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THE MASON INSTITUTE

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1. The Mason Institute

The J Kenyon Mason Institute for Medicine, Life Sciences and Law, recently established as a university-wide institute based in the School of Law, University of Edinburgh, is dedicated to conducting innovative world class research, and raising the quality, quantity, and awareness of the research being undertaken, individually and in cooperation with other domestic, European, and international partners at the University of Edinburgh. It will be a fount of evidence-based research and policy advice and a nexus for international collaboration and exchange, drawing on and pulling together a diverse collection of existing networks and forging new ones. The institute will be based in the School of Law however it will operate across several different schools with international collaborations.

2. It's All in the Name

The Mason Institute is named after Professor JK Mason, who was Regius Professor of Forensic Medicine in the University from 1973-1985 and, since then, has been an extremely valued Honorary Fellow in the School of Law. He has written numerous articles and has also published seminal works, including *Forensic Medicine for Lawyers*, *The Pathology of Trauma*, *Mason & McCall Smith's Law and Medical Ethics*, and *The Troubled Pregnancy*. Prof. Mason's work and commitment to Edinburgh perfectly embody the ideals to which the Mason Institute aspires. The new institute reflects the interdisciplinary interests of Ken and others at the University, and is borne from successes with the AHRC-funded SCRIPT Centre for studies in intellectual property and technology. It is the next logical step to establish a centre of excellence that is genuinely University-wide, internationally-oriented, and which emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary working at the interface of medicine, science, social sciences and law.

3. Plan of Action

The mission of the Mason Institute is to foster both proactive and responsive research of the highest calibre which is genuinely interdisciplinary and which generates profound real-world impacts. In pursuing this objective, the Mason Institute has 3 core work streams -

- (1) Research and Policy
- (2) Training and Support (including leading edge person and online education programmes)
- (3) Teaching and Capacity including courses in medical jurisprudence and ethics, medical research law and ethics, public health law and ethics, and related topics like intellectual property

To date, the Mason Institute has held several orienting workshops - in May and July 2011 and in February 2012. Each event proved most fruitful in refining the Mason Institute Mission Statement, strategic thinking on the development of the Institute and in developing links between members for collaborative projects. In future, the Mason

Institute will host a variety of different events, including: The Annual Lecture Series, The Ken Mason Research Seminar Series, The Mason Institute Postgraduate Seminar Series and The Bi-Annual Mason Institute Conference.

4. Research Activities

The Mason Institute has been awarded £27,000 from the School of Law to facilitate its start-up. From that, a Research and Development Officer has been appointed. This person will assist in the formal launches of the institute as well as facilitate project development and dissemination of work. Projects already underway within the Mason Institute include the following:

- The Graphic & Novel Project: This is a networking and research project funded by the Challenge Investment Fund which will produce an illustrated novel exploring ELSI issues in biomedical research.
- The Banking (On) The Brain Project: This is an AHRC Exploratory Awards funded project looking at regulatory challenges in brain banking and how different disciplines perceive the brain.
- Implanted Smart Technologies Project: This is an interdisciplinary project funded by the School of Law and Innogen which examines the regulation of smart implants, including in vivo biosensors.

5. Upcoming Events

As part of the inaugural activities of the Mason Institute, there will be a public lecture on '*Conversations about Consent and Research*', David Townend, Heather Widdows and Graeme Laurie will take part in a panel, in Edinburgh at 6pm on May 28th. The Mason Institute Launch will have its official launch later this year.

6. Membership

The Mason Institute has Members drawn from across the University of Edinburgh. Associates are drawn from outside Edinburgh and indeed outside academia. Students, particularly doctoral candidates, are also very welcome, and will form an important component of the core community. Current members already possess a wide breadth of experience and connections in diverse disciplines and the Institute is open to involvement from interested parties who share the spirit of the initiative and whose work could contribute to its goals.

Contact

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