

ALCOHOL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH COUNCIL

CODE OF BEST PRACTICE

Public Service Values

1. Council members will at all times:
 - observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to their stewardship of the Alcohol Education and Research Fund (the Fund) and management of the Council's business;
 - comply with all reasonable requests for information from any quarter;
 - be accountable for their stewardship of the Fund and the extent to which the objectives set out in the Licensing Alcohol Education and Research Act 1981(the 1981 Act) have been met; and
 - ensure that the Council's resources are used in the most efficient way by the selection, monitoring and scrutiny of all applications for grant using independent validation of performance wherever practical.

Role of the Chairman

2. The Chairman will ensure that all members of the Council, when taking up office are briefed fully on the terms of their appointment and on their duties and responsibilities. This will include giving them a copy of this Code.
3. The Chairman has particular responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership on matters such as:-
 - formulating the Council's strategy for discharging its statutory duties;
 - representing the views of the Council to the general public;
 - encouraging high standards of propriety, and promoting efficient and effective use of staff and other resources throughout the organisation;
 - providing an assessment of performance of individual Council members, on request, when they are being considered for reappointment to the Council; and
 - ensuring that all relevant equal opportunities criteria are observed.
4. The Chairman should ensure that the Council meets at regular intervals throughout the year; and that minutes of meetings accurately record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Council members.

Corporate responsibilities of Council members

5. Members of the Council have corporate responsibility for ensuring that the Council complies with the statutory duties set out in the 1981 Act. Other important responsibilities of Council members include the following:-
 - ensuring that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times; and
 - ensuring that the Council operates within the limits of its statutory authority.

Responsibilities of individual Council members

6. Individual Council members should also be aware of their wider responsibilities as members of the Council. These include the duty to comply at all times with this Code of Best Practice (or any agreed modification of it), and to act in good faith and in the best interest of the Council. They should not use information gained in the course of their service with the Council for personal gain, nor seek to use the opportunity of such service to promote their private interests. They should also disclose any gifts or hospitality received in the exercise of their duties as Council members.

7. If Council members act in accordance with the provisions of the 1981 Act then any liabilities they incur as trustees of the Fund can be met out of the Fund's resources; but if they act otherwise they may in breach of trust and be personally liable to make good any loss to the Fund. Since trustees must act jointly in administering a charity, they will also be responsible jointly to meet any liability incurred by them or on their behalf.
8. The Government has indicated that an individual member of the Council, or any Non-Departmental Public Body, acting honestly and in good faith, will not have to meet out of their own personal resources any personal civil liability which is incurred in the execution or purported execution of his board function, save where the person has acted recklessly.

Financial interests of Council members

9. The Chairman and other Council members are appointed in a personal unpaid capacity to further the objectives of the Council. They do not represent the interests of any institution or organisation to which they belong. If a member has a financial or professional interest in any item of business before the Council, it should be disclosed, and the member should withdraw while that item is being discussed.
10. For the avoidance of doubt members of the Council may submit applications for the award of a grant but in accordance with paragraph 9 above, they must withdraw while the application is being discussed. In addition the application for the grant must be made by the institution employing the member and the applicant institution must be responsible for receiving and dispersing the grant.
11. Council members are subject to the general principle of Charity and Trust Law that a trustee cannot be paid for their services, or benefit financially from their charity. The only exception to this rule is where the Council has received authorisation from the Charity Commission exceptionally to employ the services of a Council member for work that is necessary and expedient in the interests of the Fund.

Standing Orders & Conflict of Interest

12. One of the aims of Standing Orders is to deal with all conflicts of interest, including the actual or perceived conflicts relating to members with links to the alcohol industry. See Annex E for guidelines on relationships with industry.
13. The F&GP Committee benefits from the involvement of a member of the alcohol industry with experience of financial, employment and personnel issues. This member will usually chair the F&GP Committee.
14. The Research and P&O subcommittees consist of at least eight members.
15. Members with links to the alcohol industry are not appointed to the Research Committee.
16. Membership of all committees must be ratified by the full Council.
17. Subcommittees have delegated responsibility to make decisions with any conflicts being brought to the full Council
18. Subcommittee decisions must be ratified by the Chairman of the Council
19. The Council is quorate if seven or more members are present.
20. The Research and P&O subcommittees are quorate if five or more members of the committee are present.

