

Appendix to the Volunteer Code of Conduct:

Guidelines for Dealing with Conflicts of Interest

Selection for the Rhodes Scholarships

The integrity of the Rhodes Scholarships, which have built a strong global reputation for leadership and excellence over the past 118 years, is predicated on the integrity of the selection process. In selecting Rhodes Scholars, volunteers for the Rhodes Trust must always avoid perceptions of possible bias and potential conflicts of interest. It is therefore of the utmost importance that those involved in any aspect of selection recognise their responsibility to disclose any potential conflict, no matter how insignificant it may seem: *“If you are in doubt, disclose”* - to the National Secretary or, if you are the National Secretary, to Rhodes House: selection@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk.

Selectors and Selection Committee members

- In general, potential volunteers for selection should ask themselves if they have any role or relationship that could reasonably lead any applicant or outside observer to think they might have a conflict of interest. If an individual is uncertain as to whether something constitutes a conflict, they should contact their National Secretary or the Selection Committee’s Regional, District or State Secretary.
- Volunteers should not serve as a Rhodes selector if
 - their relative(s) or personal friend(s) will be applying for the Rhodes Scholarships in that year of selection;
 - they or their near relatives (e.g. spouse) have written a letter of recommendation for any applicant in their constituency (in their district or region, for larger constituencies);
 - they act as a formal advisor or supervisor to applicants;
 - for the US or Canada: they sit on a college or university committee whose purpose is to endorse applicants.

If any situation exists or develops where a question could reasonably be raised about a potential conflict, please raise the issue with either the National Secretary or the Selection Committee’s Regional, District or State Secretary.

If the above holds true, this does not mean that the volunteer may not serve as a selector - there may be acceptable ways to proceed that will protect the integrity of the Rhodes Scholarships selection process. A relationship may exist that is not disqualifying - for example, an applicant from a university whose president is on the Selection Committee, or the son or daughter of a professional partner or colleague. In such cases, the National Secretary will consider whether a special procedure to reduce or eliminate any possible or perceived bias should be introduced - for example:

- recusal from participation in the short-listing decision for that applicant; or
- abstention from questioning the applicant in the interview; or
- refraining from speaking in selection deliberations until all other selectors have expressed an opinion.

Good judgement is essential, as appearances of bias can do much damage.

The National Secretariat

For the members of the National Secretariat, the same considerations apply in terms of avoiding perceptions of possible bias and potential conflicts of interest.

National and Deputy Secretaries

If a near relative¹ (for example a niece, nephew, cousin, grandchild) is applying in the constituency of a National Secretary or a Deputy Secretary, then the Secretary should recuse themselves for one year, for that selection round, and not take part in:

- the short-listing process, and any deliberations/decisions taken therein;
- the interview and any questioning of that candidate;
- the final deliberation process, and any decisions taken on the Scholarship winners for that selection round.

Note that if the near relative is able legitimately to apply in a different jurisdiction or constituency then this should be considered as a permissible route to avoid any conflicts of interest.

During their tenure, the child of a National or Deputy Secretary may not apply for the Rhodes Scholarships. This is due to the fact that even a one year recusal on their part may not avoid the perception of bias that may be associated with the selection of the child of a National or Deputy Secretary as a Rhodes Scholar.

Regional/District/State Secretaries should not serve on a Selection Committee where a near relative (including a child) is applying.

Statement in preparation for, or during, Final Selection

To emphasise the importance the Trust places on and disclosure, it is suggested that either the Secretary (National, District or Regional as appropriate) or the Chair of the Selection Committee makes a statement to all finalists as to the importance of the integrity of the selection process, how seriously conflicts of interest are taken, and how any conflicts of interest would be/have been dealt with. This could either be done in advance of the final selection event or just before the interviews commence, depending on how final selection is organised.

The Secretary or Chair should state that, in advance of their involvement in selection, they have asked each Committee member to disclose whether there could be any potential conflict of interest [and, where necessary share the results/handling of such disclosure(s)].

Reference Providers: Trustees, Senior Volunteers, Staff

Conflicts of interest may arise for the providers of references for the Rhodes Scholarships if they occupy a position with significant influence on the policies or practices of selection. It is therefore not appropriate for the following to write a reference for an applicant in any Rhodes constituency:

- Trustees;
- The Warden or other Rhodes Trust staff members;
- Senior volunteers including National and Deputy Secretaries;

or, in that constituency where they are performing selection duties:

- Senior volunteers including Regional, District and State Secretaries, Committee Secretaries, Committee Chairs.

An exception to the above may occur if the reference provider is providing an academic or character reference in their role as an academic supervisor or academic advisor to the applicant. In such cases, the provider should clearly state in the reference that they

¹ Please note that the concept of 'near relative' should be translated as appropriate to the constituency and cultural context: for example, if a non-blood relative such as a godchild or step-child is considered as akin to a child or blood relative, then the handling of that conflict should be the same as if for a near relative (or that of a child of a National or Deputy Secretary).

are commenting purely in their role as an academic supervisor/advisor, and also declare their role as a Rhodes Trustee/senior volunteer/staff member.

As previously emphasised, it is most important that those involved in any aspect of selection recognise their responsibility to declare any potential conflict, no matter how insignificant it may seem: “If you are in doubt, disclose” to the National Secretary who will consider and adjudicate upon the matter - or, if you are the National Secretary, please write to the team at Rhodes House: selection@rhodeshouse.ox.ac.uk.