

SCHOOL OF INFORMATICS

Ethics Committee

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Guiding principles for Ethics and Integrity

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Background

At the Ethics Committee meeting in November 2019, members agreed to adopt a similar model of Ethics guidance to that of GeoSciences (link: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/geosciences/intranet/working-in-school/other-important-information/ethicsinresearch/guidingprinciples>). Instead of a code, it was agreed that PIs should be referred to “guiding principles” which are in turn aligned with the updated UUK concordat to support research integrity.

Action requested from the committee

Ethics committee is asked to review drafted School “Guiding principles for Ethics and Integrity” (Annex A) for discussion and approval. Particular input is required on sentences highlighted in bold text.

Main subject text

The School Ethics web pages refer to an ‘Ethics and integrity code’ which should be followed by all those conducting research in the School. As part of the School’s ethics procedure, PIs are asked to indicate that they are following the School code.

The content of the code is primarily extracts from the ‘UUK Concordat to support research integrity’, and is not tailored specifically to research conducted in the School. The mismatch between title and content has resulted in some researchers expressing confusion of what the School’s specific code is.

Additionally, the UUK have recently published an updated concordat, and School guidance should be updated to reflect the most recent advice available.

Equality and diversity implications

There are no equality and diversity implications.

Resource implications (staff, space, budget)

If approved by the Ethics committee, the current code will need to be replaced by the guiding principles on the Ethics webpages, which is within the Officer’s remit. The current Ethics application form, hosted on Qualtrics, will need to be updated to refer to the School’s ‘guiding principles’ rather than the ‘code’ (including updated link). The latter will require input from one of the current Qualtrics administrators.

Annex A: Draft School “Guiding principles for Ethics and Integrity”

Informatics has a set of guiding principles on research ethics and integrity that are based on the Universities UK (UUK) Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019).

Link UUK Concordat (2019): <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/the-concordat-for-research-integrity.aspx>

All researchers are responsible for keeping their awareness of legal and ethical frameworks, and good research practice, up to date; Principal investigators (PI) and supervisors maintain overall responsibility for the ethical conduct of all research and student projects.

Researchers within the School should

- pursue research of the highest standards of quality, rigour and integrity (UUK p. 7);
- respect appropriate ethical, legal and professional expectations and standards, **with ethical scrutiny embedded in the research planning process** (UUK p. 8);
- maintain awareness of up-to-date legal and ethical frameworks and good research practice (UUK p. 10);
- guard against all forms of research misconduct, including but not limited to:
 - Fabrication
 - Falsification
 - Plagiarism
 - Failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations
 - Misrepresentation of data, attribution, interests, qualifications or publications
 - Improper dealing with allegations of misconduct (UUK p. 13);
- exhibit care and respect for colleagues, and all participants in, and subjects of, research to contribute to a culture of integrity (UUK p. 16)

Any suspected research misconduct should be reported via the College reporting form.

Link to form: <https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/science-engineering/research/research-ethics/research-misconduct-reporting-form>