Delegation

21. Council members serve on a part-time basis. Responsibility for the day to day management of Council business is delegated to the Director/Secretary and the Grants & Committees Manager, who are accountable to the Chairman. The specific duties of these two officers are set out in their job descriptions. The Director also has responsibility for the work of any other administrative staff.
22. The Council delegates the following areas of responsibility to three functional committees:
 - (a) The Research Committee is responsible for developing the Council's research policies, considering applications for research grants and for monitoring research projects.

- (b) The People & Organisations Committee is responsible for developing the Council's education policies, considering applications for research grants, for monitoring research projects and for administering the Studentship Scheme.
 - (c) The Finance and General Purposes Committee is responsible for overseeing the Council's financial and administrative affairs.
14. The terms of reference of the functional committees are set out in the Annex A.
 15. Members of these committees are appointed annually by the Council and one member is nominated as chairman in each case.

Financial Accountability

16. Members of the Council have a duty to ensure that funds for which they are responsible (which for this purpose should be taken to include gifts and legacies) are properly safeguarded. They must also ensure that at all times the Council conducts its operations as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible, with full regard to the provisions of the 1981 Act. Council members are also responsible for ensuring that the Council does not exceed its powers or functions as defined in the 1981 Act or through any other limitations on its authority to incur expenditure.
17. The Chairman, the Director, one Council Member and the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee are authorised to sign cheques. Two signatures are required on each cheque in excess of £500. In addition the Chairman is authorised to approve expenditure up to £5,000 between meetings, subject to reporting such expenditure to the following meeting.

Anti Fraud Policy

18. The policy adopted by the Council in February 2003 is attached at Annex B.

Annual Report and Accounts

19. In its stewardship of the funds for which it is responsible the Council must ensure that it includes a full statement of the use of such resources in its annual report and accounts. The annual report should provide a full description of the Council's activities and list the names of the current members of the Council and senior staff.

Freedom of Information Scheme

20. The scheme adopted by the Council in 2002 (and revised in 2005) is attached at Annex C.

The financial responsibilities of the Director

21. The Director/Secretary to the Council has the functions of an Accounting Officer, which have been identified as relevant to the circumstances of the Council. The Director has ultimate responsibility for keeping proper accounts and for the efficient and effective use of resources. The Grants & Committees Manager has responsibility for the preparation of payment of authorised grants and administrative expenses, and regular liaison with the external auditors.

The Council as employer

20. The Council seeks to be an equal opportunities employer and will ensure that no candidate or employee is treated less favourably on the grounds of age, disability, gender, ethnic origin, religion, nationality or sexuality.
21. The Council should ensure that it complies with all relevant employment legislation. In filling senior appointments, the Council should satisfy itself that an adequate field of qualified candidates is considered, and it should consider the merits of open competition.

Alcohol policy

22. The Council supports the concept of "Sensible Drinking" and actively strives to promote this concept in all its activities, in the conduct of its business, in relation to its employees and in respect of the Council's internal activities.

23. Employees of the Council are expected to comply with this policy at all times when engaged in the work of the Council.
24. The Council will support and provide appropriate assistance to any member of its staff who has a drink-related problem. This offer of assistance applies also to Council members.

Commencement

25. This Code replaces the one adopted by the Council on 1 November 2000 and will come into operation on 30 June 2005.

**ALCOHOL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH COUNCIL
TERMS OF REFERENCE OF FUNCTIONAL COMMITTEES**

RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

Members with links to the alcohol industry are not appointed to the Research Committee.

Research Policy

The Committee is responsible for developing policies to extend the range and enhance the quality of alcohol research.

The following approaches are within the remit of the research committee.

- Qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- Research (doing the right thing) and audit (doing the thing right).
- Single studies and systematic reviews.
- Group methods and single case methods.

Priorities and general principles

- Only applied research will be considered
- Prioritisation process, guided by:
 - Gaps in service: e.g. Social services interventions;
- Clustering: e.g. we have funded opportunistic motivational interviewing in A&E Departments so that important results can be replicated and extended

Research Grants

1. Committee has power to reject any proposals that it considers to be unmeritorious or do not meet the Council's criteria for research projects. In its exercise of this power the Committee will communicate its reasons to the applicant and report these cases to the next meeting of the Council.
2. The Committee is responsible for engaging in a dialogue with applicants whose applications the Committee considers to have potential for funding.
3. The Committee is responsible for monitoring the progress of research grants and for considering how the reports and conclusions might be disseminated.

Co-operation with the People and Organisations Committee

The Committee is required to liaise with the P & O Committee, especially in relation to grant applications where the Committee is likely to have an interest. In this regard:

- The Director will consult the Chairmen of the two committees in a case where there would appear to be a dual interest.
- To facilitate co-operation between the Committees the membership of the Research Committee shall include a member of the P & O Committee.

