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Senate

Subject: Ethical policy framework

**Origin: Steve Rothberg**

**Executive Summary:** A comprehensiveethical policy framework is presented to Senate following a period of consultation. The framework makes a clear statement of the University’s ethical principles, incorporates existing ethical processes and presents a structure for dealing with ethical issues wherever they arise.

**Strategic/Operational Objectives met:** To ensure ethical decision making across all our activities.

**Senate Action Required:** To RECOMMEND to Council approval of the framework and the establishment of an Ethics Committee, to be a joint Committee of Senate and Council.

This over-arching ethical policy framework spans all areas of university activity. It has been developed in the context of increasing demands to demonstrate ethical practice in areas such as research and advancement, and in general recognition of the need to ensure that consideration of ethical matters, wherever they may arise, is embedded in the University’s decision making processes. It sets out principles, intentions and processes. It does not seek to address specific ethical issues, although it does point the reader to additional, specific guidance where it exists. It has drawn on many sources of information, with principal sources listed in section 18.

Senate’s attention is drawn to the following features of the framework:

* Section 1 provides a simple ‘what, how, who’ summary.
* Section 2 provides a one-page statement of ethical principles.
* The framework has been explicitly connected to the university strategy: sections of text are intentionally taken directly from the strategy and/or its implementation plans, and sections 3-16 of the framework follow the headings in the strategy. This assists with maintenance and updating of the framework and integrates ethical considerations into the strategic planning process.
* Furthermore, sections 3-16 are each owned by the senior member of staff responsible for the corresponding area of the university strategy.
* Sections 3-16 include simple statements of intent followed by a listing of available, relevant guidance (hyperlinked). In this way, the framework is a hub through which to access all relevant guidance. This will assist staff seeking ethical approvals and help staff responsible for each area to manage the many guidance documents available.
* Ethical challenges that cannot be resolved locally will be referred to the person responsible for the area of activity in which the challenge is made. Challenges that still cannot be resolved are then addressed in the manner proposed in bullet 4 of Section 17. All existing ethical approval processes will be aligned to this structure.
* Dedicated checklists will be used to assist consideration of routine issues, e.g. for experimentation with human participants. A generic ethical checklist is provided to assist with challenges from an area where no dedicated checklist exists.
* Independent scrutiny of decisions is assured through the proposed Ethics Committee membership and by reporting to Senate and Council.

Consultation with the following has played an important role in producing this version of the framework.

* the ‘responsible person’ for each area of activity plus the Academic Registrar (on governance).
* Abida Akram, Staff Development Adviser (Equality and Diversity), who has advised that the framework’s content is such that an equality impact assessment is not necessary.
* the existing Ethical Advisory Committee.
* trade union negotiating committees.
* Faculty Boards.
* A number of individual staff with particular experience of or expertise in ethical matters.
* ELT and ALT.

Consultation has also raised a number of issues for consideration once the framework is approved. The framework document is attached to this paper.

**Senate Action Required:** To recommend to Council approval of the framework and the establishment of an Ethics Committee, to be a joint Committee of Senate and Council.

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