



# Ethics Matters

## Managing Ethical Issues in Higher Education





**Brunel**  
UNIVERSITY  
WEST LONDON

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from The Council for Industry and Higher Education.

**ISBN 1 874223 51 3**

© CIHE and Brunel University

**by The Council for Industry and Higher Education**  
**Studio 11, Tiger House, Burton Street, London, WC1H 9BY**  
**[www.cihe-uk.com](http://www.cihe-uk.com)**  
**Registered Charity No. 1066956**

# Contents

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| Thanks and acknowledgements   | 4         |
| Foreword  | 6         |
| Executive summary   | 7         |
| <b>Part I</b>   |           |
| <b>Chapter 1</b> The case for articulating ethics                       | 9         |
| <b>Chapter 2</b> Thinking about ethical issues in higher education      | 13        |
| <b>Chapter 3</b> Developing a framework                                 | 16        |
| <b>Chapter 4</b> Policy into practice                                   | 19        |
| <b>Part II</b>  |           |
| <b>Illustrative ethical policy framework</b>                            | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Appendix I:</b> Current practice in UK Higher Education Institutions | <b>32</b> |
| <b>Appendix II:</b> Further reading                                     | <b>34</b> |
| <b>CIHE publications</b>  | <b>35</b> |

## Thanks and acknowledgements

# Acknowledgements

We are pleased that so many organisations and individuals have participated in this project. About 100 institutions gave us their initial views and sent us information on what ethical policies and practices exist within their university or college. Over 1,200 hits have been recorded on this section of The Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) website, over 250 downloaded the draft guide and many gave us comments and suggestions. Over 90 delegates attended our national consultative conference at the end of June. Specific discussions have been held with a number of groups including the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) and the Council of Church Colleges while many professional bodies have kept us informed about their evolving initiatives in this area.

Special thanks are due to our partners in this project and to all the members of the Advisory Group who have guided our work and given so generously of their time:

**Project partners:** The project was funded under the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Governance, Leadership and Management fund and undertaken by CIHE, the Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) and Brunel University. Other project partners were the Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics; Committee of University Chairmen (CUC); Higher Education Academy; Leadership Foundation; Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK).

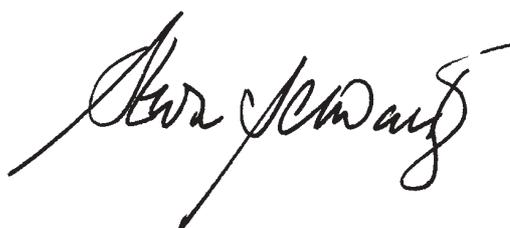
### Advisory Group members

Barbara Blake, CIHE  
Helen Bowles, SCOP  
Dr Peter Briggs, Roehampton University  
Richard Brown, CIHE  
Julia Casson, Independent consultant  
Philippa Foster Back, IBE  
Sophie Hooper Lea, IBE  
Russell King, Anglo American plc  
Chris Major, AstraZeneca PLC  
Dr Chris Megone, University of Leeds  
Will Naylor, HEFCE  
Professor Simon Robinson, Leeds Metropolitan University  
Paul Sabapathy OBE, CUC and University of Central England  
Professor Steven Schwartz, Brunel University and Chair of the Advisory Group  
Rosalind Scott, PricewaterhouseCoopers  
Dr Simon Smith, Higher Education Academy  
Dr Rosamund Thomas, Centre for Business and Public Sector Ethics  
Greg Wade, UUK  
Professor Dianne Willcocks, York St John College  
Ewart Wooldridge, Leadership Foundation

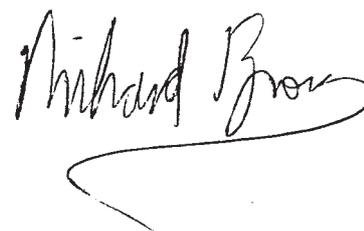
Thanks to Annabel Czajka of Brunel University for acting as secretariat for the Advisory Group and to Anglo American plc for their generous support of the national conference.

But we reserve our greatest appreciation to our Project Manager, Sophie Hooper Lea of the Institute of Business Ethics. She has led our work, steered a careful course between the conflicting ideas presented to her and acted as the primary author of this “how to” guide.

This guide is part of a process that we hope will now be embraced by the sector and by all who appreciate that an ethical dimension underpins everything a university and college stands for and seeks to achieve.



**Professor Steven Schwartz**  
Vice-Chancellor, Brunel University  
Chair of the Advisory Group



**Richard A Brown**  
Chief Executive, CIHE

## Foreword

# Foreword

Deep and lasting values underpin our higher education institutions.

Higher education is a public as well as a private good and ethical awareness and practice does and should inform everything our institutions are and do. An institution that is consciously and deliberately ethically aware will play a valuable role in pursuing wider community and societal aims. Our staff and students should be enabled to handle the range of ethical dilemmas they will face in an increasingly multicultural society with global dimensions.

The ethical challenges for our institutions of higher education are manifold. In living up to our values we shall have to consider such issues as: Can we fully deliver what our marketing promises or implies? Can we really claim to be equal opportunity employers? Are our admissions policies fair and what does fairness mean? How far do we extend a duty of care to our students and why? How do we tackle conflicts of interest in ways that are transparent?

Having a coherent and consistent set of policies and procedures in the form of a statement of ethical principles and behaviour that is embedded in the culture of our institutions can help our institutions, our staff, students and others with whom we deal, to think about, address and resolve ethical issues. An institution wide statement should show what an institution stands for, what its internal and external community can expect from it and what it might reasonably expect in return.

This “how to” guide should help our universities and colleges consider and develop their own “signature” statements. In doing so it poses issues and dilemmas rather than answering them: providing answers would defeat the whole nature of the ethical debate that now needs to be coordinated within institutions. For some this document may be the starting point for thinking about ethical issues in a broader context than that of the historical focus on research ethics or simple adherence to legislation. For others it may lead to further reflection and the evolution and then monitoring of frameworks. In both cases that process will probably be as important as the final “signature” statement.

Various professional bodies have or are developing their own codes and, in the private and now the public sectors, organisations are under pressure to articulate their ethical and corporate social responsibility policies. Our universities and colleges can gain from making the implicit more explicit and from coordinating a range of often disparate approaches into a more coherent whole.

Some may see risks in that process of open debate and challenge but we hope that this guide will help us all better navigate the challenges ahead.



**Professor Drummond Bone**  
President, Universities UK



**Professor Dianne Willcocks**  
Chair, SCOP



**Sir John Carter**  
Chair, CUC

## Executive summary

# Executive summary

**Ethics Matters:** *Managing Ethical Issues in Higher Education* is designed to help UK higher education institutions (HEIs) tackle ethical matters within and throughout their organisations. It is written for anyone who wishes to develop or has responsibility for developing or revising an institution's approach to ethical issues.

***The focus of this guide is on the ethical behaviour of an institution and its staff and students. It does not cover the teaching of ethics in the curriculum.***

Research undertaken for this project suggests that there is no coherent or consistent approach to documenting ethical policy in UK HEIs at present. This document sets out to raise questions, encourage debate and make suggestions on how HEIs might develop their own approach. It is a starting point for thinking about ethical issues and is not intended to be prescriptive or definitive.

Universities and colleges are complex and autonomous organisations, each with a distinct history and culture. Ethical issues and priorities will not be the same in all institutions and each HEI will need to tackle ethical concerns in a way that makes sense for its own organisation.

The guide identifies reasons for articulating ethical principles and explores potential ethical dilemmas. It also suggests how HEIs might choose to go about developing an ethical policy framework for their own organisation and how to put a framework into practice. Finally, the guide includes an illustrative framework which covers issues that institutions may wish to consider.

