

Report of CPSA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics to the CPSA Board

June, 2012

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The mandate of the CPSA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics as set by the CPSA Board in 2010 is as follows:

The CPSA should establish a Standing Committee on Professional Ethics whose initial tasks would include developing a set of principles of ethical conduct and whose main tasks thereafter would include

a) initiatives to educate members about ethics in the discipline; b) on-going review and revision of the guidelines.

Committee members will be appointed for a three-year term.

On May 15, 2011, Ian Greene met with the Board and presented the written report of the CPSA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics. The report summarized the teleconference meetings of the three members of the Standing Committee and their consultations by email with CPSA members in 2010-11 about what kinds of issues the Code should deal with. Greene also presented a summary of the workshop on the CPSA Code of Professional Conduct that was planned for May 17 as part of the Annual Meeting.

On May 15, Ian Greene said that the Committee would appreciate feedback from the Board on the following questions:

a) How broad should the guidelines be? For example, should it be limited to concerns within the activities of the CPSA only, or should it also address ethical issues within departments that some members, based on the email consultation, would like us to address?

The discussion that followed indicated that most members of the Board wanted our Committee to focus on issues relating to the CPSA. They were concerned that their universities already had rules and guidelines dealing with ethics issues in departments, and some were worried that an overlap would produce confusion and possibly contradiction. There was a consensus that what was needed was an aspirational and inspirational code.

At the end of the meeting it was noted that the SSHRC has changed its procedures – members have to apply to qualify to apply for a subvention, and in conjunction with this, every organization must have a conflict of interest policy. Graham White said that he had written a conflict of interest policy for the Board and employees that was based on the conflict of interest policy of the American Historical Association. There was an e-vote to approve it so that CPSA had a policy in place as required. The Board referred this policy to the Standing Committee on Ethics for recommendations.

On May 17, about twenty CPSA members attended the consultation workshop, including faculty members of all ranks and graduate students. Like the email consultation, there were a variety of views expressed about what the Code should contain, ranging from very narrow to very broad, including issues related to research and teaching.

Draft Code of Professional Conduct

Based on the feedback from the Board and the consultation workshop, the Standing Committee on Professional Ethics met by teleconference in November of 2011, and Catherine Frost offered to draft a short inspirational Code. Ian Greene and Caroline Andrew agreed with the wording of this draft, and it is attached as Appendix I.

Ian Greene has suggested an addendum to the Code which would address the educative responsibilities of the Committee. From Greene's perspective, an effective educative tool would be to permit consultation between CPSA members and the Standing Committee about ethics questions. The results of these consultations could be summarized in an Annual report in a way that preserves the anonymity of those who consulted the Committee. This procedure is similar to how provincial, territorial, and Parliamentary ethics commissioners proceed, and after a time, the annual reports with summarized anonymous advice constitute powerful educative documents. The draft addendum is attached to as Appendix II.

Conflict of Interest Policy

We found that the conflict of interest policy as it currently stands presents challenges. First, we are concerned that the policy includes only financial conflicts of interest, which is a very dated way of analyzing conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest is a problem because it may prevent a decision-maker from acting impartially, and definitely prevents the decision-maker from appearing to act impartially. What if the CPSA deals with companies or organizations where a Board member is involved in some professional capacity (advisor, Board member, or engaged in some research that entangles them with the organisation, etc). Shouldn't that also be covered? In fact given our research activities, professional conflicts may be more likely than financial ones.

Second, we do not think that the prevent financial conflicts of interest, the level of financial disclosure required by the current policy is necessary. We may be getting into some privacy issues here. This Board is made up of humble professors, not business executives. Some may be reluctant to stand for a position where they might have to disclose some aspects of their personal finances to the entire Board and have it go down into the permanent record (which presumably is open to examination by all CPSA members). We think we can ask a person to declare a financial interest and disclose the general parameters of that interest and then determine whether the Board needs more information to make a decision. We also think the details of a Board member's personal finances should never become a matter of public record.

