

Woolf Institute Ethical Policy

Context

The Woolf Institute studies how relations between Jews, Christians and Muslims can enhance the understanding of key concepts of public life: community and identity, mutual respect, personal responsibility, and social solidarity. The Institute seeks to strengthen the ethical framework that is needed for a vibrant political, economic and social life and works in the UK and overseas, including the Middle East, North Africa and the United States.

Ethics is therefore at the heart of the Institute's work. The Institute's policy is to ensure that it takes the same interest in and engagement with ethical matters affecting its own working practices.

Ethical Principles

The Institute's ethical principles are founded on its commitment to:

respect for the rights, safety and dignity of people of all faiths and none, including its own staff and students;

the fair treatment of all those with whom it deals, without discrimination;

independence of thought and its articulation for all those with whom it deals;

rigorous academic research which is guided and governed by the highest standards of academic practice without unfair intervention or external pressure as to the outcome;

the publication of research which meets the necessary academic standard;

the articulation of views and advice in the name of the Institute only when they are based on objective and verifiable evidence.

Application

These principles will guide the Institute in all its dealings, including with staff, students, the academic community, faith leaders, local communities, government, partner organisations, sponsors and donors.

In particular:

its appointment of staff and researchers will be based only on an objective analysis of the person's suitability for the job and not on any irrelevant factors, such as faith, race, gender, sexual orientation or personal connection;

it will seek to attract students whom it judges objectively are best qualified for the course and most likely to benefit themselves and those to whom they will return, without favouring those of means to the detriment of others better qualified;

it will deal even handedly and objectively with all participants in conferences, workshops and training sessions, favouring no particular faith or viewpoint but creating a climate of safety and respect, encouraging all to speak of their differences;

it will actively seek out and promote open and transparent partnership working with all those individuals and organisations who share the aims and objectives of the Institute where such a partnership is likely to be mutually beneficial, neither seeking to compromise the independence or ideals of the partner nor permitting the partner to compromise those of the Institute;

it will only seek and accept significant donations in cash or kind after exercising due diligence to satisfy itself that the donation is from an individual or organisation of standing whose ethos is consistent with that of the Institute and who will not by dint of its offer seek to compromise the objectivity of the Institute's work or dictate the outcome or otherwise undermine its independence;

it will return significant donations wherever practical and which have yet to be applied to the Institute's purposes if the donor is subsequently shown not to have acted in accordance with the ethical terms on which the Institute accepted that donation or if the donor seeks to compromise the objectivity or independence of the Institute;

it will sever ties with any donor or partner individual or organisation where there is evidence that the connection is contrary to the ethos of the Institute and risks damaging its reputation and independence.

Implementation

The Institute believes that its ethical policy will be fully shared and understood by the individuals and organisations with which it deals and will help to foster confidence that the Institute is a strong and ethical partner in helping to achieve common outcomes.

This policy statement was approved by the Board of Trustees in July 2015 following a review by a sub-committee of the Board. The members of the sub-committee were Professor Waqar Ahmad, Trixie Brenninkmeijer, Professor Martin Forward, and Martin Paisner CBE, supported by Dr Edward Kessler MBE. The Rt Hon Lord Harry Woolf was the advisor to the sub-committee. The subcommittee, chaired by Trixie Brenninkmeijer, will keep the operation of the policy under review and will be available to be consulted by the Institute's executive on particular ethical issues which may arise from time to time.

Woolf Institute,
Cambridge.

7 July 2015