Loughborough University Ethical Policy Framework 2026-27

1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

The University is an independent academic institution that exists for the creation, transmission and dissemination of knowledge for the social and economic enrichment of society. We are committed to fulfilling that purpose in ways that comply with broad obligations to social responsibility, including the promotion of human rights, civil liberties and the natural environment, with a special institutional commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the promotion of health and well-being.

Integral to this commitment to social responsibility is the adoption of high ethical standards across all areas of our activity. This framework provides an outline of our expectations in relation to organisational and individual ethical behaviour.

Loughborough University has statutory duties to secure and promote freedom of speech within the law and academic freedom, alongside its duties and commitments relating to equality, discrimination, harassment and bullying. These obligations should be considered together and in accordance with the law. Nothing in this Framework should be interpreted or applied so as to restrict lawful freedom of speech or academic freedom beyond what is permitted or required by law. Legal compliance is mandatory; ethical considerations may properly lead the University to go beyond minimum legal requirements, but must be applied consistently with its statutory duties and, where restrictions or conditions are proposed, on an evidence-based, necessary and proportionate basis.

1.2. How is the framework structured?

The Framework is structured to make clear the foundation values and principles driving ethics at the institution. Section 2 provides a framework of principles for ethics at Loughborough University. Section 3 describes the remit and scope of the policy. Finally, section 4 sets out mechanisms for resolving issues. Appendix 1 of this framework links to the detailed codes of practice, guidance, and adjacent policies for the key areas of ethics.

1.3. Who is responsible for the framework?

Ethics Committee is responsible for the maintenance of this framework as authorised by University Council. All individuals are expected to have familiarity with the broad ethical requirements of the University. The Framework will be reviewed annually.

Action	Date	Oversight provided by
Reviewed by Ethics Committee	12 November 26	Ethics Committee

Copyright © Loughborough University, 2026. All rights reserved.

2. Loughborough University Ethical Principles

The Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) provide an established external reference point for ethical behaviour and decision-making. The official descriptors are reproduced below rather than redefined by this Framework. At Loughborough they should be read alongside the University's own values and the policies and processes referenced in this Framework.

Information on the Nolan Principles can be found on GOV.UK: The Seven Principles of Public Life.

2.1. Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

2.2. Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

2.3. Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

2.4. Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

2.5. Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

2.6. Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

2.7. Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2.8. University Values

Underpinning the University Strategy are five values. These work alongside the Nolan Principles and are:

- Authentic - we will be honest, trustworthy, and open. We will respect one another and build confidence across our community,
- Adventurous - we will be progressive, ambitious and strive to achieve our best,
- Responsible - we will be accountable for our actions, we will care for ourselves, others and our environment,
- Creative - we will work imaginatively and innovatively,
- Collaborative - we will foster team spirit and create a strong sense of community.

The five values above should be used alongside the Nolan Principles to drive and inform behaviour, decision-making and activity at the institution.

3. Remit and Scope

We recognise the distinction between legal requirements and ethical considerations and aim to fulfil our obligations in relation to both. No attempt is made in this Framework to address or anticipate all possible ethical dilemmas. Nor will collaboration with a legally constituted organisation, sector or territory be ruled out simply because it raises challenging, controversial or unpopular issues. Ethics Committee may, within its delegated authority, assess individual activities and collaborations, require heightened ethical scrutiny, require or recommend proportionate mitigations, and approve or decline individual activities. A general or institution-wide prohibition on engagement with a country, territory, organisation, sector or class of organisations should be treated as a significant institutional policy decision and follow the appropriate senior University governance route, informed by Ethics Committee advice. Any such restriction should be based on transparent criteria and evidence, consider legal and regulatory advice and less restrictive mitigations where relevant, be proportionate, and have a defined review period.

The Framework offers guidance to all members of our University community on how to act with integrity, evidence and sound judgement, applying the principles set out here. In some instances legal compliance

Copyright © Loughborough University, 2026. All rights reserved.

will provide sufficient support to ensure ethical behaviour; in others the University may go further than minimum legal requirements to promote strong ethical standards. Ethical review does not replace legal, regulatory, national-security or specialist compliance processes; where these apply, their outcomes should inform the ethical assessment.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of key areas where colleagues will face ethical issues. Information on the areas of concern highlighted below can be found in Appendix 1.

