

OPEN UNIVERSITY ETHICAL RESEARCH STATEMENT

In accordance with its charitable status as a UK Higher Education provider, The Open University seeks to uphold its values of social justice and environmental responsibility, to work in the interests of the common good, and in the public interest. In pursuit of its research and enterprise activities it seeks to protect its integrity and its reputation by applying the following principles.

1. Where the process of the research poses ethical and legal risks to the individual researcher(s) and the University, the University will undertake a risk assessment and ethics review.
2. Where the proposed research or potential research results could be misused for purposes that are illegal or harmful, e.g. have 'dual use', i.e. have both civilian and defence applications, the University will undertake a risk assessment and ethics review.
3. Where the research topic, process, outputs and/or associated public engagement activities could have harmful implications in respect of discrimination, equality, diversity and inclusion, the University will undertake a risk assessment and ethics review.
4. The Open University and its researchers will not pursue research or knowledge exchange partnerships with, nor accept funding¹ from:
 - a) The tobacco industry².
 - b) Any party that is involved in illegal or unethical activity, including but not restricted to slavery, pornography, the sex industry and child labour.
 - c) Any party that would require Open University researchers to breach the principles of research integrity, deviate from scientific norms and research conventions, restrict publication or suppress research findings³, inappropriately influence the presentation or interpretation of research findings.
 - d) Any party that would require an embargo on being named as a funder or collaborator.
5. Where the funder or collaborator has, or is perceived to have, incompatible values and could potentially bring the University into disrepute by association, the University will undertake a risk assessment and ethics review.
6. The University does not preclude researchers from collaborating with the defence sector. Nevertheless, all research involving potential or actual defence and/or security application will be subject to risk assessment and ethics review.

¹ Where a funding source is a philanthropic donation to Open University research, it will be subject to the [Development Office Gift Income Procedure](#)

² Definition of tobacco industry funding to align with Cancer Research UK Code of Practice on Tobacco Industry Funding to Universities <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/applying-for-funding/policies-that-affect-your-grant/code-of-practice-on-tobacco-industry-funding-to-universities>

³ In respect of publication, an exception would be for commercial or other sensitive research.

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