University Policy Statement on Funding from Ethically Difficult External Sources or in Ethically Difficult Cases

It is difficult to develop a policy that can be used in all cases given the broad range of ethical issues which can arise when considering whether or not to accept external funding. However, some guidance is essential, particularly since some large donors now insist that specific ethical policies must be in place. For example, some medical charities will not fund research at an institution which also accepts funding from the tobacco industry. This policy is intended as a guide to staff in their dealings with external sponsors. It should be stressed that the intention is not to prevent individual members of the University from undertaking research. However, it is intended to protect the interests of all members of the University where the University acts as a corporate body in accepting funding.

University Policy

Research funds are accepted by the University on behalf of Principal Investigators. The main issues to consider in relation to whether or not external funding is accepted are:

- Is the association with the sponsor likely to bring the name of the University into disrepute?
- What are the motives of the sponsor?
- To what extent are these motives in accord with the University’s mission to be a globally competitive, research-intensive, student-focused university that takes seriously its economic, social and cultural responsibilities?
- What restrictions are placed on dissemination and exploitation of the results of the funded research? Why? Are these likely to lead to ethical problems and difficulties?

The policy of the University is to not accept funding if:

- association with the sponsor is likely to bring the name of the University into disrepute;
- the motives of the sponsor are in conflict with the University’s main aims and objectives;
- the suppression, delay, modification or partial publication of the results of research or scholarship by a sponsor is likely to lead to ethical difficulties.

In cases of doubt, the principal investigator must consult with their Head of Department and the Research and Enterprise Office for advice. Queries may be referred to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) if difficulties cannot be resolved.

Approved by Ethics Committee on 23 October 2008