

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

Introduction

Given the very wide range of ethical issues that can arise in considering whether or not to accept funding for specific university activities, it is difficult to formulate a policy that can be used in all cases. Nevertheless, the University takes the view that some guidance to staff is essential, particularly in view of the fact that some large donors are now beginning to insist that specific ethical policies must be in place. The policy below is intended to guide staff in their dealings with external funders. It should be emphasised that the policy below is not intended to prevent individual members of the university carrying out research, but is intended to ensure that the interests of all members of the University are safeguarded where the University acts as a corporate body in accepting funding.

University Policy

The key questions that must be asked about the acceptance of any funding for any purpose in the University are:

- a. what are the motives of the sponsor;
- b. to what extent are these motives consonant with the University's main mission of furthering excellence in Scholarship, Teaching and Research;
- c. to what extent are any restrictions placed on publication and exploitation of the results of the funding likely to lead to ethical problems and difficulties.

The policy of the University is not to accept funding for any aspect of its activities where either the motives of the funder are believed to be inconsistent with the University's main aims and objectives, or where the suppression of the results of any funding of research or scholarship is likely to lead to substantial ethical difficulties.

To give a specific example, it is in the highest degree unlikely that the University would accept funding from any company engaged in the manufacture of tobacco products, given that it would be extremely difficult to believe that the motives of such companies did not include the increase in sales of their products, which are now known to be both addictive and extremely hazardous to health.

There are, however, many cases where so clear a policy is more difficult to enunciate; this is particularly true of multi-national companies or organisations, which may be engaged in a very wide variety of activities, most of which are perfectly acceptable. There should be consideration of a funder's ethical policy, which is usually set out in publicly accessible documents, and its ethical record in the light of this should be assessed before funding for specific projects involving this University is agreed.

In cases of doubt or ambiguity, the principal investigator or beneficiary of a grant owes a clear duty of

care to the University; he or she must consult their Head of School and the Business Development Directorate (Grants and Contracts) (where relevant) for advice. In cases where the difficulties cannot be resolved, queries may be referred either to the faculty's Dean of Research or to the Pro-vice-Chancellor (External Affairs and Research Liaison), who will consult the Vice Chancellor if appropriate.

Revised by University Ethics Committee 19 June 2006

Approved by Council 9 October 2006

Approved by Senate 14th November 2006