### Key points

- Ethical issues arise in any and all of an institution's operations, from purchasing and estate management to research and teaching.
- Most HEIs have defined their mission and values. Addressing institution-wide ethical principles will help to ensure that these aims and values are put into practice in the day to day running of the institution.
- It is up to individual institutions to determine what is and is not appropriate behaviour for their organisations. What is acceptable for one organisation may be unacceptable to another - and both for entirely logical and legitimate reasons.
- Any ethical policy framework must evolve out of the institution's mission and values. It must also be consistent with and work alongside existing ethics-related documents.
- Addressing institution-wide ethical principles and practices is a major undertaking and requires time, resources, commitment and leadership. It is also vital that senior champions set an example by demonstrating ethical behaviour and living by the institution's ethical principles.

- The process for developing a framework – including the involvement of staff, students and other relevant groups – is at least as important as the framework itself.
- Simply publishing a framework will not ensure ethical behaviour. The framework needs to be put into practice through training, monitoring, review and reporting.

Further information on this project is available at [www.cihe-uk.com/ethics](http://www.cihe-uk.com/ethics).

# Articulating ethics

This guide is concerned with the application of ethical values to HEI behaviour. Ethics here is defined in the broadest sense. It covers the ethical identity of the institution - including how it understands and articulates its values - as well as how those values are embodied in policy and practice. Hence ethical principles apply to any and all of an institution's operations, from purchasing and estate management to research and teaching.

Ethical principles go beyond an institution's legal responsibilities. They apply to the conduct of individuals and the organisation as a whole.

## 1.1 Ethics in higher education

Higher education should be regarded as an inherently valuable activity that sets out to benefit society. The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education in 1997 stated "we believe that the aim of higher education should be to sustain a learning society"<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the Nolan Committee's First Report on Standards in Public Life sets out seven principles that "apply to all aspects of public life". These are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.<sup>2</sup>

Maintaining high ethical standards is made explicit, or at least implicit, in the aims and objectives of most institutions. But HEIs still need to ensure that these aims are put into practice in the day to day running of the institution.

Ethical issues arise in a wide range of situations, including those relating to how an institution treats its employees, students and other groups. The relationships between the organisation and its funders and commercial partners provide scope for conflicts of interest and other ethical dilemmas. Marketing practices and admissions procedures may raise questions about honesty and fairness, while upholding academic freedom can have both legal and ethical consequences. Ethical issues range from plagiarism to public interest disclosure and from race equality to confidentiality of information.

While legislation may dictate how to approach some situations, this will not always be the case. Neither should legislation drive an institution's approach to ethical issues. It is up to individual institutions to determine what is and is not acceptable behaviour for their organisations. This guide is designed to help institutions make these decisions.

## 1.2 Why tackle ethics?

Although addressing ethical issues is not a legal obligation, there is a range of reasons for HEIs to do so:

- **Governance.**

Having a consistent approach to ethical issues is a fundamental part of good governance and HEIs are coming under increasing scrutiny in this area.

<sup>1</sup> *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (the Dearing Report), The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997

<sup>2</sup> *First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life*, HMSO, 1995

- **Upholding an organisation’s mission and values.**  
Translating mission and values into action and monitoring them for effectiveness allows institutions to demonstrate that they are upholding those aims and values.
- **Guidance for staff.**  
It is vital that both professional and support staff know how they are expected to behave and can deal with any ethical dilemmas that may arise.
- **Guidance for students.**  
HEIs have some responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of their students. Students need to know both their rights and their responsibilities.
- **Risk and reputation.**  
Tackling ethical issues can help to highlight potential risks, prevent future problems and safeguard an organisation’s reputation.
- **Legislation.**  
Addressing ethical concerns helps organisations to interpret legislation and to ensure that they follow both the letter and the spirit of the law.
- **Pressure from students and other interested parties.**  
Students, unions and other groups are increasingly interested in the environment, fair trade, ethical investment and fair treatment of staff and other individuals.
- **Recruiting staff and attracting students.**  
Having a clear ethical stance may contribute to making an HEI more attractive to potential staff and students.
- **Encouraging funding, sponsorship and business involvement.**  
Companies increasingly ask suppliers and business partners about their commitment to ethics and transparency. Addressing ethics may therefore make an institution more appealing to potential business or funding partners.

**Figure One** Reasons for HEIs to address ethical concerns



**1.3** Few HEIs have produced an institution-wide framework, code, policy or statement on ethical practice. Instead, institutions have tended to produce a range of documents to address different ethical matters, probably as issues emerge. (See Appendix I for details of current ethical practices in UK HEIs.)

**Why publish an institution-wide ethical policy framework?**

The advantages of producing a comprehensive, institution-wide framework are that it helps to:

- Demonstrate the institution's commitment to high ethical standards.
- Provide coherence and consistency throughout the institution.
- Show how the HEI is trying to translate its mission and values into policy and practice.
- Guide staff and students on how they are expected to behave and how they will be treated.
- Explain the institution's ethical stance to prospective students and other interested parties.

Some argue that publishing an ethical policy framework is unnecessary as HEIs have a clearly defined mission and values. But statements of commitment mean little without policies and procedures to translate aims into action. Moreover, it would be risky to assume that everyone shares and acts on the same values.

HEIs may also be concerned about making themselves 'hostages to fortune' by articulating their ethical values. But putting an ethical framework into practice will help to improve ethical performance over time. If it is likely that producing a framework will cause problems or invite legal action, then this may suggest that an institution has a pressing need to tackle ethical concerns.

**Box One**

**'Ethics' versus 'conduct'**

Organisations often use the phrases 'code of ethics' and 'code of conduct' interchangeably. However, a code of conduct is generally addressed to staff and is predominantly an internal tool for organisations. It provides guidance and usually sets out restrictions on behaviour. A code of ethics or ethical framework will start by setting out the values that underpin the code of conduct and will describe an organisation's obligations to a range of interested parties. This type of document is addressed to anyone with an interest in the organisation, not just to staff.

**1.4**  
**How will developing a framework affect existing ethics documents?**

An overarching framework is designed not to replace, but to be used alongside existing ethics-related documents.

Complex issues such as research ethics are likely to need more explanation than an institution-wide framework can provide without becoming too long and unwieldy. In addition, HEIs are required to produce stand alone documents on topics such as race equality and data protection.

The framework can act as the first port of call for enquiries and point to other related policies and other documents.

Some HEIs may feel that an institution-wide ethical policy framework or statement is not appropriate for their organisation. Box Two provides some questions that HEIs can use to judge the effectiveness of their current approach to ethical matters.

### **Box Two**

#### **Is your current approach effective?**

- If someone asks about the ethical principles of your institution, can you refer them to a website or document that clearly explains your institution's values and how they are put into practice?
- Do you have a named person who can answer questions about your institution's approach to ethical matters?
- Do staff, students and other relevant parties know about and understand the institution's approach? Do you encourage and respond to feedback from them?
- How do you ensure that all ethics-related documents are consistent with one another and cover all relevant issues?
- Do you have a system in place for monitoring, revising and reporting on your approach to ethical concerns?

# Ethical issues

Ethical dilemmas occur when there is no straightforward answer about the 'right' or 'wrong' course of action in a particular situation. Dilemmas arise everywhere - at the governance level when developing policies, for management teams when putting policy into practice and for individuals in terms of day to day questions about behaviour. Complex dilemmas can arise when the values of an institution clash with those of society or with an individual's personal or professional values.

Dilemmas are a useful tool for helping institutions to think about their own approach to ethical matters. They can also play a valuable role in ethics training, to encourage staff and other individuals to debate issues and deal with difficult circumstances that may arise in the course of their work.

## 2.1 Possible ethical dilemmas

How would you or your institution deal with the following hypothetical situations?