Reports to the Council

In addition to the reports required above in relation to the refusal of grant applications the Committee is required to submit regular reports to the Council on its activities.

PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONS COMMITTEE

A. *Primary aims are:* to develop people and build the capacity of people and organisations to deal with alcohol related issues.

B. *These will be achieved by:*

1. *Improving practice by developing knowledge skills and motivation:* One aim is to improve the alcohol-related practice of both generic and specialist alcohol workers. This includes alcohol courses as well as work placements and shadowing. Enabling autonomy and motivation in dealing with alcohol issues is a core objective. Professional development will be facilitated through training and mentoring. The funding of lectureships, PhDs and fees for taught courses will all be considered as ways of improving alcohol knowledge and relevant skills.
2. *Supporting with information and influencing change:* Dissemination is one important objective. This includes the dissemination of findings from AERC research funding but also from other work when deemed appropriate. Dissemination includes influencing change as well as providing information. Increasing public awareness and lifelong learning are key objectives.
3. *Promoting organisational development:* Working with other organisations to facilitate cultural change is another core aim. The development of people is difficult if the organisation to which they are attached is unsympathetic or unsupportive.

C. *Operational Guidelines*

Prioritise established and innovative ways of developing *alcohol-related skills and motivation*.

- Ensure that most AERC funded research projects have a specified “people development” component.
- Fund studentships with a strong alcohol component.
- Fund a limited number of PhD’s and introduce more rigour to the selection process.
- Explore the establishment of time-limited lectureships.
- Commission work that supports work-based learning through the provision of resources, seminars and training materials.

Disseminate the evidence base to professionals, practitioners, policy makers and the public.

- Ensure that all completed AERC projects develop a dissemination strategy.
- Develop dissemination strategies for other important findings.
- Promote Alcohol Insights for both of the above.

Promote *organisational development* with reference to alcohol-related knowledge and skills.

- Establish partnerships with other organisations to promote joint implementation of alcohol-related people development projects.
- Commission work that changes cultural attitudes towards alcohol within organisations.

Co-operation with Research Committee

The Committee is required to liaise with the Research Committee, especially in relation to grant applications where the Committee is likely to have an interest. To this end:

- The Director will consult with the Chairmen of the two committees in a case where there would appear to be a dual interest.
- To facilitate co-operation between the Committees the membership of the Education Committee shall include a member of the Research Committee.

Reports to the Council

In addition to the reports in relation to the refusal of grant applications the Committee is required to submit regular reports to the Council on its activities.

FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

General remit

The Committee is responsible for overseeing the financial and administrative affairs of the Council. The main functions of the Committee are to advise the Council and ensure that its agreed policies are implemented on the following areas:

Financial management

The Committee is responsible for:

- safeguarding council funds and ensuring propriety, efficiency and effectiveness in their use;
- overseeing the appointment of investment managers and ensuring that funds are invested effectively;
- ensuring that financial reports and accounts are accurate and adequate and provide a good basis for financial planning;
- ensuring that internal financial records and controls are adequate;
- overseeing the appointment and terms of reference of external auditors, ensuring that they deliver an effective service, and ensuring that their recommendations, when accepted, are implemented.

Preparation and monitoring of Council's budget.

The Committee will submit to the Council, for consideration at its first meeting in each year, a draft budget for its expenditure during the forthcoming financial year. Thereafter the Committee will monitor the expenditure and is authorised by the Council to vire between account sub-heads as may be necessary. The Committee is authorised to approve requests for additional administrative expenditure on amounts up to £5,000.

Personnel management

The Committee is responsible for advising on the appointment, remuneration and terms and conditions of service of the Director, Grants & Committees Manager and any other employees of the Council.

Supervision of Council awards

The Committee is responsible for overseeing the efficiency in which Council grants are administered and monitored, including the terms of any agreements or contracts the Council might establish with parties to an award.

Code of Best Practice

The Committee is responsible for monitoring the Council's compliance with this *Code of Best Practice*; its effectiveness and advising on any consequential changes that may be necessary.

Reports to the Council

The Committee will submit regular reports to the Council.

CRITERIA FOR JUDGING PROJECT PROPOSALS

1). Criteria for Assessing Research Grant Applications

Assessment of grant applications should consider the headings given below. The full list of criteria will not be relevant for all projects but can be seen as a checklist.

The overarching judgement to be made should be:

Is an important question being posed that can be answered by the research results?

