

Assessor Independence: Conflicts of Interest, Panel Pressure and Decision Integrity

Sensory Science and Judging Ethics — Ahmad Issam Maadarani's Series

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Ahmad Issam Maadarani proposes an ethical and procedural framework linking independence to disclosure, individual records and structured discussion. It is the author's proposal, not a legal regulation or experimental finding about the effect of every panel on every assessor.

Evidence map

Published evidence: —

Author proposal: Disclosure, individual judgment and revision record.

1. Independence as a reviewable practice

“I am impartial” does not explain how a decision was reached. Proposed independence means readers can trace observation, criterion and reasoning and identify relevant relationships. This does not turn every professional relationship into misconduct. It prevents concealing a relevant connection while demanding unconditional trust. Define relevant relationships before the task instead of redefining them after seeing a preferred outcome.

2. Disclosure is not accusation

An assessor may have trained a competitor, shared a project or held a financial interest. Record the relationship before sample allocation. Under a declared policy, organizers decide participation, restricted duties or recusal with a substitute. These are proposed organizational options, not universal legal rulings. A relationship alone does not prove corruption; disclosure alone may also be insufficient when a decision directly affects the assessor's interest.

3. Individual judgment before dialogue

Each assessor records observations, scores and reasons before viewing colleagues' scores. Preserve that version before discussion. The aim is to make dialogue's effect visible, while allowing learning. If a score changes, record the information or criterion responsible. Final agreement may reflect better understanding or compliance; the number of agreeing votes alone cannot distinguish these possibilities.

4. Discussion based on reasons

The author proposes a round where each participant states one observation and its justification before the chair announces a view. Examine bite composition, service conditions and criterion definitions before debating scores. Preserve reasonable disagreement under the declared aggregation procedure. Do not require descriptions to match the most influential participant, and do not treat stubbornness alone as independence or competence.

5. Three records

Retain relationships and procedures, first judgments, and post-discussion revisions. A hypothetical assessor may raise a score after correcting a misunderstanding about the required texture; document the correction. Changing solely because the chair selected a number is insufficient within this framework. Preserve the original record so reviewers can see changes without imputing undocumented personal motives.

6. Limits and evaluation

Documentation can add workload, and influence can persist despite disclosure and blinding. The record therefore does not guarantee impartiality. Test its usefulness through reasoning completeness, revision clarity, session time and an independent reviewer's ability to understand decisions. Retain relationship, procedural response, substitute where relevant, initial and final scores and reasons. Together with decision review, this makes independence a practical responsibility rather than an attribute conferred by rank.

Application worksheet

Field	What to retain
Disclosure	Relationship, response and substitute
First judgment	Description, score and reasons
Revision	Final decision and reason for change

The author's analysis and proposals; examples are hypothetical and proposed procedures have not been tested here. No new experimental data are presented. Research-attributed claims remain within their source scope.

Related articles

- [12 — Article 12](#)
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- [19 — Article 19](#)
- [40 — Article 40](#)

References and source scope

The author's ethical framework or protocol; no published experimental findings are attributed to it.

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