### DILEMMA ONE: Opportunities overseas

Representatives from the leading university in a particular country would like to enter into a partnership arrangement with your institution. As part of the agreement, they want to send an annual quota of students to your institution. The students will all pay full international fees. To avoid unnecessary travel costs, the foreign university plans to select the students on your behalf. The country has a fast-growing economy, and the university and local companies are keen to work with your institution on a range of project ideas. However, a recent report on the country by a well respected charity made a series of allegations about human rights abuses and widespread bribery of public officials.

What ethical issues might your institution face in accepting this partnership arrangement? How would you go about making a decision on whether or not to enter into the agreement? What conditions might you impose?

### DILEMMA TWO: Advances in public health

Your institution filed an IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) notice on a compound and has undertaken joint work with multinational pharmaceutical company Shangri-La Plc. Subsequent research indicates that this product could be an extremely effective and perhaps even revolutionary treatment for a common form of cancer.

The chief executive (a friend of yours) asks if you, as an independent expert, will publish a paper analysing the research findings. To avoid taking up too much of your time, the company produces the first draft of the paper on your behalf. The draft arrives and you find nothing contentious in the analysis and conclusions.

The Vice-Chancellor asks for your advice on whether the institution should negotiate an exclusive or non-exclusive licensing arrangement with the company. The former could produce considerable profits for the benefit of the institution; the latter will spread the health benefits (including in developing countries) through lower prices.

What are the ethical issues? Are you prepared for the company to publish the paper in your name? Why or why not? What is your opinion on potential licensing arrangements - should the commercial interests of the institution prevail?

### **DILEMMA THREE: Friction in the community**

A front page story in the local newspaper accuses students from your institution of “terrorising” an elderly couple who live in a local residential area that is very popular with students. The couple are complaining about late night parties, loud music and rubbish dropped in the street. The newspaper story includes a quote from an anonymous student neighbour of the couple, claiming that they are “interfering busybodies” who are “making a mountain out of a molehill”.

What responsibility does your institution have? Would you take any action? If so, what would you do?

### **DILEMMA FOUR: Caring for students**

One of your students has committed suicide. Friends of the student claim that financial pressures were to blame and attack the university’s policies on charging full differential fees. You know that the student was under some personal strain as a relationship had just ended and the student was also known to have a troubled home life. But you did not get involved in the personal affairs of the student. The institution does not have any clear policies on this issue or on your responsibilities in this area.

How should you and the institution respond to the accusations? What issues does this pose for the future approach of the institution?

### **DILEMMA FIVE: Freedom of speech or racism?**

Your institution takes pride in its secular heritage and condemnation of discrimination. A hostel for asylum seekers has recently opened nearby and tensions are running high in the local community. The majority of those living in the hostel are from predominantly Muslim countries. One of your academic staff is a key member of a local protest group. The academic in question has hired a meeting room within the grounds of your institution and plans to host what she promises will be a fair and balanced debate on the issues of asylum. Earlier today, a group of staff and students came into your office with a petition about the event. They are accusing the academic of stirring up racial and religious tension. They demand that you put a stop to the debate.

What would you do and why?

### DILEMMA SIX: Difficult decisions

As head of department, you have just been told about the necessity of a series of job cuts. You are forbidden to discuss this highly confidential issue with anyone else until it is announced in a month's time. Charlie, one of your very hard working staff members, will almost inevitably have to be made redundant. He has been struggling with debt due to his mother having a long and debilitating illness that required full-time care. She died earlier this year. Yesterday, he told you that he is just about to buy a house. The mortgage payments will be uncomfortably high, but he has calculated that his salary provides just enough income to cope. You are extremely concerned about what might happen if he is made redundant.

Do you take any action? If so, why and what do you do? If not, why not?

**2.2 Tackling dilemmas** These dilemmas have no obvious 'right' or 'wrong' answers and, in some cases, different HEIs may decide upon different solutions.

In looking at these dilemmas with a view to developing an ethical policy framework or reviewing existing ethics-related documents, some of the issues to consider might be:

- What ethical issues are raised by these dilemmas?
- What possible solutions can you find for each dilemma and what are the positive and negative ramifications of each approach?
- How might your institution's mission and values guide you in choosing a course of action?
- Is guidance provided by existing codes or other ethics-related documents?
- In each case, do you want to tell staff and others how they must behave in this type of situation or would you like them to use their own judgement to find a solution?
- If it is important that individuals adhere to a particular solution, how can you ensure that they do so?
- Certain issues – such as animal research or funding from controversial companies - are more likely to be contentious than others. If you think that a particular issue may bring institutional values into conflict with personal, professional or societal values, how might you deal with this now and in the future?
- How can you encourage an open culture where staff, students and other individuals feel able to disclose and discuss ethical issues?

You might also want to think about how your HEI can develop a process for ethical reflection that would help staff, students and others to tackle the dilemmas they face in their day to day work or studies.

# Developing a framework

This chapter suggests how to go about developing a framework and what to consider when doing so. The process of developing a framework is at least as important as the final product. Discussion and debate will help to produce a 'living' document rather than a set of rules that will gather dust on a shelf.

## **3.1** **Leadership and endorsement**

An institution-wide ethical framework is unlikely to be effective unless it has a champion at the highest level and is endorsed by an institution's governing body. The head of the institution would be the obvious choice as champion, although the chair of governors may be more appropriate in some cases. It is also vital that senior champions set an example with their own behaviour by 'living' the institution's ethical principles and practices.

## **3.2** **Allocate time and resources**

An individual or committee will be needed to lead the project. Although HEIs have limited resources, it is vital to allocate sufficient time and a reasonable budget to those involved in the process. Developing the framework, putting it into practice and monitoring it are challenging tasks that will take time and energy.

## **3.3** **Start with values**

An institution's values should underpin everything that it does. It is important that any ethical framework evolves out of and is consistent with existing institutional mission and values statements. The framework will help to translate institutional values into action throughout the organisation. Core values are an integral part of any ethical framework and, if an HEI has not identified a set of organisational values, it would make sense to do so as part of this initiative. It is also important to consider the professional values of members of staff in order to ensure that the framework will not clash with these values.

## **3.4** **Build on existing ethics-related documents**

When developing a framework, it is important that it works alongside and is consistent with existing ethics codes and other related documents. HEIs can also learn from the experience of different departments. For example, many HEIs have a comprehensive approach to research ethics and this can be used as a strong foundation for developing an institution-wide framework. It is valuable to ask what already exists and what is missing in terms of the institution's current approach to ethics.

The framework will not necessarily replace existing ethics-related documents but will refer readers to other relevant documents for further information. Where documents already exist, it is important to ensure that they are up to date and that they are consistent with one another and with the institutional framework.

**3.5** Consultation is necessary to ensure that the framework addresses genuine issues and concerns. In addition, staff and other groups are more likely to use the framework if they have been involved in its development. Staff, students and representatives of the governing body must be involved in this process. HEIs can learn from organisations such as professional bodies and may also want to talk to other groups such as business partners, funding bodies, unions or local community representatives. HEIs may also find it useful to look at how other institutions and other types of organisation are addressing ethics. The wider the consultation, the more comprehensive the results will be.

**Learn from others**

**3.6** In terms of language, the framework needs to be clearly written and straightforward to understand. Organisations tend to use a mixture of aspirational language – such as ‘we try to do x’ - and rules – ‘it is unacceptable for us to do y’. It is good practice to clarify when text refers to aims or requirements. It is also important to produce an honest and meaningful document as readers will be quick to point out where the framework differs from how the institution actually behaves. Institutions will need to pay particular attention to language if they intend to have staff and others sign up to something that can be used in disciplinary proceedings.

**Think about language and length**

The length of the framework will also have an impact on how easy it is to read and how comprehensive it can be.