Third, the current policy does not leave Board members with the option simply to recuse themselves. The Board's evaluation of a potential conflict should be necessary only if a member wants to declare a conflict and also go on to participate in decision-making process. In most cases like this, people simply declare a conflict and sit out the process.

Ian Greene has drafted a very rough revised conflict of interest policy with the intention of asking the Board whether it would like the Standing Committee to continue working on drafting a new conflict of interest policy along these lines. It would be wise to know if the Board thinks we are proceeding in a useful direction before devoting more time to this task. The very rough draft is attached as Appendix III.

Continuity of Standing Committee on Professional Ethics

As noted above, members of the Standing Committee are appointed by the Board for three year terms. The three of us are now entering our third and final year. We would like to propose, for continuity purposes, that one member of the Committee be replaced annually. That would mean that one of us would retire at the time of the CPSA Annual Meeting in 2013, and would be replaced by a new member appointed by the Board. At the same time, one of us would be re-appointed by the Board for a one-year term, and another of us for a two-year term. The person with a new one-year term would be replaced in 2014, and the person with a new two-year term would be replaced in 2015. Every year thereafter, the Board would appoint one new member for a three-year term to replace a three year veteran on the committee. If the Board accepts this idea, we will let you know in what order we will retire.

Planned Activities of the Standing Committee during 2012-13

Our hope is that the Board will approve the draft Code of Conduct either in its present form or a revised form during this year's Annual Meeting. We would then devote ourselves to introducing the Code to the CPSA membership through email, and to answering questions about it. In addition, we will continue to review the conflict of interest policy and make recommendations to the Board after we receive directions from the Board.

APPENDIX I
CPSA DRAFT CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Canadian Political Science Association
June, 2012

This code is intended to inspire reflection on the best practices of Political Scientists with the aim of upholding professional standards among the membership and maintaining the discipline in high regard.

This code is not a disciplinary or regulatory tool. CPSA members are directed to consult their local civic and institutional rules as part of fulfilling their responsibilities. Moreover, members are called upon to conduct their professional life in a manner that contributes to an environment of mutual respect and collegiality for all participants.

Political Scientists should be committed to:

1. The responsible pursuit of knowledge with the aim of enhancing the human condition. This includes:
 - a. intellectual honesty
 - b. the full disclosure of research support
 - c. the responsible use of research funding
 - d. the avoidance or mitigation of potential harms to human subjects or to any individuals encountered in the course of research
2. Good citizenship. This includes:
 - a. awareness of the special obligations upon Political Scientists when they participate in public life to uphold the accuracy and responsible standards expected of the profession
3. The creation of a conducive learning environment for students. This includes:
 - a. Putting the needs of learning first
 - b. providing transparent and accountable expectations
 - c. providing timely and constructive guidance and assessment
4. Good conduct as members of the community of scholars. This includes:
 - a. demonstrating responsibility and respect in reviews and evaluations for hiring, tenure and publications
 - b. basing decisions on relevant and appropriate scholarly criteria
 - c. promoting productive dialogue and critique with the aim of enhancing shared understanding
4. Good conduct as member of a research institution. This includes:
 - a. supporting diversity and intellectual growth
 - b. contributing to the development of sound rules and practices, while adhering to an institution's particular requirements

APPENDIX II
DRAFT ADDENDUM TO CPSA DRAFT CODE OF PROFESSIONAL ETHICS
Canadian Political Science Association
June, 2012

1. Any CPSA Member may request and advisory opinion from the Canadian Political Science Standing Committee on Professional Ethics regarding whether an activity on the part of the Member or another member is in compliance with the Code. In such cases, the Committee shall consider the request and may issue a confidential report to the Member.

2. The Canadian Political Science Standing Committee on Professional Ethics shall issue Annual Reports to the CPSA Board. These Annual Reports may contain summaries of advisory opinions, presented in a format which keeps confidential the identity of any Member or Members.

