

## **Institutional Ethics**

1.1. The University of Bristol was [founded in 1909](#) with the political and financial support of civic leaders and local philanthropists whose wealth came from a range of sources including [tobacco, chocolate, the slave-trade and landownership](#).

1.2. The University acknowledges this past (for example through the [Reparative Futures](#) programme) and today seeks to employ the privileges and resources it has inherited to fulfil its [charitable purposes](#) in a changing world. The rapidly-changing research landscape necessitates anchoring in stronger, clearer and more transparent governance processes.

1.3. In 2024-2026 we have made some major changes to this effect:

- new [restructured Research Ethics Committees](#) enabling greater consistency and agility;
- new, updated [Ethics of Research Policy](#);
- new, simpler, most accessible process for reporting [Research Misconduct](#);
- new framework and process for assessing activities and partnerships in [defence](#);
- new [Trusted Research Evaluation Framework](#) being rolled out.

1.4. Being accountable and transparent is essential to retaining the trust of our staff, students and stakeholders. When we strengthen our processes we are making it clear that our work is always in accordance with our [institutional values](#).

## **2. Principles**

2.1. In May 2026 University Research Committee adopted the following clear, institution-wide ethical principles to shape the University's operations across all research areas. These are:

- **Academic Freedom & Research Integrity**  
Research must remain independent, curiosity-driven, and aligned with evidence-based public good.
- **Social Responsibility & Ethical Research**  
Partnerships should align with our overarching principle of reducing

harm, protecting human rights, and avoiding any involvement in oppression. Our partners must be reputable, legally compliant, and free from sanctions or associations with hostile state actors or their military intelligence organizations.

- **Transparency & Accountability**

We expect open disclosure of funding sources, project goals, and partner affiliations.

- **Responsible Innovation**

We consider the societal impacts of our research, being aware of power imbalances within our partnerships, and employing our power with respect and empathy for our partners.

- **Reputational and Public Interest Stewardship**

Projects should withstand public scrutiny and align with [our institution's values](#) and stakeholder expectations.

- **Secure and Trusted Research**

We comply with UKRI's [Trusted Research](#) guidance to ensure partners are reputable, free from undue influence, and aligned with UK national interests.

- **Legal**

We will comply with UK (and where relevant global) legislation in relation to national security.

University Ethics of Research Committee oversees the adoption and implementation of these principles.

For any queries contact [research-ethics@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:research-ethics@bristol.ac.uk).

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