

UKRI Code of Conduct

Policy Statement

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is a publicly-funded organisation which is dedicated to nurturing the highest quality research and innovation by focusing on excellence with impact. Each year UKRI invests in research covering the full spectrum of academic disciplines from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities.

Given this large investment of public funds, there is a need to ensure that the best interests of the public are served in the way UKRI and its employees pursue business objectives.

Employees are therefore expected to conduct themselves in a way that ensures that UKRI's business is carried out efficiently and effectively, and also to adhere to the highest standards of professional and ethical practice, as outlined in the Seven Principles of Public Life (see [Appendix A](#)).

To these ends, this policy sets out rules governing employees' conduct and provides guidance on the expected standards of conduct, both at work and in some outside activities. This policy applies to all employees.

Management Statement

The UKRI Code of Conduct has been agreed with the Trade Union Side.

References

Acceptable Use of ICT Systems and Services Policy
Grievance, Harassment and Bullying Policy
Whistleblowing Policy
Gifts and Hospitality Policy
Managing Performance and Conduct Policy
Conflicts of Interest Policy

Table showing the version history

Version Number	Status	Revision Date	Summary of Changes
Version 1.0	Complete	January 2020	New policy created
Version 1.1	Draft	October 2020	Section 15 amended the wording in relation to Consultancy work Section 16 Added reference to Intellectual Property

1. Principles

- 1.1 All employees are required to conduct themselves in line with the Seven Principles of Public Life as set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, available at Appendix A.
- 1.2 All employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy (this should be covered during the Induction process) and to adhere to the required standards of conduct.
- 1.2 All employees are required to act in accordance with UKRI's policies and procedures.
- 1.4 All employees are required to conduct themselves at work with integrity, objectivity and honesty.
- 1.5 All employees have a duty to act in a way that promotes the good name of UKRI; and, conversely, have a duty not to bring UKRI into disrepute by their actions (or inactions), statements or neglect of their responsibilities.
- 1.6 All employees must seek to create a working atmosphere that is based on trust, co-operation and mutual respect for others.
- 1.7 Disruptive, unethical or illegal conduct will not be tolerated. Allegations of such conduct will be investigated thoroughly and addressed appropriately under the relevant policy.

2. Behaviour towards others

- 2.1 Employees are required to demonstrate respect, courtesy and co-operation towards everyone they interact with at work internally and externally.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 3.1 Employees and everyone they interact with at work have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. Employees are therefore required to comply with UKRI's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principles and, in particular, have a personal responsibility to prevent their behaviour having an unfair discriminatory effect, irrespective of the intention behind their behaviour.
- 3.2 Employees are also required to comply with UKRI's policy on Grievance, Harassment and Bullying. Any form of harassment is a disciplinary offence.

4. Health & Safety

- 4.1 Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and a responsibility for the health and safety of others who may be affected by their activities.

5. Contact with the Media

- 5.1 Enquiries from the media related to UKRI activities must always be forwarded to UKRI's Press Office/Communications team, except where employees are authorised to handle these.
- 5.2 UKRI's employees may express and debate views freely and publicly on ideas, theories and

developments relevant to their professional science, expertise and competence. However, employees are advised not to comment publicly on UKRI activities or policies without previously consulting with their Director and/or the Press Office/Communications team.

5.3 All employees should be aware of their obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI) which grants a public right of access to information. Employees can be held criminally liable if it is found that they have frustrated a request for information under the act.

5.4 The unauthorised passing of privileged or confidential information to the media or other third parties is a disciplinary offence.

6. Social Media

6.1 Social media is a public forum and the same considerations, including the provisions of this code, apply as would to speaking in public or writing something for publication, either officially or in a personal capacity. When engaging with social media employees should, at all times, respect confidentiality, financial, legal and personal information.

6.2 Where any personal social media accounts used by employees make reference or link to their public role, they should take care to ensure that it is clear in what capacity they are acting.

6.3 For further information and guidance, please see [Appendix B](#).

7. Use of Resources

7.1 UKRI's resources should be used solely in respect of its business and employees should ensure the proper, economical, efficient use and safe keeping of organisational resources.

7.2 Before an employee takes property off site they should ensure they have authorisation from their Line Manager. The UKRI reserves the right of search of an employee (and their vehicle) on its premises when there is good and sufficient reason, in accordance with local guidance.

8. Use of UKRI IT and Communication Systems

8.1 UKRI's IT and communication systems are provided to enable employees to do their jobs effectively. Improper use of UKRI's computers, computer networks and internet connections will be regarded as a disciplinary offence, including the unlawful use or copying of computer software.

