SOAS Ethics Framework

1. Introduction

SOAS prides itself on being an ethical university and one of its Core Values is Ethical Standards. The placement of Ethical Standards as a cornerstone of the School's values system is vital to ensuring the continuing success and sustainability of the institution. SOAS became the first university in London to divest from Fossil Fuels in 2015. SOAS wishes to remain at the forefront of ethical decision-making and has decided to put in place an Ethical Framework to assist with this objective.

All aspects of School activities have the potential to raise ethical concerns. The SOAS Ethics Framework has been developed to guide individuals who need to exercise judgement when faced with a situation that has ethical implications. It lists the policies and procedures that will help individuals make decisions. The ethical framework sits alongside the need to comply with statutory and regulatory requirements.

The SOAS community, which includes all staff, students, associates and the Board of Trustees of the School, are expected to act in accordance with the policies, procedures and core values set out in this Ethics Framework. Some elements of the framework are directed to the Board of Trustee members in particular.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the approval of this Code and it is expected that the Framework will be promoted and embedded using the School's appropriate committee and management structures. This Framework will commence on approval by Board of Trustees and will remain in force until it is revised or replaced.

2. About SOAS

SOAS provides resources and knowledge about Asia, Africa and the Middle East to equip people for a global economy and a multicultural Britain.

The School's purpose is:

- To advance through teaching and research the knowledge and understanding of Africa, Asia and the Middle East
- To contribute to the development of the academic disciplines studied at the School
- To provide high quality education so that our students achieve excellence in their chosen subject or subjects and develop their intellectual and other core skills.

- To promote and lead global public education in our areas of specialist expertise concerning Africa, Asia and the Middle East, both in the United Kingdom and around the world

3. SOAS Core Values and Ethical Principles

SOAS Core Values are promoted and celebrated, and underpin all the School's activities. SOAS Core Values help guide staff and students in their work and studies and by so doing help the institution achieve its vision and the aims of its strategy. One Core Value relates specifically to Ethical Standards: SOAS will maintain the highest ethical standards in all of its dealings and will be open, honest, tolerant, fair and responsible in everything it does. However, all of the values have a resonance and relevance for staff and students for acting ethically. SOAS Core Values are:

- Excellence
- Equality and diversity
- Freedom of speech and tolerance
- Cultural understanding
- Ethical standards
- Community
- Evaluate and self-reflect
- Transparent and accountable
- Environment

SOAS Core Values are embedded into SOAS Ethical Framework and should be observed when making decisions that have ethical implications.

Link to SOAS Core values statements: https://www.soas.ac.uk/corevalues/

Link to SOAS Strategy:
https://www.soas.ac.uk/directorate/visionandstrategy/file114989.pdf

4. Responsibilities of the Board of Trustees

Governing bodies are entrusted with funds, both public and private, and therefore have a particular duty to observe the highest standards of corporate governance. SOAS Board of Trustees are required to protect the institutional reputation by being assured that clear regulations, policies and procedures that adhere to legislative and regulatory requirements are in place, ethical in nature, and followed [Element 2 of the Higher Education Code of Good Governance, 2014].

SOAS is committed to highest standards of professional conduct, as determined by the Nolan Principles. Board of Trustee members are expected to abide by the 7 principles of public life and this is referred to in induction material and the Board of Trustees Handbook.

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

5. Elements of the Ethical Framework

SOAS Ethical Framework is made up of six elements:

- Learning and Teaching
- Research
- People
- Gifts and Donations
- Finance & resources
- Collaborations

6. Overview of Elements of the Framework

Outlined below is a brief description of each element and a non-exhaustive list that covers the most relevant policies and procedures related to that element.

Learning and Teaching

Policies around learning and teaching which could be relevant when considering a matter that raises ethical concerns:

- Admission policies
- Plagiarism
- Academic Standards
- Disciplinary procedures
- Student Charter

Research

SOAS has a range of policies around research grants & research ethics to help ensure that the University operates to the highest ethical standards when engaging in research activity. These are:

- SOAS Research Ethics Policy
- Procedure for the Ethical Review of Research Projects for Staff and PGR Student
- Using Personal Data in Research: Code of Practice for SOAS Staff and Student
- Policy for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct Complaints about Research Misconduct procedure
- Due Diligence Procedure for Research Income [*name to be confirmed once finalised*]

People

The School's relationships with its students, staff and external stakeholders are a fundamental basis of its business.

- Human Resources e.g. recruitment
- Equality and Diversity
- Honorary Appointments
- Personal Relationships
- Consultancy
- Data protection
- Freedom of information
- Whistleblowing

- CCTV
- Harassment and Bullying - Respect at SOAS
- Complaints and disciplinary procedures

Finance & resources

Financial activity is covered by a number of arrangements that ensure the School conducts itself ethically when undertaking activity in the financial sphere.

- Register of Interests
- Fraud
- Bribery
- Procurement
- Investment

Collaborations

In its dealings with collaborations both at home and overseas be they institutional collaborations, teaching, research or exchange, SOAS has an approval and due diligence process that take into account ethical consideration. The School should aspire to ensure that those we collaborate with live up to the same ethical standards as SOAS and the School should consider the view of SOAS staff and students:

- Collaborative Agreements [*name to be confirmed once finalised*]

Philanthropic Gifts & Donations

SOAS has a Due Diligence procedure for the receipt of philanthropic donations and gifts and a Gift Acceptance Record which forms part of the Due Diligence Procedure

- [Due Diligence Procedure for the acceptance of Philanthropic Gifts](#)
- [Gift Acceptance Record](#)

7. Application of the Framework

The previous section highlights the key elements that support this framework and each of these policies or procedures will identify a senior owner who can be contacted about its application. Staff should seek advice from this person wherever possible before making any relevant decisions. For those situations not covered by a specific policy then advice can be sought from the School's Secretary. The ultimate decision-maker on ethical matters will be the Director unless otherwise outlined in the relevant policy. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

In furtherance of these principles, particular areas that should be considered for additional scrutiny when undertaking due diligence are:

- Alcohol manufacture/sale
- Armament manufacture/ sale
- Child labour
- Environmental abuses
- Fossil fuels
- Human rights abuses
- Immigration detention and prison abuses
- Labour rights abuses and trade union blacklisting
- Pornography manufacture/sale
- Tobacco manufacture/sale
- Other significant ethical or corporate governance controversies

All members of the School bear a responsibility to follow the Ethical Framework and where issues are not explicitly expressed in the Framework, members should use it as a guide along with the SOAS Core Values.

When faced with a matter that raises ethical concerns trustees, staff or students should see if there is a relevant policy but also ask themselves the following questions and keep a record of your decision making and the rationale behind it.:

- Is it the right thing to do?
- Is it within the law?
- Is it fair and equitable?
- What are the implications involved?
- Are their particular interests involved?
- Who benefits from it?
- Is it in accordance with the SOAS Core Values?
- How would this look in the press?

8. References
- Higher Education Code of Good Governance (Committee of University Chairs, 2014) - http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Code-Final.pdf
- The 7 Principles of Public Life (Committee on Standards in Public Life, 1995) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

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