**3.7** You may want to include a short introduction from the head of the institution at the beginning of the framework document. This statement could include the purpose of the framework and the institution’s core values, as well as stating the commitment of the institution and its governing body to maintaining high ethical standards. Different HEIs will have distinct interpretations of the purpose of their own framework. Examples might include providing guidance for staff and students, upholding institutional values or safeguarding the reputation of the organisation.

**Decide on a beginning and an end**

It is good practice to include a section at the end of the framework on how it will be implemented and monitored. You may also want to provide contact details for further information, feedback and guidance as well as for reporting any issues that arise.

**3.8** Ethical frameworks can take a stakeholder, issues-based, functions-based or hybrid approach.

**Choose a structure**

A stakeholder approach is structured in terms of relationships with specific groups of interested parties such as staff, students, suppliers, business partners, funding bodies and so forth. The Association of Colleges’ code takes this approach.<sup>3</sup> An issues-based approach explains the institution’s approach to a series of important issues, such as equal opportunities or academic misconduct. The illustrative framework in Part II of this guide takes a functions-based approach that focuses on higher education activities.

Each approach has different features and is equally valid. HEIs will need to decide what is appropriate for their organisation.

<sup>3</sup> *A Model Code of Ethics for Colleges*, Association of Colleges, 2003

**3.9 Produce and test a first draft** Producing a first draft and testing it with staff, students and other interested parties will help to secure their commitment. A wide consultation is likely to generate more useful feedback and suggestions.

**3.10 Finalise the framework** Once the pilot is complete and the framework has been revised if necessary, it can be finalised. Obtaining endorsement from the head of the institution and the governing body is necessary at this stage, to ensure that leadership continues beyond the development of the framework to its implementation.

The next steps are to develop an implementation strategy and to publish, distribute and launch the framework.

# Policy into practice

Developing a framework is the first stage in addressing ethical matters within an institution. But it is not enough on its own. The framework document must be read, understood and used throughout the institution.

One of the most important aspects of this is to encourage dialogue about ethical concerns and to develop a culture where staff, students and other groups feel comfortable about raising and discussing ethical issues.

**4.1 Leadership** Leadership is just as vital at this stage as it is in developing a framework. Without a senior champion, it may be an uphill struggle to maintain momentum once the framework has been published. In addition, teams such as human resources and marketing could also play a valuable role in terms of communicating and putting the framework into practice. Again, it is important that champions demonstrate ethical behaviour as well as encouraging others to work and study according to the institution's framework.

**4.2 Ethics committees** HEIs may choose to set up an institution-wide ethics committee to oversee the publication and introduction of the framework. It would be good practice to include staff, student, governing body and other representatives in order to gain as wide a perspective as possible. In addition, the committee will need to include senior individuals who have the authority to take action where it is needed.

The committee may also want to take decisions on major ethical issues and monitor, review and report on the use of the framework. Any institution-wide ethics committee will need to work alongside relevant existing committees such as research ethics committees.

**4.3 Publication and dissemination** Once the final version of the framework has been endorsed by the head of the institution and the governing body, it can be published and launched. Some organisations will choose to publish their frameworks in booklet form, to make the document easier to distribute and more accessible. Others may include the framework in their staff or student handbooks, or in other documents.

While posting a framework on the institution's web site and intranet is good practice, it is vital that relevant individuals – such as staff, students and members of governing bodies - read the document. In an ideal situation, everyone would have their own copy. If this is not possible, then individuals must be made aware of the existence of the framework and encouraged to read and refer to it. Institutions may also want to provide copies for suppliers, business partners and other interested parties.

**4.4 Training and staff development** Ethical awareness training can take many different forms. Institutions may choose to explain their framework informally – in departmental meetings, perhaps, or to groups. Training can be ethics-specific or integrated into

existing training programmes. While training staff is vital, institutions will need to decide whether they want to train others such as members of governing bodies or students. Although it is not covered in this guide, teaching ethics as part of the curriculum is extremely valuable.

An ethical framework cannot encompass every possible ethical issue or dilemma. For this reason, it is important that staff and others are encouraged to develop 'ethical literacy' and explore how to handle dilemmas as they arise. Providing other opportunities for employees to disclose and discuss issues is also useful.

#### **4.5 Adherence**

Staff, members of governing bodies and, where appropriate, students will need to engage with and adhere to the framework in order for it to work effectively. A decision will have to be taken on how far the framework is an aspirational or obligatory guide to behaviour and how it will be enforced. Moreover, the institution must decide whether it wants to encourage staff and others to choose their own course of action in certain circumstances, as opposed to following rules of behaviour.

Including a section on adherence will explain how breaches of the framework will be handled. All institutions should have procedures in place to deal with staff, student or other grievances and to investigate allegations about unethical behaviour. Staff also need to know that they will be protected from retaliation if they report potentially unethical behaviour.

Institutions may want staff and others to sign up to the framework and they may choose to refer to it in employment contracts and during performance appraisals.

Where an institution has a partnership overseas or franchises its courses to another institution, then it will want to consider how far its approach to ethical issues should also apply to that partner.

#### **4.6 Monitoring and measurement**

Unless the HEI undertakes some form of monitoring or measurement, it will be impossible to know whether a framework is having any effect on individuals or the organisation as a whole.

Building ethics-related questions into staff surveys and appraisals is one of the most popular ways to monitor ethics. Institutions may want to use regular meetings, surveys or other approaches to get feedback from staff and other groups. HEIs may also find it helpful to develop ethics-related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for comparison over time.

#### **4.7 Help, advice and whistleblowing**

Employee helplines are becoming increasingly popular in other sectors such as the National Health Service, police forces and business. Some are used for reporting grievances while others also provide a service for staff to ask for advice or guidance on ethical issues. These helplines can be run by staff or, for a more independent service, by organisations such as Public Concern at Work<sup>4</sup>.

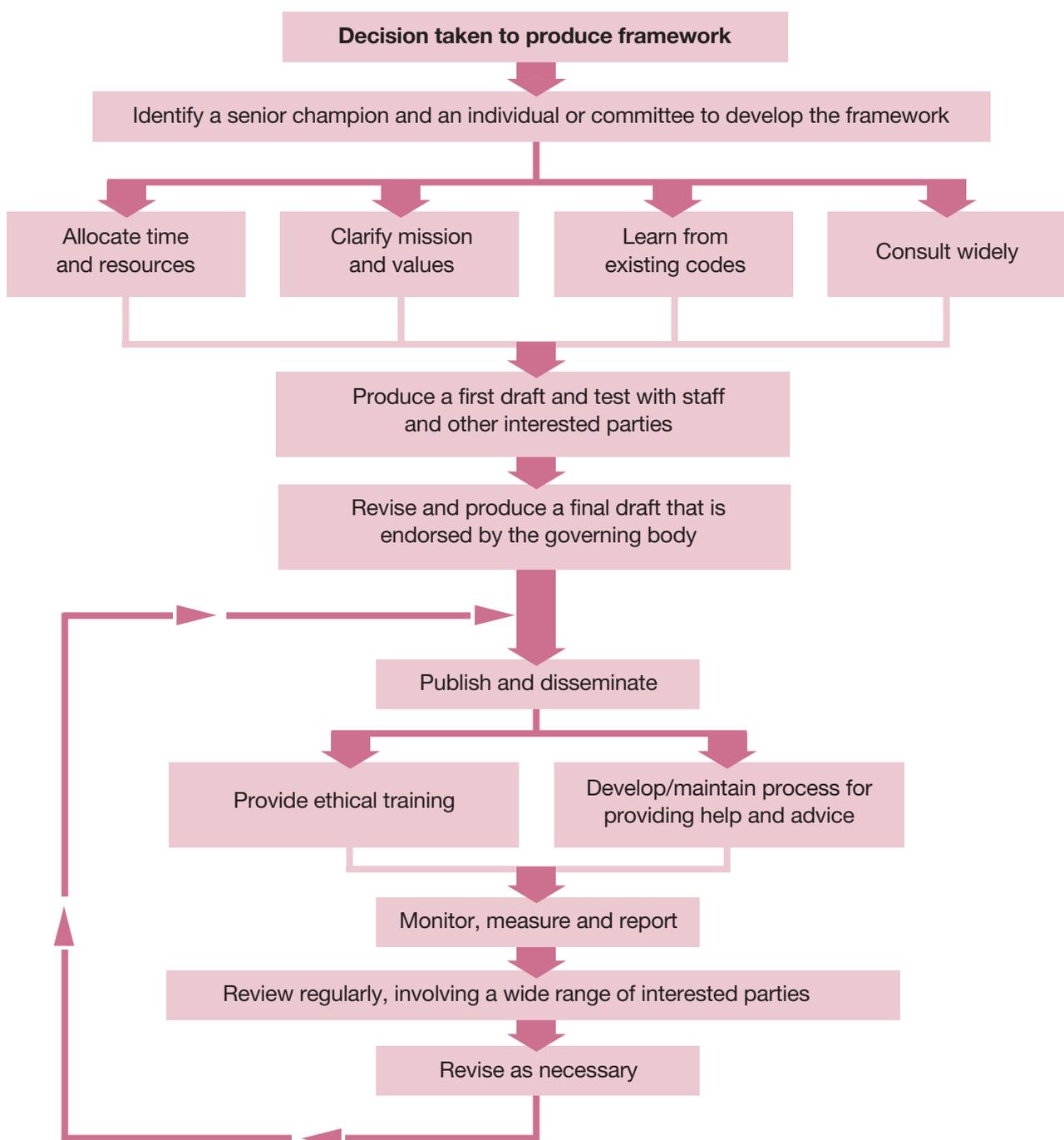
Giving employees the opportunity to speak up about issues of concern can help to prevent these issues from escalating to the point where staff decide to take legal action or whistleblow. It will always be beneficial to encourage employees to speak up about ethical issues and to foster an open culture where potential problems are taken seriously.

