**UNIVERSITY ETHICS POLICY**

**Ethics Policy Statement**

The University’s character has developed and is derived from its Church of England Foundation and the Ethics Policy Statement should be understood in this context, as expressed in the University mission, visions and values statements forming the basis of the 2026 Strategic Plan:

**MISSION**

Driven by our commitment to social justice, we focus our expertise, talents and creativity to advance knowledge, promote understanding and achieve educational outcomes for the benefit of all.

**VISION**

We will extend the transformative power of university education to the communities we serve.

**Values**

Intellectually generous, curious and rigorous.

Promote fairness and challenge prejudice.

Inspire and support each other to succeed.

The underpinning principle of the University’s ethical approach is that it should strive to do good and avoid causing harm.

The University believes ethical issues should be interpreted broadly and that consideration may be needed for activities where the following factors could be present:

* a risk to the life, well-being or dignity of human beings
* a risk to the life or well-being of animals
* a risk of damage to the environment
* social, religious or cultural sensitivity
* acceptance of gifts and fundraising activities
* trading, procurement and investment activities

It is the University’s expectation that governors, staff, students and formal partners should accept individual responsibility for ensuring that activities undertaken in the University’s name and their own behaviours are consistent with the University’s Ethics Policy, and are encouraged to raise concerns relating to ethical matters as they arise.

The University is committed to upholding freedom of expression and intellectual freedom to research and to convey the research findings. Specific ethical issues arise for research activities, most particularly where research involves human or animal subjects. These matters fall within the remit of the University Research Committee. There is a University Research Ethics Policy and a process for Research Ethics Approval to support the ethical review of research proposals.

**Legal and Regulatory Framework**

The University’s Ethics Policy needs to be understood in the context of a wider legal and regulatory framework. References to key documents are provided below but this list is not intended to be exhaustive.

**Operation within legal requirements**

The University is an exempt Charity within the definition of the Charities Act 2011. Its charitable status provides the context for a range of ethical considerations.

Governors and staff are expected to observe the Nolan Principles relating to standards in public life[[1]](#footnote-1). Documents that support these aspects of the University’s operations include:

* Articles of Association
* Gifts and Hospitality Policy and register
* Register of Interests

Other areas of legal/regulatory compliance that provide specific safeguards in terms of ethical practices and behaviours are addressed in various policy and procedural documents:

* Anti-Fraud Policy and Procedure
* Anti-Money Laundering Policy and Procedure
* Bribery Act 2010 – University Framework
* Data Protection Policy
* Environmental Management Policy
* Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy
* Financial Regulations
* Freedom of information policy
* Freedom of Speech Policy
* Intellectual Property Policy
* Investment policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Research Ethics Policy
* Research Misconduct Policy
* Code of Practice on Research Integrity
* Student Charter
* Terms and Conditions for admission to University programmes.

**UNIVERSITY ETHICS FRAMEWORK**

**Introduction**

This framework has been developed to support the implementation of the University Ethics Policy. As a framework it cannot be exhaustive in its scope and relies on an understanding and acceptance of individual responsibility, including seeking advice and raising compliance and ethics concerns where required and appropriate. **It is the responsibility of all to be custodians of our values.**

The framework has been devised drawing on practice from across the sector and in the context of the governing body’s responsibilities as set out in ‘The Higher Education Code of Governance’ published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) in December 2014 (Element 2).

**Governance**

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring that the University retains the highest levels of academic and professional integrity and that we deliver our obligations in relation to corporate social responsibility.

**Management and Communication**

Managers in all areas of the University are responsible for:

* considering the ethical dimensions of the activities in their area
* ensuring that staff and students are informed of ethical issues in their subject areas
* ensuring that staff and students are aware of the processes for raising ethical considerations

**It is the responsibility of all to be custodians of our values as they relate to every dimension of the University’s activities.**

**Ethics in learning and teaching**

Consideration of ethical issues is already a part of our curriculum and we should ensure that every student has the opportunity to reflect and debate on ethical issues relevant to their subject discipline. However, colleagues should avoid, in both the design and delivery of provision, the imposition of any particular ethical perspective.

In determining the nature and provision of placement or other work-related opportunities, consideration should be given to any ethical aspects whilst not limiting opportunities.

There is ongoing debate about managing ‘trigger’ points and providing ‘safe’ spaces respecting the personal experience of individual students. It is recognised that this can be perceived as a tension between the rights of the individual to be protected from subjects that may do harm and the role of a university to challenge ideas and to protect academic freedom and integrity. Whilst it is expected that teaching and learning will be offered within a safe and respectful environment, the importance of engaging with difficult and challenging subjects remains fundamental to our role as educators. Engaging in the ethical debates around any subject is appropriate as part of our pedagogy.

**Ethics in Research**

Students and staff engaged in research are required to follow the relevant University policies and processes for ethical approval.

**Ethics in Business**

The University is a business and, as such, engages with a range of external stakeholders, organisations and businesses and has to balance a range of responsibilities with regard to its financial activities. In all business and financial dealings due regard will be given to the ethical nature of the transactions in line with the Ethical Policy.

**Who to talk to for help and advice on ethical issues**

Governance and Compliance (including issues relating to Equality & Diversity)

University Secretary

Pro Vice Chancellor(s)

Senior and extended leadership team

Chair of the University Research Committee

**Version control statement**

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1. Selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; leadership https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)