APPENDIX III

DRAFT CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Canadian Political Science Association

June, 2012

Article I: Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish a conflict of interest policy for the Board and Employees of the Canadian Political Science Association.

Article II: Definitions

1. Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an Board member or employee is in a situation in which he or she could personally gain from the results of a decision-making situation to the extent that the employee or Board member cannot reasonably be viewed as being in a position to make an impartial decision. Such gains include financial and professional gains.

2. Potential Conflict of Interest

When a Board member or employee finds himself or herself in a conflict of interest situation but has not yet participated in a decision-making situation, he or she is in a potential conflict of interest situation.

3. Real Conflict of Interest

If a Board member or employee finds himself or herself in a conflict of interest situation and continues in it so as to participate in a decision-making process, he or she is in a real conflict of interest situation whether or not the decision-making situation results in a personal gain.

4. Financial Interest

A Board member or employee has a financial interest if the person has directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:

- a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Association has a transaction or arrangement,
- b. A compensation arrangement with the Association or with any entity or individual with which the Association has a transaction or arrangement, or
- c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the Association is negotiating a transaction or arrangement. Compensation includes direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

5. Professional Interest

A Board member or employee has a professional interest if he or she has an interest in the outcome of a Board decision that could further the professional or career success of that person, a family member, or close associate in a way that is disproportionate to the CPSA membership as a whole.

Article III: Procedures

If a Board member or employee considers himself or herself to be in a potential conflict of interest situation, she or he must take one of the following actions:

a) recuse himself or herself from the decision-making process that would lead to a real conflict of interest. There is no need to explain the reason for the recusal to the Board.

b) declare the details of the potential conflict of interest, and request the Board to decide whether the potential conflict of interest is serious enough to lead to a real conflict of interest. After the declaration of the potential conflict of interest, the member shall recuse himself or herself while the Board decides whether the Board member or employee should recuse or himself or herself from the decision-making process in question.

If the Board member or employee anticipates a situation described in (b) prior to a Board meeting, the person is encouraged to provide details of the potential conflict of interest situation at least a week in advance of a Board meeting through a letter or email to the other members of the Board.

The Board may request advice from the Canadian Political Science Standing Committee on Professional Ethics.

Article IV: Violations of the Conflict of Interest Policy

a) If the Board has reasonable cause to believe a Board member or employee has participated in a decision-making process while in a real conflict of interest situation, it shall inform the member or employee of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain.

b) If, after hearing the member's or employee's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the Board determines the member has participated in a real conflict of interest situation, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

Article V: Records of proceedings

The minutes of the Board shall contain:

a) The names of persons who decided to recuse themselves from decision-making processes of the Board,

b) The names of persons who declared a potential conflict of interest (and a summary of the reason or reasons why the persons thought that they might be in a potential conflict of interest situation), but whom the Board decided to allow to continue in a decision-making process,

c) The names of persons who declared a potential conflict of interest (and a summary of the reason or reasons why the persons thought that they might be in a potential conflict of interest situation), but whom the Board decided not to allow to continue in a decision-making process.

Article VI: Compensation

A voting member of the Board who receives compensation, directly or indirectly from the Association for services is precluded from voting on matters pertaining if member's compensation.

Article VII: Annual Statements

Each Board member and employee shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person:

Has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy,

Has read and understands the policy,

Has agreed to comply with the policy.

Article VIII: Periodic Reviews

Period reviews shall be conducted of the Canadian Political Science Association Conflict of Interest Policy.

Article IX: Use or Outside Experts

When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for in Article VIII, the Association may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the Council of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

As a member of the Board of the Canadian Political Science Association, or an employee of the Canadian Political Science Association, I certify that I have:

received a copy of the conflict of interest policy,
read and understood the policy,
agreed to comply with the policy. and
understood the Association is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

Please Print Your Name

Signature

Date