

## Bias or Conflict of Interest in the NSCP-PTA

In the NSCP-PTA, ensuring an impartial assessment is crucial for both the pharmacy technician candidate and the NSCP-PTA Assessor who conducts the assessment on behalf of the NSCP.

The impartiality of the NSCP-PTA can be compromised by:

- bias (actual or perceived)
- conflict of interest (actual or potential)

### Bias

Bias is a predisposition, either favorable or unfavorable, that can influence judgment. It involves preconceived notions or beliefs that may lead an assessor to evaluate a candidate unfairly. These biases, whether conscious or unconscious, can undermine the objectivity of the assessment process.

Examples of bias in the NSCP-PTA include, but are not limited to:

- **Preconceptions about the candidate:** Holding opinions about the candidate's background, such as their origin or the specific pharmacy education program they completed. This could involve stereotypes or assumptions about the quality of education or competence based on these factors.
- **Influence of prior knowledge:** Being aware of any awards or recognition the candidate has received. While seemingly positive, this knowledge could create an expectation of a certain performance level, potentially influencing the assessor's judgment.
- **Generalization from past experiences:** Having an extremely positive or negative experience with another pharmacy professional whose background is similar to that of the candidate. This can lead to unfair comparisons or assumptions about the candidate's abilities.
- **Familiarity with the assessment site:** The candidate having had prior exposure to the assessment site as a patient, student, volunteer, or employee. This familiarity might create a perception of unfair advantage or disadvantage, even if it doesn't exist.

### Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest (COI) is a situation in which an assessor has a personal or financial interest that could reasonably be seen as affecting their ability to make an impartial decision. It involves a clash between the assessor's professional responsibilities and their personal interests, which could compromise their objectivity. A COI does not necessarily imply wrongdoing, but it creates the potential for biased judgment.

Examples of a possible COI in the NSCP-PTA include, but are not limited to:

- **Familial relationship:** The candidate and assessor being related by family. This creates a direct personal interest that could influence the assessor's evaluation.
- **Personal relationship:** The candidate and assessor being personally acquainted. Even outside of a family connection, a personal relationship can create a sense of obligation or favoritism.
- **Financial relationship:** The candidate having any business connection with the assessor, designated manager, or owner of the assessment site. Financial ties create a direct stake in the candidate's success or failure, compromising impartiality.

## Expectations of Assessors and Candidates

Assessors and pharmacy technician candidates must understand how bias and COIs can compromise the assessor's ability to impartially evaluate the candidate's performance. Both parties have a responsibility to identify and disclose any potential issues.

As part of the NSCP-PTA application process, candidates declare that no COI exists with the assessor or site, and assessors declare they will not assess a candidate where a COI exists.

To further ensure impartiality, consider the following questions:

- "Do I recognize the person (by name or in person), and if so, what is the nature of my relationship with them?"
- "Have I heard or learned anything about the person (positive or negative) that could influence my opinion of their practice or their performance in the NSCP-PTA?"
- "Are there any explicit or implicit expectations for me, as an assessor, to help this pharmacy technician candidate succeed in the NSCP-PTA?"
- "As an assessor, are there any external factors, such as pressure from my employer or the assessment site, that might influence my judgment or create a desire for the candidate to successfully complete the NSCP-PTA as quickly as possible?"
- "As an assessor, would I feel uncomfortable interacting with the NSCP-PTA candidate or with any mutual relatives or acquaintances in the future, depending on the outcome of the assessment?"

If the answer is "NO" to all these questions, it is more likely that you can declare you have no bias or COI.

If the answer is "YES" to any of these questions, or if you are unsure how to answer them, you must contact the NSCP Registrations and Licensing Team at [registrations@nspharmacists.ca](mailto:registrations@nspharmacists.ca) and explain the circumstances. Transparency is essential in maintaining the integrity of the assessment process.

## Management of a Declared Bias or Conflict of Interest

When concerns arise about a potential bias or COI, NSCP staff will review the specific circumstances.

If the circumstances are not considered to significantly affect the impartiality of the NSCP-PTA, the pharmacy technician candidate and the NSCP-PTA Assessor may be allowed to proceed with the assessment.

However, if the circumstances are deemed to compromise the impartiality of the NSCP-PTA, the candidate will be required to select an alternative assessment site and/or assessor.

### Consequences of an Undeclared Bias or Conflict of Interest

Failure to disclose to the NSCP a bias or COI that could compromise the impartiality of the NSCP-PTA is serious. It may lead to a decision requiring the candidate to redo the NSCP-PTA with a different assessor at a different site, and at additional cost. Further, the assessor's appointment as an NSCP-PTA Assessor with the NSCP may be withdrawn.

If you have any questions about the NSCP-PTA, please contact the NSCP Registrations and Licensing Team at [registrations@nspharmacists.ca](mailto:registrations@nspharmacists.ca).