



UCL Research Funding Ethics Policy

May 2014

1. While the guiding principle of UCL's research funding policy is to generate funds to facilitate research, there are circumstances where it is not appropriate for UCL to accept money from a particular funder, either in general, or for a particular project where such funding might conflict, or be inconsistent, with the aims, objects or activities of UCL, as set out in its mission statement or elsewhere.
2. One such instance is that UCL will not accept research funding from the tobacco industry.
3. In considering whether or not to accept funding particular attention should be given to the question of whether doing so could conflict, or readily be perceived to conflict, with the independence or integrity of the researcher, of the researcher's research team or department, or UCL, or otherwise conflict with the aims, objects and activities of UCL. In particular, the Guiding Principles set out on p. 10 of the UCL White Paper 2011-2021 should be observed, especially the commitments to "apply ethical investment and procurement practices" and to "focus the impact of UCL education and research on improving the lot of people around the world and respect for human rights, and countering ignorance, poverty, ill-health and political tyranny". Any subsequent Council approved articulations of UCL's mission, values and ethical practices should also be observed.
4. It follows from the above that it may be reasonable to accept research funds from a particular source to undertake one type of project but not to undertake another. Furthermore, it may be appropriate to accept funding from some kinds of partner for some types of project only under particular conditions that would not be required for other funders, for instance insisting upon the free dissemination of all findings independent of intellectual property requirements.
5. In signing off a research proposal or similar, Heads of Department, Executive Deans and Vice-Provosts, where appropriate, must consider whether the funding is compliant with the above policy.
6. UCL's Research Funding Ethics Committee, which is a sub-group of the UCL Research Governance Committee, provides a forum for discussion of research funding ethics. Where there is doubt about whether the above considerations apply the proposal should be forwarded to the Research Funding Ethics committee for determination.
7. Nothing in the above is intended to imply that if a project meets the criteria here set out then a researcher must accept funding from that source. UCL accepts that a particular researcher or research group may, for reasons of personal or professional ethics, operate a more restrictive policy than set out here and may advertise that they do so. However, no researcher or research group may operate a less restrictive policy.
8. This policy is expected to evolve over time. Changes to it will typically be proposed by the UCL Research Funding Ethics Committee to the UCL Research Governance Committee, and thence to the UCL Ethics Committee. All modifications must be approved by the UCL Ethics Committee.