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## PREAMBLE

1. The School attaches considerable importance to the maintenance of high ethical standards in the research undertaken by its academic and research staff and students, whether supported directly by the School or funded from external sources. Research undertaken in the School should conform to generally accepted ethical principles and the values of the University of Cambridge.
2. The School recognizes that in many cases outside research partners or funding organisations have their own ethical policies or require research proposals to undergo independent ethical scrutiny. This ethical code should be seen as a complement to these existing standards, not a replacement for them.

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## WHERE DOES THIS CODE APPLY?

3. Ethical issues can arise in a wide range of situations, including those relating to research, plagiarism, safety and the environment, professional practice, race and religious equality, copyrights and patents, privacy and freedom of information. The relationships between the School and its national and international funders, including commercial partners, may provide scope for conflict of interest and ethical dilemmas. International research may bring along additional difficulties beyond those encountered within the UK.
4. Good governance and safety are already subject to University regulations, so the avoidance of harm is the main focus of this ethical code. Legislation will often dictate how to approach and solve ethical dilemmas, but it will not always be sufficient, and should not be the only driver of our School's approach to ethical issues.
5. All materials prepared for publication should respect academic professional standards, including the recognition of previous work and the involvement of other researchers. It is School policy that all publications openly declare the source of funds used to support the work.

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## PROCESS

6. The School's ethical review process involves up to three stages:
  - a. **self assessment** by the researcher, which might lead to
  - b. **departmental review**, which might require advice from a
  - c. **specialist panel**.
7. Self assessment requires individual researchers to determine, in the light of Departmental guidance, what is, and is not, acceptable behaviour. Students should discuss ethical issues with their supervisor, and academic staff are encouraged to discuss issues with their colleagues. In all circumstances, researchers should act with rigour, honesty and integrity in all their scientific work. They are also required to have respect for life, public good and the law. They have to ensure that their work is justified, minimising any adverse effect their work may have on people, animals and the environment. It is the researchers' responsibility to seek further guidance in case of doubt.
8. Departments in the School of Technology should publish an ethics policy which includes a description of the Department's ethical review process. A Department's ethics policy must be approved by the appropriate Faculty Board or Syndicate and by the School of Technology's Ethics Committee. Self-assessment is expected to be

- sufficient for uncomplicated cases; however it is likely that research involving any of the following factors may require Departmental review:
- a. Research involving human subjects who are particularly vulnerable (e.g. through disability) or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children);
  - b. Studies that are likely to cause the subject physical or mental distress or embarrassment;
  - c. Experiments or other data collection involving deception;
  - d. Sensitive personal data stored in a form that would allow individuals to be identified;
  - e. Research that may expose participants to a risk of legal or disciplinary action.
9. The School of Technology Ethics Committee shall form a Specialist Panel of experts to review difficult cases, or request an appropriate body elsewhere in the University to do so. It is expected that self-assessment and, where appropriate, an internal Departmental review process, will handle the vast majority of cases.
10. Research in the following areas cannot be approved by self-assessment or Departmental review alone and must seek guidance from the School of Technology Ethics Committee:
- a. research involving clinical procedures using human participants, NHS patients, staff or facilities, or data gathered from NHS patients, staff or institutions;
  - b. research involving the use of human tissues;
  - c. research involving animals in scientific or experimental procedures, including field-based research.

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#### THE SCHOOL OF TECHNOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE

11. The School of Technology Ethics Committee shall consist of the Head of School or a nominated representative as Chairman, together with at least three additional faculty members.
12. The Ethics Committee shall:
- a. provide advice to Departments on their review process and approve ethics policies written by Departments;
  - b. facilitate the independent review of the ethics of a piece of proposed research work when directed to do so by Departmental review or at the request of a faculty member within the School; and
  - c. investigate any potential breach of Departmental or School ethics policy when requested to do so by Departmental review or at the request of a faculty member within the School.
13. When facilitating independent review, the Ethics Committee should refer proposals to an existing review panel elsewhere in the University as appropriate. If no such panel exists, the Ethics Committee should convene a Specialist Panel to review the proposal.
14. A Specialist Panel will consist of at least three faculty members who have no personal or departmental conflict of interest with respect to the particular research concerned, plus a human resources and legal representative. The Specialist Panel will be chaired by the Head of the School or a nominated representative. The Head of School, or representative, may count as one of the membership of five, provided that he or she has no conflict of interest.
15. The Specialist Panel may, at its discretion, request advice and guidance from colleagues within the School or outside experts. It will aim wherever possible to notify the applicant within two weeks of the request for review. If difficulties arise, it will consult with the applicant and seek to resolve any issues. In case of conflict within the panel, the decision of the chair will be binding.

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## GRIEVANCE

16. Any member of the School may raise a grievance about ethical issues in research by writing to the Chairman of the Ethics Committee, citing the circumstances involved. The Ethics Committee, with or without external consultation, will seek to resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of all parties.
17. One or more members of the School may raise a grievance about a decision by the School's Ethics Committee by appealing to the University Research Ethics Committee.

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## IMPLEMENTATION

18. This code will be shared with all staff and research students. Its implementation may be audited once every three years and a report with suggested changes will be shared with the Council of the School of Technology.

*Draft proposal by Alastair Beresford*

*31<sup>st</sup> May 2012 (approved by the Council of the School of Technology on 8 June 2012)*

### **Addition (at August 2013):**

The Human Research Authority's new online guidance on NRES ethical approval can be found at: <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/>