Case Study: The Royal Academy of Engineering

The Royal Academy of Engineering developed its own Statement of Ethical Principles as a code of ethics that would apply to all engineers whatever their discipline. The Statement is in the same spirit as and consistent with the Universal Ethical Code, but focuses on issues specific to the engineering profession. The Statement, produced in collaboration with the UK Engineering Council, was disseminated amongst the engineering institutions and was met with a very positive response. The major engineering institutions have now pledged their support for the code and have accepted it as a set of guiding principles for their members. The Academy has also, along with the Engineering Professors' Council, produced a 'curriculum map' advising engineering departments on how to incorporate ethics teaching into the engineering degree.

Responsibility

It's about communicating results and intentions honestly and accurately, and understanding that your work or its outputs will have an impact on society in its broadest sense. Engaging scientists in a dialogue with those publics is just one of the key activities which the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills is promoting through initiatives like the Sciencewise programme.

Case Study: The Environment Agency

The Environment Agency was able to implement the Code following a restructuring of its Science Department in 2007. Internal consultation with the Science Management team, Science Managers, Legal, Procurement and HR Departments clarified that the Code was consistent with existing practices and Codes of Conduct. Staff were then briefed, and an intranet site set up to explain how the Code would impact staff in daily practice. The Agency is now working on the ways in which it can embed the code in an individual's objectives and personal development plans.

Government Office for Science

The GCSA (Government Chief Scientific Adviser) and Head of the Government Office for Science is responsible for:

- Providing scientific advice personally to the Prime Minister and members of Cabinet (in consultation with Departmental Chief Scientific Advisers when appropriate);
- Advising the Prime Minister and Cabinet on aspects of Government policy on science and technology;
- Ensuring and improving the quality and use of scientific evidence and advice in Government;
- Leading the science and engineering profession within the Civil Service.

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills will drive forward delivery of the Government's long-term vision to make Britain one of the best places in the world for science, research and innovation and to raise the level of education and skills at every level in our economy to give the UK the competitive edge. Science and innovation is a key part of the Department.

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Department for **Innovation, Universites** & **Skills**

Government Office for Science

Rigour
Respect
Responsibility

A Universal Ethical Code for Scientists

The Universal Ethical Code for Scientists

"Our social licence to operate as scientists needs to be founded on a continually renewed relationship of trust between scientists and society. The code has been developed in my Office to help us meet this challenge."

Sir David King, Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of the Government Office for Science

Rigour

Rigour, honesty and integrity

- Act with skill and care in all scientific work. Maintain up to date skills and assist their development in others.
- Take steps to prevent corrupt practices and professional misconduct. Declare conflicts of interest.
- Be alert to the ways in which research derives from and affects the work of other people, and respect the rights and reputations of others.

Respect

Respect for life, the law and the public good

- Ensure that your work is lawful and justified.
- Minimise and justify any adverse effect your work may have on people, animals and the natural environment.

Responsibility

Responsible communication: listening and informing

- Seek to discuss the issues that science raises for society. Listen to the aspirations and concerns of others.
- Do not knowingly mislead, or allow others to be misled, about scientific matters. Present and review scientific evidence, theory or interpretation honestly and accurately.

What is the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists?

The Universal Ethical Code for Scientists is a public statement of the values and responsibilities of scientists. By scientists we mean anyone whose work uses scientific methods, including social, natural, medical and veterinary sciences, engineering and mathematics.

The code has three main aims:

- to foster ethical research
- to encourage active reflection among scientists on the implications and impacts of their work
- to support communication between scientists and the public on complex and challenging issues.

Individuals and institutions are encouraged to adopt and promote these guidelines. It is meant to capture a small number of broad principles that are shared across disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

What it isn't!

This code is not intended to replace codes of conduct or ethics relating to specific professions or areas of research.

The code is not mandatory but scientists and institutions are encouraged to reflect on and debate how these guidelines may relate to their own work.

What Does it Really Mean?

Rigour

It's all about making sure you keep your own skills fresh, and encouraging others to do so, particularly if you are responsible for a team. It's about encouraging strict adherence to scientific method whatever the subject area, understanding how your results have been informed by the work of other scientists, and acknowledging those factors which have influenced you.

Case Study: Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA)

VLA were one of the five government agencies to pilot the code. There is now felt to be a clear perception that adherence to the Code's principles is very much part of normal business. It is recognised as an important component in the induction and training programme of new entrants. The commitment from staff at Director Level is reinforced to those new entrants face to face. All VLA scientists, including students and those who are visiting, are expected to abide by a set of documented principles which include advice on all three elements of the Code.

Respect

Put simply it means adherence to the Law and making sure that subjects of studies (whether people, animals, plants or the environment more widely) are treated as humanely as possible. In a social science context, that may mean ensuring confidentiality for subjects of study, while in other contexts it will involve a detailed balancing act between the need for progress and the need to minimise adverse impacts of your work.