<sup>4</sup> [www.pcaaw.co.uk](http://www.pcaaw.co.uk)

**4.8 Reviewing** It makes sense to review an ethical framework approximately every three years to allow sufficient time for the results of monitoring to highlight any problems with the framework. It is worth seeking a wide range of perspectives on whether the framework is relevant and effective. HEIs will also want to respond to changes in legislation and new ethical issues that arise.

**4.9 Reporting** It is good practice to report on the introduction and effectiveness of an ethical framework. Institutions may choose to comment on their approach to ethical issues in annual reports and update governing bodies on developments.

**Figure Two** Developing a framework and putting it into practice



## Illustrative ethical policy framework

# Illustrative framework

### Purpose of the illustrative framework

This illustrative ethical policy framework aims to provide suggestions and guidance on how to articulate institutional values and ethics. The document is not intended to be a template – it simply provides an idea of the issues and the approach that institutions may want to think about in developing their own framework. Each institution will have a distinct culture and set of priorities.

The text draws upon recommendations from the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education<sup>5</sup> and Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice<sup>6</sup>, as well guidance from other publications and HEI codes. Like the guide as a whole, the framework has evolved out of Developing a Code of Business Ethics: A Guide to Best Practice Including the IBE Illustrative Code of Business Ethics<sup>7</sup>.

**Please note that institutions may not find all of the following issues or subjects applicable to their organisations. In order to make the illustrative framework useful to institutions with different structures and concerns, this guide seeks to cover a wide a range of issues.**

*This framework is intended to provide an opportunity to begin discussions that will lead to your own, tailored approach. Please do not simply adopt this illustration.*

### Box Three

#### General questions to consider when developing a framework

- What is the purpose of your framework – what are you trying to achieve and why?
- Who is involved in developing your framework? And how can you encourage them to take responsibility for ethics?
- How comprehensive will your framework be?
- How will the framework sit alongside existing ethics-related documents?
- Structure – what approach makes most sense?
- What kind of language will you use and why?
- How much freedom will certain individuals have to make their own decisions within the context of the framework?
- Whose behaviour will your framework cover? Staff? Students? Members of governing body? Visitors? Others?
- How will you ensure that people engage with and/or adhere to the framework?
- Who will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing your framework?

See Chapters 3 and 4 in Part I for more information on the above issues.

<sup>5</sup> Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education, QAA, 2004

<sup>6</sup> Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice (the Schwartz Review), Higher Education Review, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Developing a Code of Business Ethics: A Guide to Best Practice Including the IBE Illustrative Code of Business Ethics, Simon Webley, IBE, 2003

## A Preamble

This section introduces the illustrative framework and will include mission and values statements as well as key points about the framework. It is good practice for the preamble statement to be signed by the head of the institution or chair of the governing body.

*For example:*



### THINKING POINTS:

What are your institution's mission and values? Your framework will need to be consistent with them. What are the key messages that you want to get across to readers?

The mission of our institution is "to enable people to develop their capabilities and fulfil their potential, both personally and at work; to advance knowledge and understanding through scholarship and research; and to contribute to an economically successful and culturally diverse nation"<sup>8</sup>

- The institution's operations and reputation are based on seven core principles. These are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.<sup>9</sup>
- Upholding the mission and values of the institution is of the utmost importance to the long-term success and sustainability of our organisation.
- The institution requires and maintains the highest ethical standards in carrying out its operations. Staff and students are expected to act according to our ethical principles. Unethical practice of any sort will not be tolerated. The institution will monitor ethical performance regularly and will produce regular reports about our performance.

Trust has to underlie all that we do and all of our relationships. That trust is built on integrity and fairness.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

## B Purpose and use

This section refers to the purpose of the framework and how it is intended to be used. It is important to clarify who is expected to adhere to the framework.

*For example:*

### 1. This framework:

- Describes how we attempt to embody our values in principles and practice.
- Provides guidance on addressing dilemmas about institutional, staff or student conduct and directs individuals to where they can obtain further assistance.
- Applies to all staff, students and members of our governing body, and to all of our operations.



### THINKING POINTS:

What is the purpose of your framework? Who is expected to adhere to it? How do you intend to use the framework? Does a functions-based approach make sense for your framework? What about a stakeholder or issues-based approach?

<sup>8</sup> Taken from *Higher Education in the United Kingdom*, HEFCE, 2004

<sup>9</sup> Taken from *the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life*, HMSO, 1995

**B**  
*continued*

**2. Using this framework:**

- a. This framework should be used alongside the institution's policies, codes, guidance and conduct documents. It will be reviewed regularly.
- b. This framework cannot address or anticipate all likely ethical dilemmas. It is intended to guide staff and students in how to act with integrity, good conscience and judgement at all times.
- c. This framework was produced by the institutional ethics committee in consultation with the institution's main stakeholder groups and approved by the board of governors. The institution is committed to regular and meaningful engagement with its stakeholders regarding its activities in general including ethical principles and practice.

**C Teaching, learning and assessment**

**This section looks at the ethical issues involved in the teaching and learning process. It refers to the roles and behaviour of academic staff and students.**

*For example:*

Maintaining the highest standards of teaching and learning are fundamental aims of our institution. Staff and students must uphold the highest standards of academic integrity.

1. Our academic staff are responsible for creating a beneficial learning environment for students.
2. We strive to ensure that our academic programmes provide a high quality and challenging educational experience and ensure fair, rigorous and transparent student assessment procedures.
3. This institution fully supports academic freedom within UK law for staff and students to further knowledge and debate.
4. Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated among staff or students.
5. Consensual relationships between staff and students should be appropriately declared.
6. The institution has policies and procedures in place to respond to student complaints and appeals about academic matters. These procedures are designed to ensure that students can raise matters of proper concern to them without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected.<sup>10</sup>
7. The institution and its staff are responsible for ensuring that students engage with ethical issues.