8.2 UKRI will monitor computer usage and any unacceptable use will be investigated. Further details, including the extent of permitted personal use of IT and communication systems, are provided in the UKRI Acceptable Use of ICT Systems and Services Policy.

8.3 Where other systems are utilised, the UKRI Code of Conduct still applies.

9. Financial Propriety

9.1 UKRI has a 'zero-tolerance' approach to fraud and aims to foster an environment in which opportunities for fraud are minimised and in which suspicions of fraud are reported. UKRI is committed to rigorously investigating cases of alleged fraud, to the recovery of any assets lost

(through legal action if necessary) and to taking action against perpetrators of fraud.

9.2 Employees have an obligation:

- 9.2.1 to use UKRI funds and other resources under their control only for the purposes for which they are provided;
- 9.2.2 to manage these resources with probity;
- 9.2.3 not to benefit from personal gifts or hospitality attributable to their employment that may compromise or be thought to compromise their integrity;
- 9.2.4 not to make a profit secretly from their employment activity;
- 9.2.5 to avoid waste or extravagance;
- 9.2.6 to report, in line with the Whistleblowing Policy any suspected instances of irregularity, impropriety or fraud.

9.3 Employees whose responsibilities include the management of UKRI resources must follow relevant instructions and guidance.

10. Confidentiality

10.1 All employees have a duty to protect official information held in confidence and not to divulge it to unauthorised persons, inside or outside UKRI. Information about people or business operations should only be removed from the office with the necessary authorisation and with appropriate data protection safeguards (e.g. encryption) in place.

10.2 Employees should continue to observe their duty of confidentiality when no longer working for UKRI.

10.3 Information obtained in the course of work must not be used for personal gain or benefit.

10.4 Employees should make themselves aware of their obligations in accordance with UK Data Protection legislation, and any disclosure of information must be in line with UKRI's data protection processes and other relevant policies and procedures. If in doubt, clarification should be sought from line managers or the Data Protection Officer.

11. Gifts & Hospitality

11.1 Employees are required to act in accordance with the Gifts and Hospitality Policy.

11.2 Employees should be aware that the giving or receiving of gifts, money, hospitality or other favours may constitute a bribe if it is found to be an inducement for an action that would provide an advantage to the employee or other parties. Such a breach is a disciplinary offence and may constitute a criminal offence under the Bribery Act.

11.3 Approaches from an outside organisation about the offer of an award or prize must be discussed with line managers.

12. Handling Contracts

12.1 Only designated employees may enter into contracts or place orders on behalf of UKRI. Designated employees will be informed of their delegated authority to do so.

12.2 Any employee whose work involves negotiation or contact with contractors, suppliers, customers etc, should be scrupulous in avoiding any situation which might give rise to criticism or suspicion or which might compromise UKRI. An employee will be required to prove that the receipt of a payment or other consideration from someone seeking to obtain a contract or other advantage is not corrupt.

13. External Activities

13.1 As a general rule, UKRI will not concern itself with the conduct of employees outside work. However, activities and/or misconduct outside work which impact adversely on an employee's work performance or the organisation's reputation may result in disciplinary action being taken.

13.2 An employee who is arrested and/or charged with any criminal offence, except a minor traffic offence, must disclose this to their line manager and to HR at the earliest opportunity. The outcome of any such charge must also be reported. Depending on the nature of the alleged offence, and/or conviction, action under the Disciplinary procedure within the Managing Performance and Conduct Policy needs to be considered.

13.3 An employee who becomes bankrupt or insolvent must inform their line manager and HR so that any possible impact on their role can be determined; the employee should also inform the line manager and HR when an order of discharge has been granted.

14. Conflicts of Interest

14.1 Employees must declare to their manager any financial or non-financial interests that are in conflict with the interests of UKRI as outlined in the Conflicts of Interest Policy.

15. Consultancy Work

15.1 For the purposes of this policy statement, "consultancy work" is defined as work which entails the use of an employee's professional skills and qualifications and which attracts payment for services provided over a period of time.

15.2 Restrictions

15.2.1 Employees should not engage in activities which might be in conflict with the interests of UKRI, or which might be to the detriment of normal duties. Before entering into any commitment to undertake consultancy work, an employee must obtain permission in writing from their Line Manager. Work related to the consultancy must be done wholly outside normal working hours and must not commit UKRI to undertake any work. Any consultancy agreements for which an employee is a party in their own right must not transfer any UKRI IP to the consultant, or customer or supplier.

15.2.2 The potential scientific, technical and financial advantages of the work being done corporately will be taken into account. Consultancy work directly related to research

programmes supported by UKRI should be undertaken in an official capacity.