Also obtaining ethical approval, where appropriate, is a priority

Relevance - Is the research:

- generalisable across other settings;
- capable of leading to better services or policy
- providing value for money;
- relevant and required at this time;
- capable of resolving uncertainty?

Researchability - Is the research:

- appropriate (quantitative or qualitative methodologies are acceptable);
- measurable in terms of both outcomes and processes of change;
- rigorous and unbiased; where relevant attention would be paid to design, sample size, statistical analysis, and assessment instruments.
- replicable, especially if a complex intervention is involved. The integrity of an intervention should be checked; e.g. by tape recorded sampling.
- capable of completion within the timescale; not over optimistic when taking account of resources and methods
- multidisciplinary - including involvement of managers and practitioners in the design of the proposed research, to encourage ownership
- A priority for users and have users been involved in the development of the proposal?

Resources - Does the research:

- provide expected benefits that exceed costs;
- develop R&D skills in the alcohol field;
- develop an R&D infrastructure in the alcohol field;
- provide an important basis for future R&D development?

Implementation - Is putting the research into practice likely to:

- be feasible;
- result in managers and professionals becoming committed to implementing best options as shown by research findings;
- be achieved in other settings?

Rating Scale for Applications

Score	Explanation
5	Highly relevant and likely to provide extremely useful data within the time period available and contribute to research and development in the alcohol field.
4	Relevant to current issues and will make a contribution to a debate while being capable of being achieved in the time available.
3	Relevant to current issues but the quality of results and potential usefulness restrict its potential impact.
2	Of some relevance but restricted in terms of its potential impact on current issues and R&D in the alcohol field.

- 1 Limited relevance and ability to make a contribution to R&D development in the alcohol field.

2). Criteria for Evaluating Proposals Involving Qualitative Research Methods

Outline of methods

- Are the methods chosen appropriate to the research questions? The focus of the study should lend itself to qualitative analysis
- *Sampling*: In this context a sample of participants or cases does not need to be representative, nor random, but a clear rationale is needed for the inclusion of some cases, or individuals, rather than others. Sample size can be justified on the basis of the aims of the study, the specific methodological approach and the claims the researchers wish to make about their findings.
- *Choice of data collection technique*: An explanation is required for why a particular method has been chosen to access data rather than another method, e.g.: why a semi-structured interview rather than a diary study.
- *Data collection and management*: How is data to be stored, managed and used? For example, will the researcher keep detailed notes of field visits? Will all interviews be transcribed? Will all the relevant information about the participants and/or the organisations be clearly specified?
- *Integrity of Interventions*: Interventions should be clearly described so that they could be replicated by other researchers; also the integrity of the interventions should be checked (e.g. by tape recorded sampling)

Data analysis

- *Description of analytic framework*: An analytic framework needs to be clearly outlined. In some cases there may be a pre-existing framework for data analysis. In this case the derivation of this framework should be explained. If there is no pre-existing framework then the researchers need to explain the rationale for the analysis strategy.
- *Auditability of analysis procedures and processes*: The processes and procedures for analysis should be detailed. A content analysis will look very different from a discourse analysis for example. The reader needs to be able to understand the processes or procedures or steps through which the data analysis evolved, that is the analysis trail should be auditable.
- *Derivation of analysis categories*: Adequate discussion needs to be provided of how themes, categories or concepts will be derived from the data or from the literature.
- *Sources of raw data*: Where more than one method of data collection will be used, authors should refer to the analysis process for each method and any subsequent integration of analysis from the different methods.
- *Use of transcript excerpts*: When planning to use quotes to highlight findings the basis for the selection of particular excerpts should be explained (e.g.: will they be representative or illustrative.) .
- *Confirmability*: In some qualitative studies, where appropriate, researchers may use reliability checks to see whether others would categorise the data in the same way. Are these checks being used?
- *Credibility*: In some qualitative studies researchers may feed back their interpretations of the data collected to research participants in order to gain their views on the researchers

interpretation. In these cases the proposal should outline how participants comments will be dealt with.

- *Alternative explanations:* Are mechanisms outlined through which the researcher will seek disconfirmatory evidence or alternative explanations for the results?
- *Replicability:* If the procedures outlined above are clearly described then the study should be replicable.
- *Utilization:* Hopefully the findings will be useful and applicable. The researchers should describe how the findings will make a difference.

**ALCOHOL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH COUNCIL
ANTI-FRAUD POLICY**

Introduction

The Alcohol Education and Research Council requires all staff and Council members at all times to act honestly and with integrity and to safeguard the charitable resources for which they are responsible. Fraud is an ever-present threat to these resources and hence must be a concern to all staff and Council members. The purpose of this statement is to set out your responsibilities with regard to the prevention of fraud.

