Any member with a declared or identified conflict of interest must **recuse themselves** immediately and entirely from the discussion, deliberation, and voting process related to the affected HEI or programme.
- **Oversight:** The EIZ governance structure provides oversight to ensure strict adherence to this conflict of interest policy at all stages of the accreditation process.

5. Compliance and Reporting

- **Mandatory Compliance:** Adherence to this Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest is **mandatory** for all EAC members, EVT members, and any EIZ staff involved in the accreditation process.
- **Violations:** Failure to comply with the terms of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including removal from the EAC/EVT, and/or other penalties as determined by the EIZ Council.

Declaration and Recusal Process

The declaration and recusal process is a critical operational safeguard built into the EIZ-E-17-P policy to actively manage and prevent conflicts of interest (COI) during accreditation activities. This process ensures that the integrity and objectivity of the Engineering Accreditation Committee (EAC) and Evaluation Visit Team (EVT) decisions are maintained.

Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-P/001	 Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest	Page7 of 8
Doc. Type: General Procedure		Valid From: July 2024
		Revision No. 0

1. Mandatory Conflict of Interest Declaration

All EAC and EVT members must complete a **formal, written declaration** at two key stages:

1. **Annual Declaration:** At the beginning of their term or at a specified annual cycle, members must declare any ongoing professional, financial, or personal relationships that could potentially give rise to a conflict of interest, particularly regarding any Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with engineering programs accredited or seeking accreditation by the EIZ.
2. **Pre-Activity Declaration:** Before commencing work on any specific accreditation evaluation, review, or decision-making meeting, members must review the list of HEIs involved and confirm if a conflict of interest exists, based on the criteria in **Schedule B1 1(g)** (academic or links with the HEI being evaluated).

2. Identifying and Reporting a Conflict

A conflict of interest is triggered if a member:

- Is currently, or has recently been, an employee or academic staff member of the HEI whose programme is being evaluated.
- Has other **substantive links** (e.g., major consultancy work, significant financial ties) with the HEI that could be perceived as influencing their objectivity.

The member has an **affirmative duty** to immediately:

- **Report the COI** to the EAC Chairperson or the EIZ Accreditation Secretariat.
- **Specify the nature of the COI** (e.g., "I am currently a Professor at the HEI under review").

3. Recusal Procedure

Recusal is the process by which a member with a declared conflict of interest is formally excluded from all aspects of the accreditation process related to the conflicted HEI.

Step	Action Taken	Purpose
Notification	The conflicted member officially notifies the EAC leadership of the COI and their intent to recuse.	Formal documentation of the conflict.
Exclusion from Review	The member is not allowed to participate in the site visit,	Prevents collection/review of data that could be biased.

Doc. No. PPRND/E-17-P/001	 Policy on Ethics and Conflict of Interest	Page8 of 8
Doc. Type: General Procedure		Valid From: July 2024
		Revision No. 0

Step	Action Taken	Purpose
	programme review, or report preparation for the conflicted HEI.	
Exclusion from Deliberation	During the EAC meeting where the HEI's accreditation decision is discussed, the recused member must leave the room (or disconnect from the virtual meeting).	Ensures the member does not influence the discussion or perception of other members.
Exclusion from Voting	The recused member is not counted for quorum and is strictly prohibited from casting a vote on the accreditation decision.	Guarantees the decision is made solely by impartial members.
Documentation	The recusal is formally recorded in the minutes of the EAC meeting, detailing the member's name and the HEI they recused from.	Provides an audit trail and proof of compliance with EIZ-E-17-P.

4. EAC Chairperson's Role

The EAC Chairperson (or a designated alternate) is responsible for:

- Reviewing all COI declarations.
- **Determining the validity and necessity of recusal** in ambiguous cases.
- **Strictly enforcing the recusal process** during all accreditation activities and meetings.

This rigorous process is the primary mechanism by which the EIZ maintains the **transparency and public trust** in its accreditation function.

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PPRND/E-17-CRI-P Rev 0 – EIZ Policy/Procedure