

# DEPARTMENT OF GEOLOGY & PETROLEUM GEOLOGY

## ETHICS POLICY

The Department of Geology and Petroleum Geology adapts the Ethics policy of the Natural Environment Research Council, as follows (from <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/aboutus/ethics/ethics-policy>):

### 1. Guiding Principles

#### In relationships with others

- Treat colleagues, suppliers and the public respectfully and professionally, taking account of confidential issues when appropriate.
- Deal courteously with those who hold opinions that differ from ours.
- Respect cultural differences.
- Have open and explicit relationships with government, the public, the private sector and other funders.

#### In our work

- Operate with honesty and integrity in all our work, taking steps to identify and deal with corrupt scientific practices and professional misconduct .
- Be open and transparent in making decisions, undertaking activities and allocating funding; if that is not possible, explain why.
- Reach conclusions based on best scientific and professional practice, having considered all views.
- Work to the standards of UK legislation as a minimum here and abroad, and operate according to local laws as required.
- Disclose conflicts of interest and actively manage them.
- Ensure funding decisions are transparent and securely based on objective assessment and selection procedures.
- Recognise appropriately the intellectual, scientific support and operational contributions of others.
- Consider ethical challenges which arise from new or possibly risky research at the limits of our knowledge by broadening debate at an early stage.

#### Impact on the environment

- Weigh any possible adverse impacts of proposed work against the expected benefits, while considering the economic, social and environmental dimensions.
- Assess and minimise the adverse impacts of our decisions and work on the natural environment, on people and on animal welfare.

### 2. Particular Issues

Ethical issues arise in the following particular aspects:

#### Fieldwork

Where appropriate all students and staff in the Department are made aware of the importance of securing consent for fieldwork on private or public land.

### Grant Applications

Many grant-awarding bodies require applicants to discuss any ethical issues associated with their research proposal and to provide evidence to the funder that the research design will lead to the work being completed in an ethically rigorous manner.

### Plagiarism

The Department follows the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline (section 5, Appendix 5.15; see also Academic Quality Handbook section 7.17.)

### Data Protection

The Department requires compliance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (1998).

## **3. Personnel Concerned**

The Ethics Policy applies to anyone who conducts research, and includes academic, emeritus, research and administrative staff, postgraduate research students, taught postgraduate and undergraduate students (for taught Masters and undergraduate dissertations), visiting staff and Honorary research staff.

Regardless of funding source the policy applies to *all* research undertaken in the Department.

Lines of responsibility are shown in Table 1 below.

## **4. Specific Guidance**

### Staff

- (i) The attention of all staff is drawn to the Ethics policy.
- (ii) A copy of this document is circulated to all staff.

### PhD students

- (i) An Information Pack for New Research Students contains (a) the departmental Ethics policy and (b) the University policy on plagiarism.
- (ii) Students are encouraged to attend a presentation on 'Research Ethics and Legal Issues', organised by the College of Physical Sciences.

### MSc students

One three-hour session for the MSc Petroleum Geology class is presented in the form of a workshop.

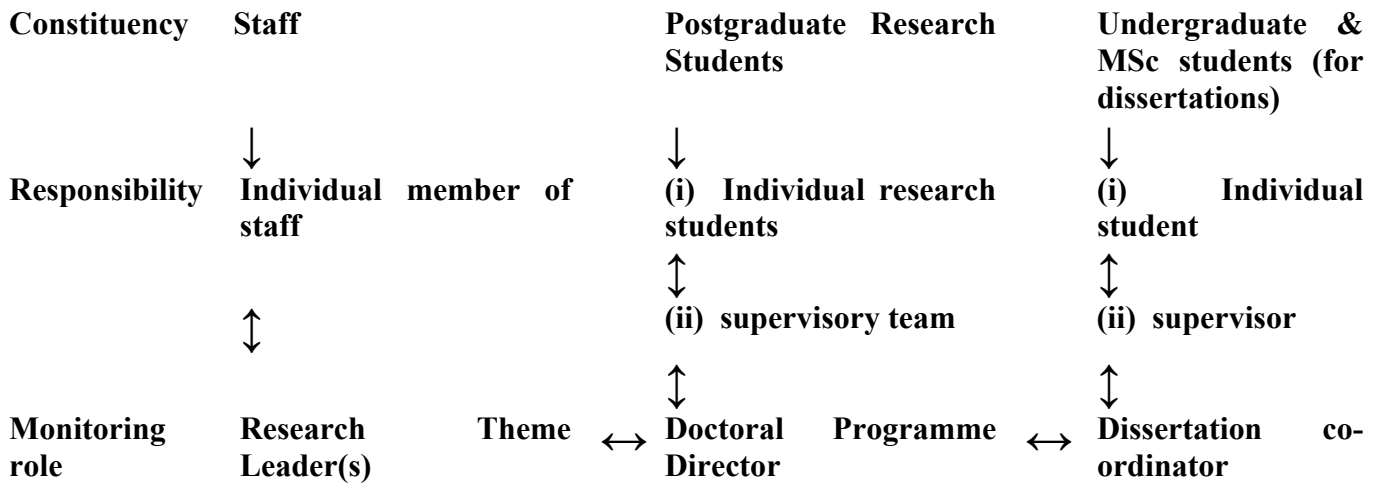
### Undergraduates

- (i) All undergraduate students complete a document covering safety issues and ethical responsibility in the field.
- (ii) Each year handbook includes the NERC policy statement, and the University policy on plagiarism.

- (iii) Independent field mapping proposal forms include a commitment to follow the ethics policy.
- (iv) Laboratory project proposal forms include a commitment to follow the ethics policy.

The policy is posted on the departmental website.

**Table 1. Responsibility for research being undertaken in an ethical manner**



Ultimate responsibility lies with the Head of the School of Geosciences.

Aspects of this policy are adapted from The University of Aberdeen Dept. of Geography and Environment, and the Natural Environment Research Council.