AERC Policy

All cases of fraud, or attempted fraud, against the Council will be thoroughly and promptly investigated. Where appropriate, legal and/or disciplinary action will be taken.

Any fraudulent use of the Alcohol Education and Research Fund, whether by third parties or our own staff/Members, will not be tolerated and all reasonable measures will be taken to prevent fraud occurring. All staff/Members have a responsibility to safeguard charitable resources and any actual or attempted abuse of that trust will be investigated.

What Is Fraud?

No precise legal definition of fraud exists; many of the offences referred to as fraud are covered by the Theft Acts of 1968 and 1978. The term is used to describe such acts as deception, bribery, forgery, extortion, corruption, theft, conspiracy, embezzlement, misappropriation, false representation, concealment of material facts and collusion. For practical purposes fraud may be defined as the use of deception with the intention of obtaining an advantage, avoiding an obligation or causing loss to another party.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff and Council Members are responsible for:

- a) Acting with regularity and propriety in the use of official resources and in the handling and use of the Alcohol Education and Research fund whether they are involved with cash or payments or receipts. In the event of fraud being perpetrated by a member of staff or Council Member, this will be regarded as gross misconduct leading to dismissal.
- b) Developing and maintaining effective controls to prevent fraud.
- c) Taking appropriate legal and/or disciplinary action against perpetrators of fraud.
- d) Reporting details of any fraud or suspected fraud immediately to the Chairman of The Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- e) The Chairman of The Finance and General Purposes Committee will take responsibility for investigating any attempted or suspected fraud. He/she will inform the Chairman of the Alcohol Education and Research Council, and should at the earliest opportunity inform the Department of Health Sponsoring Division in accordance with the Management Statement/Financial Memorandum.

Fraud Response Plan

If you suspect fraud:

- a) Inform the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. In the event of the Accounting Officer being suspected, then the Chairman of the Alcohol Education and Research Council should be contacted. He/she should then take responsibility for investigating the alleged fraud.
- b) Any decision to involve the police will be taken by one of the above, and in the first instance Westminster Police Station, 202-206 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1, should be contacted (tel. No: 020 7730 1212). The Department of Health Sponsoring Division should be notified of the facts in the first instance, in accordance with the relevant section of the MS/FM. The DoH should also be approached early for advice about how to secure any evidence relating to the fraud. (The DoH may wish its own Internal Audit Unit to carry out the investigation). Generally it is advisable that the suspected perpetrator should not be allowed access into the office or to any of the IT equipment before the investigation begins.
- c) If fraud has been perpetrated by someone outside of the AERC, the most senior executive at that organisation should be written to notifying them of the fraud, explaining the amounts involved and seeking recovery of lost monies. It may be advisable to seek legal advice over the content of the letter and to consider the action which might be necessary if litigation to recover the debt seems likely.
- d) If losses occur as a result of a fraud by a member of staff or Council, the perpetrator should firstly be notified of the size of the loss caused by the fraud, as soon as this is known, and be invited to repay or recompense for this loss. Generally, it is advisable to obtain the agreement of the person concerned before recovery of the losses begins. In some cases, however, agreement will not be necessary, e.g. in the event of an overpayment of salary. If the individual does not agree then it may be necessary to consider legal proceedings to recover the losses.

Ethics And Conduct Of Staff And Council Members

All staff and Council members owe a duty of loyal service to the Alcohol Education and Research Council. As stewards of charitable funds, staff and Alcohol Education and Research Council members must have, and been seen to have, high standards of honest, propriety and integrity in the exercise of their duties. Staff and Council members should not accept gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party, which might be seen to compromise their integrity. In addition all staff and Council members will only be reimbursed for those expenses, which they have wholly and necessarily incurred in pursuing the legitimate business and affairs of the Alcohol Education and Research Council. Staff and Council members should also ensure that such expenses are reasonable in the context of the activities that they are undertaking on behalf of the Alcohol Education and Research Council.

Freedom of Information

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

THE AERC PUBLICATION SCHEME

Established in accordance with Section 19 of the Act

Part 1: Introduction

Under Section 19 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the AERC has undertaken to adopt and maintain a scheme for the publication of AERC information. In this context, "publication" simply means, "to make publicly available". The Information Commissioner has approved our scheme. We shall publish information in accordance with it and shall monitor and review its operation. An electronic version is on the AERC website at www.aerc.org.uk.