**THINKING POINTS:**

How can you ensure that student assessment is fair, rigorous and transparent?

What does a beneficial learning environment mean in practice?

What other relevant issues might your framework cover, such as an institution's duty of care during placement learning opportunities?

Staff and students both have responsibilities in terms of teaching and learning. How will your framework provide a balance between what individuals can expect from the institution and what will be expected of them?

<sup>10</sup> Guidance on complaints and appeals has been taken from the *QAA Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education*

## D Research and development

This section relates to research and development issues. It refers to the behaviour of academic staff and students.

*For example:*



### THINKING POINTS:

How can this document be used alongside existing research ethics codes?  
How can your current approach to research ethics inform your thinking about institution-wide ethics?  
What can you learn from the experience of your research ethics committees when forming an institutional ethics committee?

We are dedicated to furthering knowledge within our institution and within society as a whole. Research and development plays a key role in the process. Staff and students are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical behaviour in conducting research, as well as to comply with the letter and spirit of all relevant legislation.

1. The institution has clear and transparent policies and procedures in place for ethical review of research.
2. The institution's research ethics committee is responsible for the ethical scrutiny of research proposals and ensuring that a discussion of potential issues of ethical concern takes place before a project commences.<sup>11</sup>
3. The institution has a responsibility to protect the rights of human subjects involved in research projects and to protect them from harm, to ensure that impact on the environment is reviewed and to avoid the use of animals unless absolutely necessary.
4. When submitting research papers for publication, the authors must declare any relevant funding sources or other issues that constitute a potential conflict of interest.
5. The institution upholds the rights of staff and students to publish without hindrance except where a specific written provision has been made with the agreement of all parties.<sup>12</sup>
6. Data and other information about research and research subjects will be kept confidential and will not be used without the consent of the individuals concerned.

## E The student experience

This section refers to the institution's responsibility to students and what it expects from them. It would be good practice for institutions to work closely with their student union in the development and implementation of the framework.

*For example:*



### THINKING POINTS:

How can you ensure that students know what is expected of them, what is unacceptable and what the penalties are for inappropriate behaviour?  
What does 'fair' mean in the context of student admissions and other issues?

The institution strives to be a community of learners built on the basis of trust and mutual respect. The institution has a duty of care for all students while they are studying at the institution. We have a responsibility for their academic and personal welfare. We also expect students to maintain high standards of personal and academic behaviour during the course of their studies. We support the right of our students to be involved in student union activities and we encourage students and union representatives to enter into dialogue with us on the institution's ethical stance, policies and procedures.

<sup>11</sup> Suggestions for the role of the research ethics committee are taken from *University Research Ethics Committees: Their Role, Remit and Conduct*, Anthea Tinker and Vera Coomber, King's College London, 2004

<sup>12</sup> Guidance has been taken from *The Missenden Code of Practice for Ethics and Accountability*, The Missenden Centre, 2002

## E

*continued*



### THINKING POINTS:

How far does your duty of care for students extend?

What are appropriate support mechanisms for students?

Are there other relevant issues that your framework might cover, such as student safety and security, or the use of the institution's internet system for receiving or sending offensive material?

1. We strive to ensure that our student recruitment and admissions process is transparent, fair, clear, explicit and implemented consistently.
2. All marketing and promotional materials will be relevant, accurate at the time of publication, not misleading, accessible and designed to help applicants make informed decisions.
3. Selection procedures will be followed fairly, courteously, consistently and expeditiously. Information concerning applicants will remain confidential.
4. The institution strives to ensure that prospective students – including international applicants - are proficient in the language of the course and have the ability to complete their course.
5. Relations with students are based on respect for the dignity of the individual and fair treatment for all. The institution is committed to equality, diversity and inclusivity.
6. The institution will not tolerate sexual, physical or mental harassment (including bullying) of its students. Students are expected to be open, honest and courteous with staff and each other.
7. The institution will ensure the provision of appropriate support mechanisms for students including academic supervision, counselling, career education guidance and financial support for cases of genuine hardship.
8. Students must comply with the institution's rules and regulations, as set out in the student handbook. The handbook also covers disciplinary and complaints procedures.

## F Business and local communities

This section looks at the institution's relationship with business and local communities. It refers to the behaviour of the institution as a whole and those involved in these activities. Knowledge transfer and other commercial activities that the institution may be involved with include: copyrights, patents and licensing relating to intellectual property rights; spin-off companies, business start-ups and innovation centres; consultancy; the acceptance of corporate donations; sponsorship or funding of research, chairs, courses or lectureships; corporate training; use of institutional facilities for conferences or events and public private partnerships.

*For example:*

The institution supports and encourages knowledge transfer opportunities and works in collaboration with private, public and charitable organisations and bodies to achieve these aims. In addition, the institution is committed to playing an active and positive role in the communities in which we operate.

### Business

1. The integrity of the institution and its representatives is of paramount importance and any serious ethical or legal concerns should be referred to the institution's ethics committee or research ethics committee, as appropriate.



### THINKING POINTS:

Do you forbid any business-related activities, such as private consultancy or doing business with controversial industries?

Will you show this framework to business partners and explain how issues such as academic freedom could affect them?



**THINKING POINTS:**

Who will take decisions about the ethics of accepting particular donations, sponsorship or funding?  
How can you cope with diverse approaches to ethics and belief systems in a multicultural world?

2. This committee should vet all substantial donations, sponsorship and funding that the institution applies for or is offered.<sup>13</sup>
3. Staff must declare and provide details in the institution's Register of Interests of any private consultancy work or other involvement with an organisation that is seeking to enter into a business relationship or other collaboration with the institution.
4. Staff and students must give informed consent to confidentiality clauses where these are deemed necessary by the institution and its business partners. However, the institution has a responsibility to ensure that all of its dealings are as transparent and accountable as possible.

**Local communities**

5. We strive to make a positive contribution to the local and regional community, including economic, civic, cultural, educational and environmental initiatives.
6. The institution will respect the traditions and cultures of each country in which it has dealings. Where there is conflict between local customs and the principles and values set out in this framework, this framework will guide all staff while they are acting on the institution's behalf. Staff should contact the institution's ethics committee if in doubt about how to behave in cases of potentially serious conflict.

**G Leadership and governance**

This section refers to the institution's overall approach to ethics and governance issues. It relates to the behaviour of the institution and its governing body.

*For example:*

We are committed to the highest standards of corporate governance, accountability and responsibility. We seek to conform to all relevant governance guidelines including the Governance Code of Practice and General Principles.<sup>14</sup>

1. The institution will exert appropriate financial control.
2. The institution will communicate its policies, achievements and prospects honestly with all interested parties, especially staff.
3. The institution will engage with suppliers, contractors or business partners who do not endanger our institutional reputation; procurement policies and procedures will deliver value for money and demonstrate socially and environmentally responsible behaviour.
4. The institution will strive to only do business with organisations that uphold basic human rights.
5. The institution will manage its estate in responsible ways.



**THINKING POINTS:**

What does communicating honestly with staff and others mean in practice?  
What might an ethical purchasing policy cover?  
What is the extent of your institution's commitment to sustainable development and environmental concerns?  
What does it mean to compete vigorously and honestly with other HEIs?

<sup>13</sup> Guidance has been taken from *the Missenden Code of Practice for Ethics and Accountability*, The Missenden Centre, 2002

<sup>14</sup> Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK, Committee of University Chairmen, 2004

**G**  
*continued*



**THINKING POINTS:**

How can you ensure that the same ethical standards apply to overseas campuses?

6. As part of our commitment to sustainable development, the institution will prevent or otherwise minimise, mitigate or remediate any harmful effects of our operations on the natural environment and finite resources.
7. The institution will collaborate and compete with other higher education institutions in a fair, honest and appropriate manner.
8. Where the institution sets up campuses abroad or licenses other organisations to provide courses, the same academic and ethical standards will apply.
9. Our ethical investment policy guides all investments made by the institution.