15.2.3 If the consultancy requires official resources including UKRI research facilities or consumables, assistance of other employees, or access to any UKRI property (including inventions/ know-how, unpublished information or data), the work should be undertaken in an official capacity and not as a consultancy.

15.3 Consultancy Fees and insurance

15.3.1 Fees for approved consultancy, which are carried out without recourse to official time or resources, may be retained by the employee.

15.3.2 UKRI will not be liable for any act or omission arising out of the consultancy. Individuals should consider personal professional indemnity insurance.

15.3.3 No statement must be made which leads customers to believe the individual is acting as an employee, agent etc. of UKRI.

15.3.4 Employees who receive income from outside sources are responsible for notifying HMRC and paying any Income Tax or National Insurance due.

16. Intellectual Property

16.1 UKRI shall own intellectual property created by its employees in the course of their employment. For the purposes of clarity, “the course of employment” extends to activities and periods of activity outside work hours, if related to your field of occupation and usual duties. The employee waives all moral rights to such intellectual property.

16.2 Employees have a duty of confidentiality to UKRI and must discuss with their line manager, any disclosure or publication of research details or other emerging intellectual property. The disclosure or publication of research details or intellectual property may severely prejudice UKRI’s ability to protect and/or utilise any intellectual property for the benefit of the public and/or commercial return. Employees who wish to assign UKRI copyright to a publisher should refer to their line manager for permission.

16.3 UKRI may, at its discretion, file and prosecute applications for intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to, patents). Employees shall cooperate in providing information and reasonable assistance to UKRI as required to facilitate any such filing and/or prosecution.

16.4 Some of the UKRI Councils may have an Award to Inventors Scheme under which an employee named as an inventor or creator of UKRI intellectual property, which is commercialised in a defined set of circumstances, may be eligible for an award. Employees should refer to their line manager for details of any UKRI Council specific schemes.

16.5 The rights and obligations described in this Intellectual Property Clause continue in force after employment has ceased in respect of intellectual property made during employment.

17. Political Activity

17.1 In general, employees are free to take part in political activities. Participation in any political

activity must only be undertaken in a personal capacity and employees should avoid becoming involved in political controversy on matters affecting UKRI.

17.2 Some employees, in politically restricted posts, may be restricted in their ability to take part in political activities.

17.3 Employees taking part in political activities should inform their line manager.

17.4 Employees seeking adoption as a Parliamentary or European Assembly candidate should inform their line manager and HR.

18. Publications, Broadcasts and lectures

18.1 Approval to participate in a lecture or broadcast as a representative of UKRI should be sought from line managers. Any fees would normally be payable to the UKRI.

18.2 If an employee is invited to participate in a lecture/broadcast in a personal capacity on a non-work-related matter, then permission will not normally be required.

19. Safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults

19.1 Employees, visitors and others working with or on behalf of UKRI should note that when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, they should:

19.1.1 Never ask for, or accept, personal contact details or invitations to share personal contact details (this includes email, phone numbers, social media contacts, address, webcam, skype, etc.) from any child, young person or vulnerable adult associated or formerly associated with UKRI's work. Also, never ask for or accept personal contact details or invitations to share personal contact details from a family member of any child, young person or vulnerable adult associated or formerly associated with UKRI's work. Never share their own personal contact details with such individuals except where this has been explicitly authorised by UKRI and/or for UKRI business purposes.

19.1.2 Never disclose, or support the disclosure of, information that identifies children, young people or vulnerable adults through any medium, unless that disclosure is in accordance with standard UKRI policies and procedures and/or has the explicit consent of their line manager. Media includes paper, photographs, and social media.

19.1.3 Not contact a child, young person, vulnerable adult or a family member of a child, young person or vulnerable adult associated or formerly associated with UKRI's work either by way of a personal meeting or through written, telephonic or digital means (including social media) without ensuring that the contact is either made jointly or in conjunction with another member of staff.

19.1.4 Never take images of children, young people or vulnerable adults without consulting with the UKRI Communications team in order to ensure that the intended use of the images does not conflict with UKRI's policies.

19.1.5 Ask permission of the child, young person or vulnerable adult (or in the case of children, their

parent or guardian) informing them of the specific purpose(s) and intended use of images (including how and where) and respect their decision to say no making it clear that there will be absolutely no negative repercussions from denying such consent.

- 19.1.6 Ensure that images are respectful and do not impact negatively on the dignity or privacy of the child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- 19.1.7 Ensure that the use of the images does not put the child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk of being identified or located.
- 19.1.8 Never upload the images of children, young people and vulnerable adults associated with UKRI activities to non-UKRI social media pages without the full and explicit consent of UKRI Communications Team.
- 19.1.9 See the Code of Conduct at Appendix C specific to employees, visitors and others working with or on behalf of UKRI with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

20. Breach of the Code of Conduct

20.1 A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

20.2 Breaches of behaviour or conduct in others working for the organisation should be reported to the appropriate level of management or external body if appropriate.

