

# ETHICS CODE



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**The University of Kent is committed to the highest standards of integrity and to ensuring that ethical considerations, including adherence to the law and to contemporary best practice, underpin all of its activities.**

**The University's values enshrine academic freedom, integrity and accountability, sustainability, critical thinking and intellectual creativity; with the University as an inclusive and welcoming international community.**

**This Ethics Code applies to the University of Kent community, which for the purposes of this document means students, staff and members of Council; and members of the community are expected to adhere to, uphold and apply the Code when undertaking their day-to-day activities.**

## Ethical decision making

Decisions and actions with ethical implications occur regularly in all areas of University life, from members of staff deciding whether to accept a gift from an external supplier, to behaviour and decisions taken during elections for student and staff Committee and other posts and to not keeping a clear and accurate record of your own and others' annual leave.

The University would expect members of its community to identify and resolve the ethical implications of individual decisions and actions as follows:

- A To consider whether the decision or action is compatible with the values set out in this Ethics Code or any related Policies, Codes and Procedures.
- B To consider how you would explain this decision or action if you had to justify it to close friends and family, or if it was on the front page of a newspaper. What would be the impact on your reputation, or that of the University? Would you be comfortable asking someone else to undertake this action?
- C To seek advice from an appropriate person, such as a colleague or line manager, the Head of School or Department or, in more specialist cases, the Research Ethics and Governance Officer, the Director of Development, the Director of Finance or the Secretary of the Council.
- D To keep a record of any decisions made and the rationale behind them.

## Where and how to raise ethical concerns

If you have ethical concerns after taking into account this document and the related policies and procedures, you should refer to your line manager in the first instance and then to the following individuals:

- **Regarding research:** the Research Ethics and Governance Officer
- **Regarding fundraising:** the Director of Development
- **Regarding finance:** the Director of Finance
- **In general:** the Secretary of the Council, for reference to the Ethics Committee.

If you have concerns that cannot be addressed under an existing policy or procedure you should consult the University's Whistleblowing Policy and Background and Guide to Use web page.



# ETHICAL GUIDELINES



The University of Kent expects staff, students and members of Council to act in accordance with its Ethics Code, which builds on the University's values from the University Strategy 2025, the Nolan Principles, the Student Charter and the Code of Conduct for members of staff. These guidelines are built around the following headings:

- |                                                                   |                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Responsibility and accountability                               | 4 Equality, diversity and inclusivity |
| 2 Integrity, honesty and transparency                             | 5 Collegiality                        |
| 3 Academic freedom, critical thinking and intellectual creativity | 6 Sustainability                      |
|                                                                   | 7 Making a positive impact            |

Use of the Code should support members of the University facing ethical decisions and those in leadership or supervisory positions have a particular responsibility to set an example and to promote good ethical behaviour

Please note that there is a longer and more detailed version of this Code available on the Governance website.

## 1 Responsibility and accountability

Each member of the University community should:

- a be aware of their own responsibilities and accountable for their own actions
- b be prepared to raise concerns relating to ethical matters when they arise
- c act in accordance with all relevant legislation and statutory requirements
- d act in accordance with the University's Policies, Procedures and Regulations.

## 2 Integrity, honesty and transparency

Each member of the University community should:

- a be honest and truthful
- b declare interests and appropriately manage possible conflicts of interest
- c be transparent and consistent in their decision-making
- d maintain their independence when engaging with outside parties
- e conduct any financial activities appropriately and in line with the University's Policies, Procedures and Regulations
- f be aware of the University's rules on confidentiality, copyright, Data Protection and Freedom of Information and act accordingly
- g not use their office or employment for personal gain
- h ensure compliance with appropriate legislation
- i not enter into any relationship that compromises, or could be seen to compromise, the University's values.

## 3 Academic freedom, critical thinking and intellectual creativity

Each member of the University community should:

- a uphold the University's commitment, defined in its Charter, to freedom of speech within the law and the protection of the rights of members of the University to put forward ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions
- b be aware that the University is committed to providing an environment where ideas and opinions are open to discussion and challenge and where the highest standards of academic rigour are applied
- c if carrying out research, conduct it to the highest level of ethical standards and in accordance with current legislation and policy requirements
- d if engaged in academic practice, undertake it with integrity, ensuring fairness and creating an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect
- e adhere to the best practice guidance of any relevant professional bodies.

## 4 Equality, diversity and inclusivity

Each member of the University community should:

- a be committed to the creation and support of a balanced, inclusive and diverse community
- b seek to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation of those who share one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity
- c be committed to equality of respect, opportunity and access to higher education to those from all backgrounds, including those who share one of the protected characteristics as well as those who do not, and those who are or may be financially disadvantaged

- d not accept bullying and harassment and report it if it occurs
- e if conducting University activities with external organisations and the international community, ensure that they act in accordance with University Policies and Procedures
- f respect relevant international laws and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

## 5 Collegiality

Each member of the University community should:

- a promote an inclusive and participatory work, study and social environment
- b encourage, support and behave appropriately to each other, treating others with dignity and respect
- c seek to support democratic consultation by participation in collective deliberations
- d recognise that they are responsible for their own and each others' health and safety
- e ensure that they promote a welcoming and safe environment to work and study
- f meet the highest standards of good personal, professional and academic conduct applicable to their role.

## 6 Sustainability

Each member of the University community should:

- a attempt to minimise any negative impact they might have on the natural and built environment
- b exercise good stewardship of the financial, physical, human and intellectual resources entrusted to them
- c aim to support efficient and effective work and study practices.

## 7 Making a positive impact

Each member of the University community should:

- a support the University's aim of contributing to the broader educational, employment, social and cultural objectives and to our communities, whether local, regional, national or international
- b be aware that the University's object, from its Royal Charter, is 'to advance education and disseminate knowledge by teaching, scholarship and research for the public benefit'
- c be aware of their place as a member of the University's community and the University's place in the wider national and international academic community
- d be aware of the potential impact of activities and individual behaviours on the communities in which the University operates, taking care to act ethically, sensitively and responsibly at all times.

# GOVERNANCE



**The University's Ethics Committee was set up by Council to oversee the University's policies on ethics and to consider and advise on ethical issues referred to it. As part of this it will consider reports, at least annually, from the following existing University Committees; Research Ethics and Governance Committee, Fundraising Co-ordination Committee and Anti-Bribery and Corruption Review Group.**

The membership and terms of reference of the Ethics Committee can be found on the Governance website.

This Ethics Code and the guidelines within it have been prepared by the University Ethics Committee in consultation with the University's key stakeholder groups. The Code underpins the work of the Ethics Committee in providing assurance to Council on ethical matters.

The University of Kent aims to be at the forefront in its consideration of ethical matters in higher education.

In writing this Code, consideration has been given to the Nolan Principles, the seven principles of public life; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Council Secretariat would like to thank the Ethics Manager at the London School of Economics and Political Science for their assistance and guidance with the drafting of this document.

## Note

This Code is gender neutral and applies to members of the University Council and all students and employees living in or working/studying at or for the University of Kent in any part of the world, although for the avoidance of doubt does not apply to former members of the University who are no longer so engaged. The Code applies to work and conduct howsoever performed including that which takes place online or through social media.

