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From the Policy Officer
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Response to the Council for Science and Technology document *Rigour, respect and responsibility: a universal ethical code for scientists*

Dear Dr Russell,

I am pleased to enclose the Academy of Medical Sciences' response to the Council of Science and Technology document *Rigour, respect and responsibility: a universal ethical code for scientists*.

This response was prepared in consultation with a number of Fellows of the Academy and is endorsed by the Academy's Officers.

The Academy of Medical Sciences broadly welcomes the introduction of a universal ethical code for scientists as proposed by the Council for Science and Technology. As the Council has noted, a number of institutions and professional bodies already have ethical frameworks in place, but these may be quite specific to the needs and activities of the particular institution. Therefore, the Academy agrees that it may be useful to have in place a more general, all-encompassing code that can stand alongside pre-existing ethical guidelines and provide guidance to scientific researchers from all disciplines. While the Academy recognises the need for brevity and simplicity, we are aware that some organisations might seek a fuller set of guidelines.

In response to the specific questions asked:

1. The Academy believes that the proposed code does have the potential to fulfil the aims of fostering ethical research, encouraging active reflection and supporting constructive communication. Such a code could be relevant to all sciences and would help to raise the profile of ethics in interdisciplinary research. Whilst the Academy would stress that almost all scientists already work to a similar code, it is important to increase awareness of ethics amongst researchers. The code may thus serve as a reminder to scientists of their responsibility to carry out all research with honesty and integrity. The Academy suggests that the wording of the code should include more reference to the positive role that scientific research can play, rather than focusing on more negative aspects. For example, the code could start with a reference to the fact that science produces huge benefits for society through the systematic, objective and rational application of observation and experiment.

2. The Academy has received mixed responses from a small survey of UK institutions about whether they would consider adopting this code. Overall, it appears that individual institutions are more in favour of introducing their own ethical guidelines, but the Academy feels that it may be useful to use this general code as a foundation that could easily be integrated into their own structures.

3. The Academy will consider supporting this ethical code in practise. This might include publicising it amongst the Fellowship and referring to it in our online and published materials, particularly those concerning Academic Careers.

Yours sincerely,

Aileen Aherne