## **H** Management

**This section covers human resources issues. It identifies the institution's responsibilities to its academic and support staff, and explains what is expected of them.**

*For example:*



**THINKING POINTS:**

How does this document work alongside your staff handbook or any similar documents? Might this section also cover the behaviour of members of your governing body? Who is involved in decisions about issues such as staff development? How can you ensure that staff issues such as remuneration and assessment are fair?

We strive to create a positive, responsible, open and exemplary working environment for our academic, administrative and other staff. The institution expects all staff to maintain the highest standards of ethical behaviour and adhere to this framework.

1. Relations with staff are based on respect for the dignity of the individual and fair treatment for all.
2. The institution is committed to equal opportunities and will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, religion, political beliefs, national origin, colour, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status or disability.
3. The institution will not tolerate sexual, physical or mental harassment; and it places high priority on the health, safety and security of staff in their work environment.
4. The institution will maintain a fair and just rewards policy; it will encourage all staff to develop relevant skills and progress their careers.
5. Information obtained by staff at work should be directed to organisational ends. Any personal interests or interests of a member of one's immediate family must be disclosed.
6. Confidentiality for the individual and for institutional relationships with outside bodies will be respected.
7. No member of staff may give or accept money, gifts or hospitality of significant value or anything else which could be construed as being intended as a bribe to or from a student, supplier, business partner or other party.
8. The institution will aim to develop relationships with its suppliers, contractors and other partners based on honesty, fairness and mutual trust. The institution undertakes to pay its suppliers and contractors in accordance with agreed terms.

## I Adherence

This section looks at how the framework might be enforced as, if it is to work effectively, individuals will have to adhere to the framework. Institutions will need to decide whether to enforce the framework and, if so, what approach to take.

*For example:*

The institution's commitment to this ethical policy framework is considered as fundamental to our long-term sustainability and success. This will be demonstrated through our systems of training, adherence and accountability regarding performance.

1. Strict adherence to the provisions of this framework is a condition of employment in the institution. Management teams must ensure that staff understand this framework and the values that underpin it and are informed of the requirements relating to their job. Failure to comply with this framework may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.
2. The institution also expects students to adhere to the standards of behaviour and conduct contained in this framework.
3. Staff and students have an obligation to report actual or potential infringements of this framework. The institution's whistleblowing policy sets out procedures for reporting concerns and identifies how the institution will investigate allegations.
4. Retaliation or retribution for reporting genuine concerns violates the institution's ethical principles and will not be tolerated.
5. Staff behaviour is guided by the institution's policies and goals. The institution must be challenged if there is reason to believe that the ethical standards set out in this framework are being violated.
6. The ethics committee is responsible for ensuring that all reported breaches of this framework are investigated and remedial and/or disciplinary action is taken if appropriate. The ethics committee may discharge this responsibility by appointing staff to perform these tasks and reviewing reports of case histories.
7. No part of this framework may be waived or suspended.



### THINKING POINTS:

How will you ensure that staff understand and use the framework?

How will you deal with individuals who might claim that the institution is not living up to the framework?

How will you ensure that people raise issues internally, rather than whistleblow?

Who will be responsible for investigating alleged breaches of your framework?

## J Resources

This section provides a link to other ethics-related documents such as research ethics codes. It also provides staff and others with details of who to contact for further information or advice.

*For example:*

List of codes, policies and resources, such as research ethics code, admissions procedures, etc.

These documents can be found on the institution's web site at:  
[www.xinstitution.ac.uk/ethics](http://www.xinstitution.ac.uk/ethics)



### THINKING POINTS:

Who answers staff, students and others' questions about ethics?

Do you have effective complaints procedures to ensure that issues are dealt with at an early stage?

**J**  
*continued*



**THINKING POINTS:**

Do you provide a helpline? Is it manned by staff or provided by an external organisation?  
Who is in charge of reviewing your ethical framework?  
How might you cross reference or refer readers to specific ethical codes or other documents?

If your enquiries are not fully addressed by these resources or you wish to report a possible violation of this framework, your next steps should be to:

- Raise the issue, in confidence, with your management team / student representative. Significant cases will be referred to the institutional ethics committee.
- Refer to the institution’s complaints procedures for staff and students.
- Call the confidential helpline on XXXXX. Your enquiry will be answered by an independent monitor who is not connected with this institution / a member of the Ethics Advisory Team.

This framework will be regularly reviewed and amended by the institution’s ethics committee and governing body to ensure that it accurately reflects the range of the institution’s operations and concerns of its staff and other stakeholders. If you would like to comment on this framework, please email the ethics committee: xxxx@xinstitution.ac.uk.

**Index of issues and subjects**

**Issues and subjects covered in the illustrative ethical policy framework**

In reviewing your framework, you might want to check whether it covers the following ethical issues.

| Subject  | illustrative framework reference |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Academic freedom                                 | C3                               |
| Academic standards                               | C                                |
| Admissions                                       | E1-4                             |
| Animal welfare                                   | D3                               |
| Assessment                                       | C2                               |
| Breaches of code                                 | I, J                             |
| Bribery / gifts and hospitality                  | H7                               |
| Business relationships / commercial activities   | F                                |
| Collaboration / competition with other HEIs      | G7                               |
| Communication with staff and stakeholders        | B2, G2                           |
| Community initiatives                            | F                                |
| Complaints and appeals                           | C6, E8, I, J                     |
| Confidentiality of information / data protection | C6, D6, E3, F4, H5-6             |
| Conflicts of interest                            | D4, F3, H5                       |

| <b>Subject</b>                              | <b>illustrative framework reference</b> |
|---|---|
| Consultancy                                 | F3                                      |
| Cultural issues                             | F6                                      |
| Disciplinary procedures                     | E8, I                                   |
| Diversity                                   | E5, H2                                  |
| Donations                                   | F2                                      |
| Duty of care                                | E                                       |
| Environmental responsibility                | G6                                      |
| Equal opportunities / non-discrimination    | E5, H2                                  |
| Estate management                           | G5                                      |
| Ethical investment                          | G9                                      |
| Funding sources                             | D4, F2                                  |
| Governance                                  | G                                       |
| Harassment and bullying                     | E6, H3                                  |
| Health, safety and security                 | H3                                      |
| Helpline                                    | J                                       |
| Human rights                                | G4                                      |
| International students                      | E4                                      |
| Marketing practices                         | E2                                      |
| Obligations to students                     | E                                       |
| Obligations to staff                        | H                                       |
| Overseas campuses                           | G8                                      |
| Plagiarism / academic misconduct            | C4                                      |
| Procurement / purchasing                    | G3                                      |
| Research ethics                             | D                                       |
| Sponsorship                                 | F2                                      |
| Staff development                           | H4                                      |
| Staff remuneration                          | H4                                      |
| Student / teacher relationships             | C5                                      |
| Suppliers and subcontractors                | G3, H7-8                                |
| Support mechanisms for students             | E7                                      |
| Sustainable development                     | G6                                      |
| Union involvement                           | E                                       |
| Values                                      | A                                       |
| Whistleblowing / public interest disclosure | I                                       |

## Current practice in UK Higher Education Institutions

# Appendix I

In December 2004, UUK and SCOP asked their members to fill in a questionnaire on current ethics practices in higher education institutions. Ninety-nine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) responded to the questionnaire, which represents 63 percent of UUK and SCOP's members. Eighty-two percent of respondents enclosed documents including mission or values statements and other ethics-related codes, policies, statements or guidelines.

It is important to note that the questionnaire stated that partial answers and multiple responses would be welcome. This means that the research findings can be regarded as an indication, but not an accurate picture of ethics practices within UK HEIs.

