



UNIVERSITY OF  
LINCOLN

## SECRETARIAT & LEGAL SERVICES

### ACADEMIC POLICY SUMMARY SHEET

<b>NAME OF ACADEMIC POLICY:</b>	Framework for Professional Ethics within the University of Lincoln
<b>PURPOSE OF POLICY AND WHOM IT APPLIES TO:</b>	<p>The policy sets out a series of guiding principles for the formation of policy and standards of professional behaviour, underlines the University's commitment to its stated values and offers guidance for decision and action in areas not covered by existing regulation.</p> <p>The policy applies to all staff and students within the University of Lincoln.</p>
<b>RESPONSIBLE BOARD/ COMMITTEE WITH ROUTE OF APPROVAL:</b>	<p>Academic Board approved the policy on 11 June 2008.</p> <p>The policy was endorsed by the University Ethics Committee on 29 January 2008 and was approved by Core Executive on 25 February 2008.</p>
<b>LEAD STAFF MEMBER RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS UPDATE:</b>	Pro Vice Chancellor (University Development)
<b>PERSONS CONSULTED IN DEVELOPING POLICY:</b>	The policy was considered by members of Academic Board and Core Executive.
<b>POLICY FINALLY APPROVED BY:</b>	Academic Board on 11 June 2008
<b>DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	11 June 2008
<b>DETAIL OF DISSEMINATION:</b>	The policy was disseminated to all Faculties via email, with an introduction via the staff magazine <i>Contact</i> , and is available on the Secretariat portal site.
<b>PROPOSED DATE OF REVIEW</b>	September 2011
<b>SECRETARIAT OFFICER – MAIN CONTACT:</b>	Officer to the University Ethics Committee
<b>DATE:</b>	9 September 2008

## The Framework

The University requires of itself as an institution and of its staff and students that the following three precepts are observed at all times:

- **Respect for academic freedom**

This is a primary value without which no university can exist.

Respecting academic freedom<sup>1</sup> includes

- Ensuring people are able to develop and express their ideas and beliefs openly and without detriment
- Allowing people to pursue legitimate lines of enquiry even when they prove controversial or challenging to others
- Defending the right of others to express ideas and beliefs which are difficult, unpopular or which run counter to accepted thinking

- **Respect for the persons of staff, students and all who may be affected by the University's activities**

Respecting people includes

- Taking into account their feelings, cultural attitudes and personal beliefs so as not to cause unreasonable or unnecessary stress or distress
- Promoting their ability to make independent and informed decisions in their work
- Acknowledging their autonomy to act upon the informed decisions they have made

- **Respect for one's role as a member of the University**

Respecting one's professional role includes

- Acting with integrity within one's professional life
- Acting fairly in dealings with others, ensuring that any differential treatment is demonstrably based on relevant and appropriate grounds
- Acting in such a way as to produce a beneficial outcome and to limit any harm to others, to the interests of one's profession and to the University

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<sup>1</sup> A full statement on Academic Freedom in the University of Lincoln was adopted in June 2007 and is to be found on the Ethics web-page

## **The Framework as a Guide to Professional Conduct**

Each of these requirements, taken individually, may lead to a violation of one or both of the others. For example, expressing controversial ideas openly might conflict with the requirement not to cause others unnecessary distress; or respecting others' autonomy in choice of action might conflict with the need to limit harm.

When taken together, however, each requirement acts so as to limit the extent to which the others can be exercised. Thus in respect of academic freedom, all staff must have the right to champion views which others might find distasteful, but exercise of the requirement to respect others should ensure that such views are sensitively and discretely expressed and confined to those occasions where their expression forwards the business of the University. Again, any impulse perhaps to over-compensate for the beliefs or sensitivities of others is held in check by the need to act fairly and not introduce irrelevant bases for differential treatment.

Thus the space within which judgements of ethical professional behaviour can be made is delineated by the triangle of the three mutually reciprocal requirements. Together they both provide the boundaries within which the freedom to act exactly as one wishes is voluntarily confined, and offer a structure through which to define and decide appropriate action.

## **The Individual and the University**

These requirements are enjoined on both individuals in their professional behaviours and the University as a corporate body, in its academic or management decisions, policies and strategies. The shared responsibility to uphold them defines the ethical relationship of individual and University.

Thus the University has a responsibility publicly to uphold its members' rights under academic freedom and conversely to make clear their obligation not to act in such a way as to bring harm to itself, its members or to others.

Individuals have a responsibility to act in such a way as upholds the integrity of the corporate body of University and also to recognise that a personal violation of these requirements might damage it.

In this way, the individual's professional autonomy is preserved within the context of a corporate responsibility to promote it, and that autonomy is willingly confined and directed towards the corporate good.