Ethical Framework

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) Universities are committed to the discovery and transmission of knowledge, wisdom and learning for the betterment of society. With the capacity to address humankind's greatest challenges, universities advance on the basis of merit in an environment of common endeavour and mutual respect. As occasional 'critics of society' universities are bound to draw on evidence and reason.

(2) Members of a university are obliged to do the same – with a professional responsibility to look beyond self-interest and personal conviction in order to build and sustain their institution's capacity to realise its distinctive purpose, values and principles.

(3) To this end, the University of Newcastle (University) Ethical Framework is to guide and support decision-making at all levels. It is intended to be a 'compass' for navigating the University's complex ethical landscape; not a 'checklist' or 'recipe' for making decisions.

(4) When making decisions on behalf of the University, the 'standard for judgement' lies in this Ethical Framework rather than the personal beliefs of any individual.

(5) This Framework must be read and applied as a whole – as no single element has priority over another. This Framework will not eliminate ambiguity – values and principles will compete from time to time. Thus, decision making requires the need for the exercise of judgement rather than 'mere compliance'.

Section 2 - Vision

(6) To be a world leading University for our regions.

Section 3 - Values

(7) Value structure choices between competing options. In realising the University's vision we will prioritise the following institutional values.

Equity

(8) Our commitment to equity and inclusiveness is fundamental to everything we do. Equity drives us to create inclusive environments, support diverse communities, build partnerships that remove barriers to participation, and ensure our decisions promote fairness, access, and opportunity for all.

Excellence

(9) We pursue the exceptional and strive for innovation in our teaching, research and operations for our students and regions. Excellence drives us to innovate, set high standards, and continuously improve, celebrating achievement while always challenging ourselves to do better.

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Engagement

(10) Our staff, students, alumni and communities are deeply connected to the challenges and opportunities in our regions and beyond. Engagement to us means listening deeply, collaborating openly, and working with our partner to ensure our efforts are relevant, responsive, and create real-world impact.

Sustainability

(11) We are ethically minded and prioritise responsible management of our environment and the financial sustainability of our institution. Sustainability means leading with care, thinking long-term, and making choices that protect our environment and support the wellbeing of our people.

Section 4 - Principles

(12) Principles provide a ‘standard of judgement’ against which to test the quality of decisions. In realising the University's vision and giving effect to its values we will:

a. act on the basis of sound reasons, solid evidence and impartial judgement;
b. aim to do good and minimise harm;
c. aspire to deserve the trust and good opinion of the communities we serve as a university;
d. be accountable for the choices we make;
e. do what we say we will do;
f. maintain the sustainability of our institution;
g. promote safety and wellbeing;
h. respect the intrinsic dignity of people.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Alex Zelinsky Vice-Chancellor alex.zelinsky@newcastle.edu.au
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.