



US Fencing Coaches Association

Certification and Accreditation Board Conflict of Interest Policy for Examiners

Published by the Certification and Accreditation
Board of the United States Fencing Coaches
Association, © 2022

Version: 1.1
Last Updated: 1-11-2022

The United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) conducts certification and educational operations with coaches teaching the Olympic Sport of fencing in the United States. Its members have the opportunity to earn higher levels of certification through apprenticeships and practical examinations, from introductory levels up to the rank of Fencing Master.

USFCA certification exams are conducted by pre-approved USCFA examiners who have been trained for this purpose. This process relies on the independence of examiners and exam objective standards. It is important to note that examiners, in applying objective exam standards, are also influenced by their-viewpoints, opinions, and preferences. As a result, there is a subjective, discretionary component to all USFCA certification exams, which must not be called into question because of professional and/or personal relationships between and among the parties involved. Since USFCA exams are subject to the scrutiny of the entire fencing community, conflicts of interest can compromise the independence of exams in fact or in perception.

The world of fencing in the United States is a very close-knit community. Further, USFCA members participate in a variety of distinct roles throughout their careers and/or their daily activities. So, it is easy for conflicts of interest to arise in the contexts of USFCA exams.

To preserve, ensure and maintain the independence of the examination process, the USFCA had adopted the following Conflict of Interest Policy regarding its certification process.



USFCA Certification Process - Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy

1. This COI policy sets forth the COIs rules for the (5) levels of USFCA certification.
2. The USFCA, including its officers, board and committee members, Executive Director, employees, and members at large must comply with the rules outlined in this COI Policy.
3. Conflicts of interest are defined in many ways. For this COI Policy, a conflict of interest is any situation that may vitiate the independence of the USFCA certification process in fact and/or perception. Therefore, the USFCA must ensure the independence of its certification process and to maintain it free from the influences of outside relationships between the parties involved.
4. For COI's that have taken place in the past (e.g. former student, former employee) the statute of limitations is 5 years prior.
5. COIs may arise in a variety of circumstances in connection with the USFCA certification process. Below, is a non-exhaustive list of the parties involved.
 - Examiners
 - Candidates for practical examination
 - Thesis candidates
 - Candidate's mentor(s)
 - Members of the Certification and Accreditation Board
 - Other examiners involved in the same exam (e.g., husband and wife examiners on the same commission)
6. The COI Policy classifies COIs into two categories:
 - Material COIs: Mandatory ineligibility/recusal of the examiner(s).
 - Minor COIs: CAB rules on minor COIs and informs the interested parties of its decision. Minor COIs could include COIs based upon perception. Although the USFCA should strive to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, Minor COIs (whether based upon a perception or fact) may not necessarily result in the exclusion or the recusal of an examiner, as long as the Minor COI is managed upfront with complete transparency.
7. The USFCA/CAB shall adopt a formal COI reporting process as part of its certification process. This allows interested parties to have an open channel of communications with CAB. The COI Policy shall include a COI Form for reporting Minor COIs to CAB.



United States Fencing Coaches Association

Conflict of Interest Policy for Examiners

8. Failure to report COIs may result in the subsequent invalidation of a practical exam, depending on the type of COI and whether the failure to disclose a COI was intentional. The CAB shall establish a procedure to address COIs reported after a practical exam has taken place.
9. Examiners cannot receive gifts (before or after a practical exam) from the candidate or third parties on behalf of the candidate.
10. All examiners and/or adult exam candidates must review this COI Policy at least two weeks before taking a practical exam. If a practical exam is scheduled at the last minute (e.g., at a USFCA clinic), it is the responsibility of the examiners to determine that there are no COIs in connection with the exam. In doubt, examiners are expected to recuse themselves) or contact the CAB to disclose the COI and ask for guidance.
11. One goal of USFCA certification is to encourage the entry of as many members as possible into the certification process. Therefore, COI issues do not apply to the first two levels of certification. However, starting at level 3, COI issues become increasingly predominant. CAB will appoint Level 5 examination boards.
12. The COI Guideline Table, below, identifies the impact of the types of conflict-of-interest relationships on the USFCA's five levels of certification.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST GUIDELINE TABLE

LEGEND:

TERM	MEANING	OUTCOME
NO COI	No Conflict of Interest	Examiner is eligible
M	Material COI	Examiner ineligible- Recusal
TBD	Minor COI	To be resolved by CAB
N/A	Not Applicable	e.g., Only one examiner is needed for the exam

Examiners: This includes examiners conducting the practical exam and also members appointed to a Thesis Board (Level 5). Employment: For COI purposes, employment could be full-time, part-time, occasional, or even volunteer work. An individual may be hired as a contractor (1040) or as an employee (W2).

Type of Relationship	Parties Involved	Level 1 Screening	Level 2 Assist. Mon.	Level 3 Moniteur	Level 4 Prevot	Level 5 Master
Litigation/dispute	Examiner and candidate are parties to a SAFESPORT dispute/investigation, civil litigation; or a USFCA/USA Fencing ethical complaint.	M	M	M	M	M



United States Fencing Coaches Association

Conflict of Interest Policy for Examiners

Work/Business	Examiner and candidate are parties to a loan/financing, licensing/franchising, real estate, partnership, joint venture agreement.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has employed the candidate or been employed by the candidate within the last 5 years.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner is in negotiations to employ candidate or be employed by the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has signed a contract to employ candidate or be employed by candidate within the next 3 months.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner is or has been the candidate's coach.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate work for the same employer in the same chain of reporting.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate have co-authored a paper or a book within the last 5 years.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	M	M
Work/Business	Examiner has worked as a volunteer (minimum 10 hours per week) for Candidate or vice versa.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	TBD	TBD
Work/Business	Employer of candidate employs examiner <i>ad hoc</i> to conduct clinics and examination at employer's club.	NO COI	NO COI	TBD	TBD	TBD
Work/Business	Examiners who have served as referee assigners or referee examiners of the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Candidates who have served as referee assigners or referee examiners of examiners.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Candidates who have served as a referee or other official at a tournament hosted by examiner.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Examiners who have served as a referee or other official at a tournament hosted by candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI	NO COI
Work/Business	Examiner and candidate have or have had a mentor/mentee (or vice versa) relationship.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M



United States Fencing Coaches Association

Conflict of Interest Policy for Examiners

Personal Relationship	Examiner is a relative of the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Examiner is or was married to the candidate.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Examiners and the candidate have or have had an emotional relationship.	NO COI	NO COI	M	M	M
Personal Relationship	Two examiners on the same board are related by marriage, family, or an emotional relationship. *For levels 4 and 5, this COI can be waived by candidate.	N/A	N/A	N/A	M*	M*