

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## COUNCIL

### **Matters for note by Council at its meeting on 10 November 2020 arising from the meeting of Ethics Framework Governance Committee on 29 July 2020**

1. The Committee welcomed the following new members:

- Professor Matthias Ruth, PVC for Research;
- Professor Kiran Trehan, PVC for Partnerships & Engagement;
- Dr Keith Allen, who had been appointed Chair of the Academic Ethics Compliance Committee on the recommendation of the then PVC for Research, Professor Deborah Smith.

Regarding the remaining vacancy for a lay member of Council, the Head of Governance & Assurance advised that the two existing lay members would provide sufficient value, independence and challenge, although it would be helpful to have one further lay representative where the Committee was asked to make decisions in relation to specific cases. The Committee **agreed** that its current membership was fit for purpose, and that additional members should be asked to attend for specific matters as needed.

2. The Committee **resolved to approve** proposed changes to the Philanthropy and Recognition Due Diligence Policy. This sets out the University's due diligence procedures in relation to (i) the source of philanthropic donations to the University and (ii) the granting of awards and recognitions such as the naming of estate, with a focus on ethical and reputational risk. The changes address the following:

- robust documentation and management of risk;
- operational effectiveness and speed;
- closer alignment with the University's formal governance framework, including the Ethics Framework Governance Committee (EFGC).

The finalised Policy is included as a Category 2 item on Council's agenda for 10 November 2020 on the advice of Ethics Framework Governance Committee, given that Council members' networks are a potential source of donations.

The Committee **noted**:

- the timeliness of the review given the increase of philanthropic activity in recent months owing to the Covid 19 situation, and the new donors being engaged through the York Unlimited fundraising campaign;
- that the Policy's approach to risk management would need to align with the University's new risk framework. A pragmatic approach had been agreed whereby the Risk & Audit Manager would work with OPPA over the coming year to agree changes, for introduction when the Policy was next due for review.

3. The Committee **resolved to approve** a Policy on Declaring Interests, Managing Conflicts of Interest, and Gifts and Hospitality. The Policy addresses an identified gap in the University's procedures for ethical and responsible business practice, and brings together the University's approach to declarations and conflicts of interest with its policy on gifts and hospitality, under common principles and a framework for decision making based on a model of distributed autonomy. It applies to all those employed by or appointed to act on behalf of the University, including members of Council.

The Committee discussed approaches to dissemination and training, to include targeted messaging to particular groups (including Council members), web resources and inclusion in induction processes,

supported by periodic reminders to all staff. Online training and automated testing tools will also be considered.

4. The Committee **considered** working formulations of ethical values which draw on the University's Vision Statement, as the basis for an overarching statement to the University's policies in the ethics arena. Following discussion, the Committee **agreed** that whilst both a high level statement and supporting policies were needed, work on the former should be put on hold pending further development of the University Strategy 2030. For the time being, work should focus on the development of policies in order to support the consideration of specific cases arising in practice.

Development of the framework for academic activity would be prioritised, working with the PVCs for Research and Partnership & Engagement, the Academic Ethics Compliance Committee and colleagues from the Research Strategy and Policy Office, and with a particular emphasis on academic input. The Committee **noted** the need to be pragmatic in formulating position statements, given the complexity and far-reaching implications of many of the areas involved.

The Committee further **agreed** that the work in progress on ethical values should be updated in the light of its comments and shared with UEB.

**Dr Alice Wakely, Assistant Secretary, Ethics Framework Governance Committee  
on behalf of Denise Jagger, Chair of Council and of Ethics Framework Governance Committee  
26 October 2020**