Loughborough University Ethical Policy Framework 2024-25

1. Introduction

1.1. Preamble

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

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

Loughborough University has a statutory and contractual duty to protect academic freedom, a commitment to tackle discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and a statutory duty to promote equality. Academic freedom is bounded by the principles and guidance within this policy. In all areas of activity, legal and ethical compliance must be the key consideration in decision-making.

1.2. How is the framework structured?

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

1.3. Who is responsible for the framework?

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

Action	Date	Oversight provided by
Reviewed by Ethics Committee	21 May 24	Ethics Committee

2. Loughborough University Ethical Principles

The Nolan Principles of Public life give a foundation to behaviour at all levels of the University; ethical behaviour at the individual, organizational, and professional levels is underpinned by these principles. Colleagues should take decisions through the lens of the Nolan principles, supported by the policies and processes found in the rest of the framework.

Information on the Nolan Principles can be found on the web at: www.good-governance.org.uk/publications/insights/the-nolan-principles

2.1. Selflessness

Colleagues should act solely in the best interest of the University and its Royal Charter.

2.2. Integrity

Colleagues should always act with integrity. Colleagues should declare all conflicts of interest, excusing themselves from making decisions where these occur. Colleagues must avoid placing themselves in positions whereby they are placed under undue pressure or obligation from other people or organisations which might inappropriately influence their decision-making or activity. Colleagues should treat others with respect and dignity.

2.3. Objectivity

Colleagues must be impartial, recognising bias and prejudice to make fair, merit and evidence- based decisions.

2.4. Accountability

Colleagues are accountable to each other, the public, and the planet. We will care for ourselves, others, and the environment.

2.5. Openness

Colleagues should go about their decision-making and activity in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for doing so.

2.6. Honesty

Colleagues should be honest and truthful, declaring interests ahead of time.

2.7. Leadership

Colleagues should promote and inhabit these principles across their behaviour. Colleagues should challenge others when their behaviour does not meet these standards and accept challenge in good faith when it is received.

2.8. University Values

Underpinning the University Strategy are five values, these work alongside the Nolan principles and are:

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

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

3. Remit and Scope

We recognise the distinction between legal requirements and ethical considerations and aim to fulfil our obligations to both. No attempt is made in this framework to address or anticipate all possible ethical dilemmas. Nor will collaboration with any, legally constituted organisation or sector be ruled out simply to avoid confronting challenging ethical issues. Ethics Committee, not this framework, will be responsible for determining territories or organisations that we will not work with, or will work with utilising a heightened ethical process.

The framework offers guidance to all members of our University community on how to act with integrity, good conscience and good judgement at all times. In some instances, legal compliance will provide sufficient support to ensure ethical behaviour, in others the University goes further than the law to promote strong ethical standards.

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

- Investigations with human participation
- Investigations including the use of human tissue and/or animals and/or animal cells/tissues
- Investigations with military applications or using dual use (i.e. civil applications that could viability also be used militarily) technologies
- Investigations involving accessing security sensitive material
- International collaborations that create an elevated ethical risk
- Activities which will impact equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Funding by philanthropic gifts
- Activity that may lead to corruption and/or bribery concerns

4. Mechanisms for resolution

Any member of the University community may challenge the institution or individuals if in good faith they feel that we have fallen short of the standards set out in this framework in relation to organisational or individual ethical behaviour[1]. Initially, this should be discussed locally, for example with a tutor, supervisor, line manager, department / section head or Dean, but if a resolution cannot be found then contact should be made with the responsible person for the area of activity (see Appendix 3) in which the challenge is made. If a resolution still cannot be found, then this responsible person will ensure that the matter is passed to the Ethics Committee for resolution. Disclosures made in good faith will be protected.

The University's Whistleblowing Policy may also be relevant here.

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

For research and innovation studies, the Ethical Quick Test is intended to prompt University staff and doctoral students to consider the action/activity in simple terms and to

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[1] Research Misconduct Policy:
https://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/media/research/researchethicsandintegrity/downloads/Research_Misconduct_Policy.pdf

ensure that the conduct and outcomes of the activity adhere without question to the ethical principles outlined in Section 2 of the Ethical Policy Framework.

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

4.2. Ethics awareness form (for taught students)

For taught student projects, the Ethics Awareness Form is intended to raise awareness of ethical considerations and ensure that the conduct and outcomes of the project adhere without question to the ethical principles outlined in Section 2 of the Ethical Policy Framework. Taught students should discuss the completion of the form with their project supervisors.

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

4.3. Ethics review

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

Appendix 1: Key activities, review route and oversight

Activity	Review Route	Process	Responsible Post	Relevant Policies
Investigations involving human participants	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Follow the Code of Practice on Investigations involving Human Participants. Complete an ethics application via LEON leon.lboro.ac.uk	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee	▪ Code of Practice on Investigations Involving Human Participants ▪ Research with Children and Young People ▪ Conducting Interviews and Working Alone Off-Campus
Investigations involving activity falling under the Human Tissues Act	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Follow guidance from the Human Tissue Act Licence Sub- Committee. If necessary, complete an ethics application via LEON leon.lboro.ac.uk	COO as licence holder. PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee.	▪ University HTA Licence Compliance Quality Manual ▪ Human Tissue Authority
Investigations with military applications or using dual use technologies	Dean/AD(R); Ethics Committee	Complete the Review Process for Projects Involving Research with Military Applications or Dual Use Technologies.	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	▪ Export Control Policy
Investigations involving animals or animal cells/tissues	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Complete an ethics application via LEON leon.lboro.ac.uk	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	▪ Code of Practice for Research
Investigations involving accessing security sensitive material (e,g, online terrorist content or material).	Ethics Review Sub-Committee	Complete an ethics application via LEON leon.lboro.ac.uk	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee. COO for Legal Compliance.	▪ Code of Practice for Research
Activities involving Elevated Ethical Risk International Collaborations	Ethics Committee	Complete the Review Process for Elevated Ethical Risk International Collaborations. Ethics Committee will make final determinations if territory/organisations are to be precluded.	PVC (R&I) as Chair of Ethics Committee	▪ Code of Practice for Research
Funding by philanthropic gifts	Ethical Advisory (Gifts)	Refer to the process in the Donor Acceptance Policy	Director of Philanthropy	▪ Donor Acceptance Policy
Activities which will impact Equity, Diversity, or Inclusion	Equality Impact Assessment	Complete an Equality Impact Assessment	PVC (EDI)	▪ Disability ▪ Equal Opportunities ▪ Equality & Diversity Statement
Corruption and Bribery		See Policies	CFO	▪ Anti-Bribery Policy ▪ Conflict of Interest Policy ▪ Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

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