

Framework for Ethical Consideration of Sources of Funding

1. The purpose of this framework is to provide guidance to individual members of the University who are faced with making decisions about whether to accept external funding of any variety, whether for research, teaching projects or general departmental/University development (e.g. in the form of benefactions*). The onus is on the individual to use the framework to identify whether there are any ethical issues and then to consult further with appropriate colleagues, such as their Head of Department, line manager or departmental/subject-level ethics committee. With regard to research funding, the University Senate has agreed (M05/50, July 2005) that it is important not to take such responsibility from individual researchers who need to be proactively engaged with any potential issues in their own research.
2. When faced with a decision about whether to accept funding from a particular source, the following questions are paramount:
 - (a) **Might acceptance of this funding potentially bring my department, and by extension the University, into disrepute?**
 - (b) **Might acceptance of this funding detrimentally affect other existing relationships within the University?**
 - (c) **In the case of funding for research, consultancy or other such work, might the outputs or results be:**
 - **used by the funder to enhance unethical practices?**
 - **subject to limitations on dissemination or approval by the funder?**
3. If the answer to any of these three questions is ‘yes’, the matter should be discussed further with the Head of Department or his/her nominee (e.g. Chair of Departmental Research Committee). If no decision can be reached in discussion with these colleagues, the issue should be referred in the first instance to the departmental/subject-level ethics committee. Likewise, if the departmental/subject-level ethics committee is unable to resolve the matter, it should refer the case in question to the University Ethics Committee which will consider it and make a recommendation to the University Council. It is not necessary to go systematically through each of these steps if the matter clearly warrants consideration by the University Ethics Committee at the earliest opportunity.
4. If it is agreed in further discussion that the organisation or individual offering funding is involved in activities that may include unethical practices, the University’s approved principles for good ethical governance and practice apply, namely that there is a presumption against accepting the funding where the results of the research could be used to enhance unethical practices. In some cases this presumption may be over-ridden, for example where the organisation has acknowledged the problem and is already attempting to eliminate it.
5. In all of the above, individuals should bear in mind that the cornerstones for the management of ethical issues in the University are explicit discussion, institutional accountability, and proportionality.

Approved by the University Council
DATE: 3 March 2006

** If funding is offered in the form of a gift, advice should be sought from the Director of Development as a matter of course.*