UCL General Code of Ethical Principles

Definition

A simple definition of ethics taken from oxforddictionaries.com is as follows:

> Ethics - Moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity.

The definition implies action. In other words, ethical considerations should be embodied and evidenced in decision-making and actions.

Ethical principles

These principles apply to all staff (including those holding honorary appointments), students of UCL, and members of UCL Council. Specific aspects of these principles will apply to UCL contractors and partners where agreements with them require adherence to any of the documents listed in Annex B.

This statement of principles is deliberately short and simple. It is designed to complement Annex A and the documents referred to in Annex B, and to act as an aid to individuals when dealing with decisions at UCL where ethical considerations come into play.

1   Responsibility and accountability

1.1   Staff, students and Council members should take responsibility for their decisions.
1.2   UCL will ensure that its governance arrangements and frameworks for delegation make lines of accountability for decisions clear.
1.3   Concerns regarding ethical matters should be raised and addressed as they arise.

2   Integrity

2.1   We will be honest and truthful in our work.
2.2   We will act in accordance with the applicable law and UCL policies and regulations.
2.3   We will declare interests and manage conflicts appropriately.
2.4   We will be transparent and consistent in decision-making.

3   UCL Values

3.1   We will put UCL's values at the heart of our decision-making.

- Commitment to excellence and advancement on merit
- Fairness and equality
- Diversity
- Collegiality and community building

- Inclusiveness
- Openness
- Ethically acceptable standards of conduct
- Fostering innovation and creativity
- Developing leadership
- Environmental sustainability.

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Annex A: Ethical Principles in Practice

1   When dealing with a situation with ethical implications, you should consider the following questions and guidance:

– *Have you considered all those who might be affected by your decision and those who might criticise your decision and the foreseeable reasons they would give for you not taking the decision?*
– *As well as the risk of harm, have you considered positive obligations – formal or informal – that you owe to those affected by your decision?*
– *Have you considered what could go wrong as a result of your decision for you, your colleagues (staff and students), the wider University or other stakeholders?*
– *What options have you considered for responding to the situation?*
– *Think carefully about the factual basis for your decision. Is your understanding of the facts robust and fair?*
– *How would you justify your behaviour to your manager or a colleague or friend if asked?*
– *How would you defend your actions if publicised in the media?*
– *Are you confident that your decision is the best one in the circumstances?*

2   Another perspective can often help to determine the way forward. So, if you are concerned, postpone any action until you have obtained further advice. Talk to a colleague or your Line Manager and discuss the situation. Try to discuss how detractors might see your decision and the possibility of other alternative actions other than those you have thought of, so that this discussion is of maximum use to good decision making.

3   Is it your decision to make?
It is not feasible for an individual to be an expert in every single field of activity. Please check the list in Annex B to see if there is a specific policy or guidance that relates to your enquiry. Where a policy does exist, please direct the enquiry to the appropriate contact specified in the policy document to take forward.

Annex B: Policies and other documents with ethical implications

Ethics should be a guide to action, and taking ethical issues into account should be part of everyday decision-making, so much of UCL's ethical guidance is rightly set out in other procedural documents and codes of practice. Key documents are listed below:

List of relevant documents

Academic

Code of Conduct for Students
Complaints Procedure for Students
Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech
Code of Conduct for Research
Research Ethics Committee
Research Funding Ethics Policy
Research Integrity
Procedure for Investigating and resolving allegations of misconduct in academic research

Finance
Anti-Corruption and Bribery Policy
Consultancy policy
Declaration of Interest Policy
Expenses Policy
Financial Regulations
Fraud Policy
Gift Acceptance Procedure
Gifts and Hospitality Policy
Investment Policy
Related Party Declarations

General
Information Security policy
Public Interest Disclosure
Slavery and Human Trafficking

Staff
Dignity at Work Statement
Harassment and Bullying Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Managing Stress at Work
Organisational Change Procedure
Staff Code of Conduct for Personal Relationships

Sustainability
Sustainable Procurement Policy
Sustainability Policy