

## Simulation exercise template

### Simulation Exercise Title: Identifying and Managing Conflicts of Interest in VET Research

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**Objective:** The goal is for learners to recognize and identify conflicts of interest in research using the knowledge they've acquired, and to think critically about the ethical challenges these conflicts present while proposing alternative solutions. Building on the steps outlined in the previous digital resource, learners are expected to develop a thorough understanding of how to identify, disclose, manage, and avoid conflicts of interest, thereby ensuring the integrity of their research projects.

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### Background

A researcher at a VET institute, is conducting a study examining impact of a new skills training program designed to help long-term unemployed individuals, particularly those with chronic illnesses and mental health problems, find permanent employment. The study is funded by a well-established private company "A", which wants to employ some of the participants after they complete the training.

The researcher has close professional ties to the company "A", since they have previously worked as external consultant for the company. Additionally, the researcher is seeking a future academic collaboration with the company to secure further research funding for her department. On the other hand, the company has expressed interest in positive study results that could be potentially used in their marketing and recruitment strategies.

The researcher knows, personally, one of the participants, Andreas, who is a family friend and has been struggling with unemployment for years due to

mental health issues. The researcher knows that his participation in the study and subsequent employment could be life-changing for him.

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### **Data Provided**

- The study is funded by a well-established private company “A”, which wants to employ some of the participants after they complete the training.
  - The researcher has close professional ties to the company “A”, since they have previously worked as a consultant for the company.
  - The researcher is seeking a future academic collaboration with the company to secure further research funding for her department.
  - The company has expressed interest in positive study results that could be potentially used in their marketing and recruitment strategies
  - The researcher knows, personally, one of the participants, Andreas, who is a family friend and has been struggling with unemployment for years due to mental health issues
  - The researcher knows that his participation in the study and subsequent employment could be life-changing for him
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### **Task**

**In this activity, the learner must a) read the scenario carefully, b) identify the potential COIs and c) answer the questions below, following the steps provided.**

**To effectively solve this exercise, the learner should have read and understood the previously provided digital resources about Conflict of Interest.**

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## Guidelines

- As the researcher proceeds with the research, they must navigate several potential conflicts of interest (COIs).
- Follow the steps below to identify these COIs and, answer the questions.

### Question 1:

#### **STEP 1: Identify potential COIs**

Write down 6 specific conflict of interest the researcher faces, considering: a) financial interests, b) academic interests, as well as, c) personal interests. How the COIs can impact their research design, data collection, results and dissemination of research findings?

### Question 2:

#### **STEP 2: Disclose Existing COIs**

Develop a COI statement that the researcher can use to detail the nature of the COIs identified and how the researcher plans to manage them.

### Question 3:

#### **STEP 3: Manage Unavoidable COIs**

Identify 3 actions the researcher can take to minimize the impact of their COIs on the research.

### Question 4:

#### **STEP 4: Avoid Creating New COIs**

List potential actions or situations that may create new COIs for the researcher during or even after the research.

**Question 5:**

**STEP 5: Educate yourself and others**

The researcher organizes a training program for their fellow researchers, the aim of which is to inform and educate them on avoiding and managing COIs.

What it is important for the researcher to mention during this program? What aspects of COIs must be covered?

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**Deliverables:** The learner is expected to answer all five questions.

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