Purpose and aims of the AERC

The Alcohol Education and Research Fund is constituted under the provisions of section 6 of the Licensing (Alcohol Education and Research) Act 1981 and is a registered charity No 284748.

Within the machinery of Government the Secretary of State for Health is the sponsoring authority for the Council. Prior to January 2007 the Secretary of State for Culture was the sponsoring authority and prior to May 2001 the Home Secretary was the sponsoring authority. The Council's day to day contact with the sponsoring authority is through the Department of Health.

Section 7 of the 1981 Act provides that the Fund is to be vested in and administered by the Council and applied for such charitable purposes within the United Kingdom as the Council may from time to time determine from among the following:

- (a) The education of the public as to the causes and effects of, and means of preventing, excessive consumption of alcohol;
- (b) The care and rehabilitation of persons convicted of offences involving drunkenness;
- (c) The provision of treatment and other help for persons dependent on alcohol or given to excessive consumption of alcohol; and
- (d) Research into matters relevant to any of the purposes mentioned in paragraphs (a) to (c), and the publication of the results of such research.

The Act provides additionally that, in determining how the Fund is to be applied for the purposes of (b) and (c) the Council *shall* give priority to support for novel schemes for achieving those purposes.

The Council has defined its current objectives in the following *Statement of Purpose*:

The Council seeks to increase awareness of alcohol issues, to facilitate a reduction in alcohol-related harm in society and to encourage best practice. Our aim is to make a positive difference to the ways in which society understands and uses alcohol.

Within this overall purpose the Council aims to:

- generate and disseminate research-based evidence to inform and influence policy and practice; this includes research on innovative educational initiatives;
- support appropriate innovative educational and people development initiatives and
- through its studentship scheme to contribute towards the formation of the next generation of academic researchers; and assist workers in the alcohol treatment field to provide a better service for their clients by enabling them to obtain appropriate qualifications.

AERC Organisation

Members of the Council are appointed by the Secretary of State and serve for three years after which period they may be re-appointed for a further period of three years. The Council meets three times a year, but there are functional committees that meet in advance of Council meetings. The Finance and General Purposes Committee monitors the Council's expenditure and considers financial management issues. The People & Organisations and Research Committees consider applications for grants and policy in their subject areas. They have delegated authority to refuse applications but decisions to award grants are subject to endorsement by the Council. The Dissemination Committee was established in 1998 to review and develop the Council's policy in the dissemination of the findings of research sponsored by the Council. The Committee completed its remit in February 2002.

Grant making policy

The Council provides four kinds of grants:

- Research grants are awarded to carry out research into the relevant purposes specified in the Council's statutory objectives.
- Developing People & Organisations project grants are made for a wide range of activities, mostly concerned with new approaches towards community and prevention initiatives.
- Small grants are provided to develop innovative approaches to alcohol related problems.
- Studentship grants are awarded through an annual competition. These are in two categories: (a) for students who wish to undertake research in the alcohol field leading normally to a PhD or MSc; and (b) for those who are working in the alcohol field and who wish to acquire appropriate professional qualifications by following a taught course. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage alcohol research and to improve the quality of service provided for those with drinking problems.

The Council is well known within the alcohol field and, with the exception of the studentship scheme it does not need to advertise for applications. Full information about the grant application procedures is available on the Council's website www.aerc.org.uk.

Purpose and structure of the Publication Scheme

This Publication Scheme has been developed under the requirements of Freedom of Information Act 2000 and has been agreed by the Information Commissioner. Its aim is to provide easy access to the information which the AERC publishes and has agreed to make available under the provisions of the Code of Practice on access to government information, Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act.

The scheme specifies:

- the classes of information we publish or intend to publish
- the manner in which information in each class is or is intended to be published; and
- whether the material is or is intended to be available free of charge or on payment.

The AERC has always sought to be as open as possible, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information (the Code), copies of which are available free of charge from:

Lord Chancellor's Department
Freedom of Information and Data Protection Division
Room 151
Selborne House
London SW1 6QW.

www.lcd.gov.uk

On 1 January 2005 the general right of access under Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act was introduced and the Act replaces the Code.

Sometimes, information may not be provided and the reasons will be given in each instance. Documents may be edited where, in the view of the Council, particular information should not be disclosed because of confidentiality, unwarranted invasion of privacy, commercial sensitivity or other specified grounds, including the public interest.

The purpose of this Publication Scheme is to make information available before you need to ask for it.