20.3 Legal action may be considered if a criminal offence is suspected and, if appropriate, the matter may be reported to the police or other relevant authorities.

21. Raising concerns

21.1 If there is a concern about a possible breach of this code, if employees of UKRI are being asked to act in contravention of the code of conduct or are concerned about misconduct or wrongdoing in any other areas, then they should raise their concerns either through the Whistleblowing Policy or the Grievance procedure in the Grievance, Harassment and Bullying Policy.

Appendix A – The Seven principles of public life

A1. Selflessness

A1.1 Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

A2. Integrity

A2.1 Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

A3. Objectivity

A3.1 In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

A4. Accountability

A4.1 Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

A5. Openness

A5.1 Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

A6. Honesty

A6.1 Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

A7. Leadership

A7.1 Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

A8. These principles apply to all aspects of public life. They were established by the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, chaired by Lord Nolan, in 1996.

Appendix B – Personal Use of Social Media

- B1. Employees are fully responsible for their own actions and the consequences of their actions when accessing these sites when at work and at all other times.
- B2. Content posted on social media websites has the same legal status as written documents.
- B3. When assessing the impact on the reputation and integrity of UKRI, the content of material posted on social media sites is the primary consideration; the location from which the material was posted is secondary to this but is nevertheless significant.
- B4. As specified in the Acceptable Use of ICT Systems and Services Policy, UKRI generally permits employees limited and reasonable use of computing facilities for personal use during nonworking time, for example at lunch time. This includes access to social media networking sites.
- B5. UKRI reserves the right to restrict access to social media networking websites using UKRI's computer facilities.

Appendix C: Additional Code of Conduct applicable to safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable adults

- C1. UKRI employees, visitors or any other person, whilst in the course of their work with or on behalf of UKRI, must not:
 - C1.1 Abuse or exploit a child, young person or vulnerable adult or behave in any way that places a child, young person or vulnerable adult at risk of harm, including harmful traditional practices (such as female genital mutilation, forced marriage or child marriage), prostitution, slavery or trafficking.
 - C1.2 Engage in any form of sexual activity or develop a physical or sexual relationship with anyone under the age of 18 or with a vulnerable adult.
 - C1.3 Use physical punishment/discipline or use of physical force of any kind towards children, young people or vulnerable adults.
 - C1.4 Engage children, young people or vulnerable adults in any form of sexual activity which involves the exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour.
 - C1.5 Use language or behave towards a child, young person or vulnerable adults in a way that is inappropriate, offensive, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
 - C1.6 Fondle, hold, kiss, hug or touch children, young people or vulnerable adults in an inappropriate or culturally insensitive way.
 - C1.7 Have a child, young person or vulnerable adult with whom they are in contact in a work-related context stay overnight at their home (including any other personal, permanent or temporary residential accommodation with which they are associated e.g. lodgings).
 - C1.8 Sleep in the same room or bed as a child, young person or vulnerable adult with whom they are in contact in a work-related context. Where it is necessary to sleep close to unaccompanied children, young people or vulnerable adults, they will make sure that another adult is present and it is in line with authorised procedures.
 - C1.9 Do things of a personal nature for children, young person or vulnerable adult, with whom they are in contact in a work-related context that they can do for themselves (e.g. taking a child, young person or vulnerable adult to the toilet or bathroom or helping them get dressed or undressed etc.).
 - C1.10 Spend time alone away from others with children, young people or vulnerable adult with whom they are in contact in a work-related context; they will always make sure that another adult is with them and/or they are with the child/young

person/vulnerable adult in an open public place, where others are around and in plain view of others.

- C1.11 Hit or otherwise physically assault or physically abuse children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- C1.12 Act in ways that shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, young people or vulnerable adults, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
- C1.13 Discriminate against, show differential or preferential treatment to, or favour particular children, young people and vulnerable adults to the detriment of them or others.
- C1.14 Develop relationships with, engage in any practice with or develop behaviour towards children, young people and vulnerable adults that could in any way be deemed or interpreted as exploitive or abusive.
- C1.15 Condone or participate in behaviour of children, young people or vulnerable adults that is illegal, unsafe, or abusive.
- C1.16 Use any computers, mobile phones, video or digital cameras, or any such medium to exploit, harass or bully children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- C1.17 Use computers, mobile phones, or video or digital cameras or other electronic devices, to access, view, create, download, or distribute pornographic or abusive images of children, young people or vulnerable adults.