

## **Birkbeck College Ethics Framework**

### Mission

1 Birkbeck's principal aims are to:

- Provide higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of adults; in particular those who live or work in the London region.
- Enable adult students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.
- Maintain and develop excellence in research and provide the highest quality research training in all our subject areas.
- Make available the results of research, and the expertise acquired, through teaching, publication, partnerships with other organisations and the promotion of civic and public debate.

2 The key supporting objectives are to:

- Offer our students an integrated range of flexible, research-led courses across all levels of provision.
- Achieve and maintain strong research cultures in support of interdisciplinary work in each school and faculty.
- Ensure the College provides an inclusive working and learning environment for its students and staff so that all may develop to their full potential.
- Develop the College's capacity to respond rapidly to new and changing opportunities in higher and further education.
- Develop sustainable partnerships within the London region and beyond.

### Principles

3 We seek to maintain the highest standards of academic and professional integrity when considering the ethical, social and environmental issues related to our work towards fulfilling our mission.

4 Birkbeck's ethics framework, drawing together these policies and procedures, is predicated on our mission and the seven principles of public life identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995 (the Nolan principles), which have been adopted by Birkbeck's Governors in their Code of Practice:

- Selflessness – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- Integrity – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- Objectivity – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- Accountability – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

- Openness – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- Honesty – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- Leadership – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

5 We are also guided by the terms of the Charities Act 2011, under which we are obliged to use our resources efficiently in pursuit of our charitable purposes and for the public benefit.

#### College Ethics Framework

6 Through our structures and processes for decision making and institutional development, we aim to embed a culture of ethical awareness, good practice and the exercise of responsibility and sound judgement, providing policies, procedures and guidance for staff and students. Together these form a College Ethics Framework, consisting of College committees responsible for policies and procedures as set out below:

7 The Governors, through conduct of their own business and that of their Committees, seek to promote the highest standards of ethical responsibility. They are responsible for approving and implementing this ethics framework and the Governance code of conduct.

8 Governors also have responsibility for policies and procedures related to staff conduct, equality and diversity, environmental matters and as set out below:

Audit Committee is responsible for

- Conflicts of Interest policy
- Public interest disclosure (whistleblowing) policy
- Gift Acceptance Policy

Research Committee is responsible for

- Research strategy, policy and good practice

College Ethics Committee is responsible for

- Advising on the College Ethics framework and promoting good ethical practice throughout the College
- Advising the Research Committee on ethical review of research projects and research integrity and good conduct procedures
- Ethical review of research projects
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Teaching and Quality Enhancement Committee is responsible for policies and procedures related to student conduct:

- Code of student discipline
- Student Complaints Procedure,
- Student Dispute Resolution Policy and Procedure

Equalities Committee is responsible for:

- Equality and Diversity statement and equalities strategy

Finance and General Purposes Committee is responsible for:

- Financial Regulations (including anti bribery policy)

Human Resources Strategy and Policy Committee is responsible for:

- Dignity at Work and Study policy covering staff, students and contractors, which is also approved via Academic Board
- Academic staff disciplinary and grievance procedures, Statute 28
- Disciplinary and dismissal procedure for non academic staff
- Non academic staff grievance procedures

Estates Committee is responsible for:

- Environmental policy and strategy (under review)

9 Each School is responsible for formulating its own ethics framework for local implementation of policies and procedures and the promulgation of the College's mission and ethical principles as appropriate to the academic disciplines within the School. Ethical review of proposed research projects is considered by School Research Committees or Research Ethics Committees as appropriate and business referred to the College Ethics Committee if needed.

10 Individual members of staff are responsible for ensuring that

- any ethical issues arising from their work, including research, teaching, professional and consultancy activities, are given due consideration
- students are aware of issues surrounding research and professional ethics
- they exercise appropriate responsibility and judgement in implementing the College's policies and procedures related to ethical practice

College Ethics Committee January 2014