Responsibility for the AERC Publication Scheme

The Chairman of AERC has overall responsibility for the AERC Publication Scheme and can be contacted at:

Alcohol Education & Research Council
Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre
28 Broadway
London SW1H 9JX
Tel: 020 7340 9502

The person responsible for maintaining the Publication Scheme on a daily basis is:

The Accounting Officer
Alcohol Education & Research Council
Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre
28 Broadway
London SW1H 9JX

Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI Act) received Royal Assent on 30 November 2000. It creates a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions from that right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The AERC is a Non Departmental Public Body under the Act and is therefore bound by its provisions. The general right of access was introduced in January 2005.

The Lord Chancellor's Department leads on policy related to the Act and will publish Codes of Practice for public authorities on compliance and records management. The Information Commissioner has a duty to promote best practice under the Act and to ensure compliance. The Commissioner's address is:

The Office of the Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5 AF

www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk

Subject only to certain prescribed conditions and the exemptions set out in Sections 21 to 44 in Part II of the FOI Act, the public will have a statutory right:

- to be told whether the AERC holds information of the description specified in the request; and if so;
- to have that information disclosed.

The AERC is committed to the principles of openness embodied in the Act and will release information to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the public interest. The AERC will also comply with the Codes of Practice to be issued by the Lord Chancellor under Sections 45 and 46 of the Act.

Obtaining documents and information under the Publication Scheme

The AERC routinely places large volumes of information on its website. It is all freely available for downloading, if you have Internet access. Otherwise, copies will be provided on request. Other information published in accordance with this Scheme, but not available electronically, will also be sent on request.

You can request published information by e-mailing the AERC at andrea.tilouche@aecr.org.uk or by telephoning 020 7340 9502 or by writing to:

Alcohol Education & Research Council
Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre
28 Broadway
London SW1H 9JX

Charges

We indicate in the individual Publication Scheme Information Classes where a charge may be levied.

The following could apply to information you intend to use for private research/study:

- Free of charge on the website (i.e. there is no charge by us, but the user will have to meet any charges by their Internet service provider, personal printing costs, etc.) For those without Internet access, a single printout as on the website will be available by post from the above contact address. However, requests for multiple print outs or for archived copies of documents which are no longer available on the web, may attract a charge for the cost of retrieval, photocopying, postage etc. We will let you know this at the time of your request. Any charge will be payable in advance.
- Free of charge to view, but a charge may be made for photocopies. We will let you know of any charge at the time of your request and this will be payable in advance.

Publications

The AERC publishes much information on the project work it funds. In addition our key requirement on grant holders is the production of a detailed technical report, which is expected to be published in relevant scientific or professional journals. *Alcohol Insights* are posted on the AERC website.

The Council also publishes an Annual Report, which summarises the activities of the AERC and identifies current grant holders. Copies may be obtained free of charge from the website.

Complaints

If you have a complaint about the operation of this Publication Scheme or how the AERC has dealt with a request for information, please write to:

The Chairman
Alcohol Education & Research Council
Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre
28 Broadway
London SW1H 9JX

Review of the Publication Scheme

The Publication Scheme will be reviewed annually. In addition, we shall routinely monitor its operation.

Tell us what you think

This Publication Scheme is intended to help you find AERC information easily and quickly and to improve the flow of information into the public domain. We want to improve our service to you and we would, therefore, welcome any comment or suggestions that you may have about how we could improve the scheme. We are committed to reviewing the scheme and your feedback will help. Please write to:

The Accounting Officer
Alcohol Education & Research Council
Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre
28 Broadway
London SW1H 9JX

Part 2: Information Classes

This publication scheme aims to make as much AERC information as possible readily accessible to the public, on a continuous basis. We are committed to releasing more material in the future.

The AERC will make available information within the information classes described below. Information falling into the classes will be retained in line with the AERC's retention and disposal schedules, which comply with Public Record Office guidance.

The classes are grouped into broad categories as follows:

- Annual Reports and Accounts
- Minutes of meetings
- Accountability and relationship to government
- Plans and strategy
- Organisational structure
- Data related to the establishment and continued operation of AERC
- Grants and grant holders
- Project reports and dissemination
- Keynote speeches
- Media/press notices
- Seminar papers

Within each broad category there are identifiable classes of information that the Council publishes or intends to publish. Under each class can be found:

- A brief description of the information available within the class
The format in which the information is made available (for example, website, by e-mail, or by post). The website address is given but not the address of the page within the website as this can change. Use the menus, search function, and subject navigation on the website to find the relevant document. Unless specifically stated, the address for all postal requests is, Alcohol Education & Research Council, Room 178, Queen Anne Business Centre, 28 Broadway, London SW1H 9JX.
- Whether the class contains chargeable information (indicated by "£"). Prices available on request.
- Some classes also include additional information under "Notes"