- Investigations with human participation
- Investigations including the use of human tissue and/or animals and/or animal cells/tissues
- Investigations with military applications or using dual use (i.e. civil applications that could viably also be used militarily) technologies
- Investigations involving accessing security-sensitive material
- International collaborations that create an elevated ethical, research security or foreign interference risk, including where sanctions, export controls or other national security or regulatory requirements may apply
- Activities that may impact equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Funding by philanthropic gifts
- Activity that may lead to corruption and/or bribery concerns

4. Mechanisms for resolution

Any member of the University community may challenge the institution or individuals if in good faith they feel that we have fallen short of the standards set out in this Framework in relation to organisational or individual ethical behaviour1. Initially, this should be discussed locally, for example with a tutor, supervisor, line manager, department / section head or Dean, but if a resolution cannot be found then contact should be made with the responsible person for the area of activity (see Appendix 3) in which the challenge is made. If a resolution still cannot be found, the responsible person will ensure that the matter is passed to Ethics Committee for consideration in accordance with its delegated authority. Where a matter or decision falls outside that authority, Ethics Committee should recommend escalation through the appropriate University governance route. Significant decisions to prohibit an activity or impose material conditions should record the reasons, evidence, legal or regulatory advice where relevant, and less restrictive mitigations considered; standing restrictions should have a defined review period. Disclosures made in good faith will be handled in accordance with the University's Whistleblowing Policy and other applicable protections.

The University's Whistleblowing Policy should be followed where a concern falls within its scope.

4.1. Ethics quick test (for staff and doctoral students)

For research and innovation studies, the Ethics Quick Test is intended to prompt University staff and doctoral students to consider the action/activity in simple terms and to ensure that the conduct and outcomes of the activity are consistent with the ethical principles outlined in Section 2 of the Ethical Policy Framework.

It is important that reviewers consider the implications of an action/activity in all areas of the University's business, not just in the area within which the action/activity arises. On completion of the Ethics Quick Test, respondents will be advised by email whether additional ethics review is required and of the appropriate course of action.

4.2. Ethics awareness form (for taught students)

For taught student projects, the Ethics Awareness Form is intended to raise awareness of ethical considerations and ensure that the conduct and outcomes of the project are consistent with the ethical principles outlined in Section 2 of the Ethical Policy Framework. Taught students must discuss the completion of the form with their project supervisors.

On completion of the Ethics Awareness Form, students will be advised whether additional ethics review is required and the appropriate course of action.

4.3. Ethics review

For a range of activities, additional ethics review will need to be sought, as detailed in Appendix 1.

Copyright © Loughborough University, 2026. All rights reserved.

Appendix 1: Key activities, review route and oversight

Activity	Review Route	Process	Responsible Post	Relevant Policies
Investigations involving human participants	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Follow the Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Participants. Complete an ethics application via LEON	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee	Investigations involving Human Participants Research with Children and Young People Conducting Interviews and Working Alone Off-Campus
Investigations involving activity falling under the Human Tissue Act	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Follow guidance from the Human Tissue Act Licence Sub- Committee. If necessary, complete an ethics application via LEON	COO as licence holder. PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee.	University HTA Licence Compliance Quality Manual Human Tissue Authority
Investigations with military applications or using dual use technologies	Dean/AD(R&I); Ethics Committee	Complete the Review Process for Projects Involving Research with Military Applications or Dual Use Technologies.	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	Export Control Policy
Investigations involving animals or animal cells/tissues	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Complete an ethics application via LEON	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	Code of Practice for Research Investigations involving animals or animal cells or tissues
Investigations involving accessing security-sensitive material (e.g., online terrorist content or material).	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Complete an ethics application via LEON	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	Code of Practice for Research Investigation involving accessing Security Sensitive or Extremism-Related Material
Activities involving elevated ethical risk, research security or foreign interference in international collaborations	Ethics Committee; relevant legal, research security or compliance function(s) as required	Complete the Review Process for Elevated Ethical Risk International Collaborations and any relevant legal, regulatory or research-security due diligence. Ethics Committee will determine individual cases within its delegated authority and make recommendations on any proposed general preclusion, which should follow the appropriate senior University governance route. Relevant processes may include sanctions, export controls, FIRS, the National Security and Investment Act and Trusted Research/due diligence, where applicable.	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee; relevant University legal, compliance or research security lead(s) as applicable	Code of Practice for Research Export Control Policy Trusted Research
Funding by philanthropic gifts	Ethical Advisory (Gifts)	Refer to the process in the Donor Acceptance Policy	Director of Philanthropy	Donor Acceptance Policy
Activities which will impact Equity, Diversity, or Inclusion	Equality Impact Assessment	Complete an Equality Impact Assessment	Executive Director of EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Core Plan
Corruption and Bribery		See Policies	Executive Director of Finance	Anti-Bribery Policy Conflict of Interest Policy Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

Remit for the Responsible Person: To receive ethical issues relating to their area of the business of the University which members of the university community have not been able to resolve locally. Where such issues still cannot be resolved, to ensure that the issue is considered within the process laid out in this framework.

Copyright © Loughborough University, 2026. All rights reserved.