### Lack of common discourse

It was immediately apparent from the questionnaire responses that there is a lack of common discourse on ethical issues in higher education. Respondents had very different views on what ethics encompasses within a higher education context.

The clearest example of different interpretations of the scope of ethical concerns relates to research. Forty-one percent of HEIs with research ethics-related codes or other documents stated that their organisation had no other ethics-related documents. Given that all institutions should have statements on issues such as race equality and data protection, the conclusion that could be drawn is that the individuals who filled out the questionnaire did not regard these issues as being related to ethics.

### Fragmentation

A second finding is that institutions tend to have a series of different documents, often produced by different departments or functions, rather than any coherent, institution-wide approach to ethical issues.

Many HEIs published a range of documents on different issues. The average number of codes per HEI was four, but respondents listed up to 25 different codes or documents relating to ethical issues.

Only seven institutions that responded to the questionnaire provided a general ethics or business conduct policy, code or statement covering the institution as a whole and not referring exclusively to research ethics. Of these, two were still predominantly research focussed. The remaining five did cover a wider range of issues.

### Inconsistency

The approach and the language used to describe ethics-related documents also varied. Institutions provided documents called codes (including codes of ethics, conduct and practice), guidelines, policies, statements, policy statements, policy charters, procedures documents and frameworks. A number of institutions chose to cover ethical issues in staff handbooks, in staff or student charters or in purchasing and other manuals. Staff and students were the two primary groups addressed in HEI ethics-related documents.

Five percent of respondents said that their institution had no ethical codes or other ethics-related documents.

### Overwhelming focus on research ethics

Research ethics is clearly a key area of focus for HEIs, but concentrating on this subject may have led institutions to neglect broader ethical issues facing their organisation.

Seventy-seven percent of HEIs had at least one research ethics related code. However, as stated above, 41 percent of these HEIs said that their organisation did not have any other ethical codes or ethics related documents. In addition, while 78 percent of HEIs had an ethics committee, at least 61 percent of these committees were specifically for research ethics.

### Institutional values

Seventy-three percent of HEIs said that they had a published statement of their institution's values. Corporate plans and mission or vision statements referred to ethical values or principles as well as 'professional' values such as excellence. A number of HEIs mention, endorse or have adopted the seven principles of public life, as set out in the Nolan Committee's First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.<sup>15</sup>

### Key ethical issues

HEIs identified a broad spectrum of current or future ethical issues. The most common issues related to aspects of research ethics. Thereafter, sources of funding or sponsorship and the ethics of commercial activities were the most frequently cited causes of concern. Other issues varied widely from freedom of information to sustainability and from relationships between staff and students to cross-cultural and international student issues.

### Implementing, monitoring and revising ethics-related documents

Findings in these areas included:

- Forty-three percent of respondents revise or plan to revise their ethics-related documents every two to three years.
- Just over half of HEIs – 53 percent - said that they monitor the effectiveness of their codes, although the explanation of how the documents were monitored varied widely.
- Only 37 percent said that they consulted staff and students on the effectiveness of their codes.
- Nearly three quarters – 73 percent - said that they provide staff with a copy of relevant codes.
- Forty-five percent said that they offer training to staff on the meaning and use of their codes.
- Seventy-one percent of respondents said that a clear, named person was available to provide advice on the code internally.
- Only five percent of respondents provided some sort of external help or advice line.

<sup>15</sup> First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, HMSO, 1995

## Further reading

# Appendix II

- A Model Code of Ethics for Colleges, Association of Colleges, 2003
- Broadening our Horizons: International Students in UK Universities and Colleges, UKCOSA, 2004
- Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education, QAA, 2004
- Corporate Use of Codes of Ethics: 2004 survey, Simon Webley and Martin Le Jeune, Institute of Business Ethics, 2005
- Developing a Code of Business Ethics: A Guide to Best Practice Including the IBE Illustrative Code of Business Ethics, Simon Webley, Institute of Business Ethics, 2003
- Fair Admissions to Higher Education: Recommendations for Good Practice (the Schwartz Review), Higher Education Review, 2004
- First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, HMSO, 1995
- Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK, Committee of University Chairmen, 2004
- Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction Survey 2002-3, HEFCE, 2005
- Higher Education in the Learning Society (the Dearing Report), The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997
- Higher Education and the Public Good, CIHE, 2004
- Higher Education: More Than a Degree, CIHE, 2005
- Lambert Review of University-Business Collaboration, HM Treasury, 2003
- Proposals for National Professional Standards for Supporting Learning in Higher Education, Higher Education Academy, 2005
- Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, HMSO, 1996
- Student Disciplinary Procedures (the Zellick Report), CVCP, 1994
- The Missenden Code of Practice for Ethics and Accountability, Rory Daly, The Missenden Centre, 2002
- The Student Experience Report 2005, UNITE, 2005
- University Research Ethics Committees: Their Role, Remit and Conduct, Anthea Tinker and Vera Coomber, King's College London, 2004

## CIHE publications

# Publications

### **Workforce Development: The California Experience**

This document considers how aspects of the Californian experience of Workforce Development compares with and can inform UK experience.

*Helen Connor and Madeleine King*

**October 2005**

**ISBN 1 874223 54 8**

**Price £5.00**

### **Workforce Development**

This report summarises responses to our February consultation on work based learning and suggests some examples of current developments, and also proposes a framework within which this important subject could be taken forward.

*Helen Connor*

**September 2005**

**ISBN 1 874223 53 X**

**Price £5.00**

### **International Competitiveness: Setting the Scene**

Introductory paper to the CIHE's extensive project investigating the international competitiveness of UK higher education institutions. This report summarises the May 2005 Council meeting that detailed the need and agenda for this project.

*CIHE*

**July 2005**

**ISBN 1 874223 52 1**

**Price £5.00**

### **Fishing for Talent from a Wider Pool**

The CIHE and IES have together produced this report that investigates trends and dilemmas in corporate graduate recruitment. The executive summary and the report of the web audit are available for download from our website, but the full report can be ordered from the IES website at £35.

*CIHE and IES*

**March 2005**

**ISBN 1 851843 50 7**

**Price £35.00**

### **Student Employability Profiles: An Employer's Guide**

THE CIHE with Graduate Prospects has commissioned this guide to raise awareness amongst employers of the employability skills that are developed through the study of a wide range of academic subjects. We hope this information will help employers better to understand the skills that should be developed during the learning process in specific disciplines and in turn help recruit from a wider range of academic backgrounds.

*CIHE & Graduate Prospects*

**March 2005**

**ISBN 1 874223 49 1**

**Price £3.00**

### **The Value of Higher Education**

A guide for students and their advisers on the value of higher education and what businesses look for in the graduates they recruit. This document was written with support from CIHE and UCAS, in association with Prospects. Available electronically from UCAS and CIHE websites and in hard copy from UCAS.

*Vikki Pickerin CIHE & UCAS*

**March 2005**

**Free**

*website download*

### **Higher Education: More Than a Degree**

This consultation at St George's House in January 2005 follows on from our successful consultation in March 2004 and focused on the student experience of higher education.

*CIHE*

**March 2005**

**ISBN: 1 874223 47 5**

**Price £5.00**

### **Higher Education Leadership and Fundraising**

Summarises the Council discussion with the US fundraising guru John Glier on how US institutions have secured funding

*CIHE*

**June 2004**

**ISBN 1 874223 46 7**

**Free**

### **Higher Education and the Public Good**

Summary of a consultation on how the fundamental values of HE can be better asserted. Supported by CIHE, SRHE and St George's House Windsor.

*CIHE*

**June 2004**

**ISBN 1 874223 45 9**

**Free**

*website download only*

***A full list of CIHE publications can be found and ordered through our website [www.cihe-uk.com](http://www.cihe-uk.com)***