Annual Reports and Accounts

Class:	Annual Reports and Accounts
Description:	Annual Audited Report of AERC Financial Affairs from 2002
Format available:	Hard copy available from AERC
Chargeable information:	-
Notes:	Prior year reports available from AERC

Minutes of Meetings

Class:	Minutes of Meetings
Description:	Minutes of all Council and sub-committee meetings from 2002

Format available: Hard copy available from AERC
Chargeable information: £
Notes: Prior year reports also available from AERC

Accountability and Relationship to Government

Class: Accountability and Relationship to Government
Description: The Licensing (Alcohol Education & Research) Act 1981
Format available: Hard copy available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office
Chargeable information: A charge will be made by HMSO when printed versions are requested

Plans And Strategy

Class: AERC Strategic Plans
Description: Various documents providing an outline of the strategic direction and development of AERC activities. Summarised outline objectives.
Format available: AERC websites: www.aerc.org.uk. Annual published reports
Chargeable information: -

Organisational Structure

Class: AERC organisational structure
Description: Various documents outlining the Council's current structure including details of delegated sub-committee roles and responsibilities currently in place.
Format available: Hard copy available from AERC
Chargeable information: -

Data Related to the Establishment and Continued Operation of AERC

Class: Data Related to the Establishment and Continued Operation of AERC
Description: Minutes of meetings of the Council and its sub-committees and various documents relating to the day to day affairs of the Council
Format available: Hard copy available from AERC
Chargeable information: -
Notes: -

Grants and Grant Holders

Class: Grants and Grant Holders

Description: Various documents which outline and list all current funded projects and their related grant holders. Details of past funded projects may also be available.

Format available: Hard copy available from AERC and also at AERC website

Chargeable information: -

Notes: -

Project Reports and Dissemination

Class: Alcohol Insights

Description: Publication of summary project outcomes and results

Format available: Hard copy available from AERC and also at AERC website

Chargeable information: £

Notes: Many reports from earlier years are also available

Class: Grant holders dissemination report

Description: Publication by project grant holder of detailed project study, findings and outcomes

Format available: Hard copy available from AERC

Chargeable information: -

Media/Press Notices

Class: Media/Press Notices

Description: Media/Press Notices in relation to AERC activities

Format available: Prepared notices and other media information supplied on written request to AERC

Chargeable information: -

Seminar Papers

Class:	Seminar Papers
Description:	Papers presented at latest bi-annual AERC conference by current and past grant holders
Format available:	Presentation materials available in a variety of media including video, compact disc, computer software and written reports
Chargeable information:	£

AERC guidelines on interaction with the alcohol industry

1. The membership of the AERC is deliberately very broad, covering a wide range of vested interests. Members are linked to professional disciplines such as psychology and the medical profession, to the Alcohol Alliance and to the alcohol industry. Nevertheless one of the missions of the Council is to maintain its independence. It is not biased in its views by links to any profession or organisation including the alcohol industry, the government, the Department of Health, the Home office or lobbying bodies of any kind.
2. The Council is always aware that there is the possibility of a conflict of interest when liaising with the alcohol industry. Although many members of the industry are keen to reduce alcohol related harm there is, nevertheless, a possible conflict. A reduction in alcohol related harms will involve a reduction in per capita consumption and therefore in the alcohol industry's profits. The research & public health communities place this possible conflict towards the top of their concerns when liaison with the alcohol industry is involved.
3. The Council has considered constructing detailed guidelines to cover every situation where there may be vested interests involved but instead the Council will simply be vigilant and deal with conflicts as they arise. By being open and alert to possible conflicts they can be avoided.
4. Any cooperation between the alcohol industry or any other commercial body and the AERC, although transparent, should not be used for PR purposes for the industry in their marketing material or in their communications with policy makers.
5. In developing relationships with the alcohol industry or other organisations, the AERC's reputation and values must be ensured. Scientific validity must not be compromised.
6. No commercial enterprise shall be authorized to use the AERC's name or logo for the promotion, advertisement or marketing of its products or services
7. The AERC will accept a reasonable level of hospitality from other organisations, including the alcohol industry and trade associations only if the hospitality is attached to a meeting where specific topics are discussed rather than hospitality which can be considered to be a gift.
8. The Council is particularly vigilant regarding decisions about research funding. All applications are independently peer reviewed and alcohol industry representatives are not members of the Research Committee