Ethics Committee

Minutes

Tuesday 3 October 2023: 9.30 am – 11 am
Online via MS Teams

Members in attendance:

- **Chair / Convener:** Alexandra Birch-Mayne / Reader in Natural Language Processing
- Uta Hinrichs / Reader in Data Visualisation
- Kia Nazarpour / Personal Chair of Digital Health
- Bjorn Ross / Lecturer in Computational Social Science

Apologies:

- Arno Onken / Lecturer in Data Science for Life Sciences

In attendance:

- **Secretary:** Katarina Scaife / Research Data Officer

Decisions

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<td>DECISION 01: Committee agreed that the September minutes were a fair representation of the meeting.</td>
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<td>2. 1.2.3 – 23.1: Process for an application to be resubmitted with changes</td>
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<td>DECISION 01: The spring workshop is not needed as the November workshop should be sufficient.</td>
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<td>DECISION 01: The committee agreed that it was important to communicate that ethics is on the marking schedule and that there is an ethics application deadline to markers and students.</td>
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<td>6. 7 – 23.1: AOB</td>
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## Actions

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| 1.        | 1.1–23.1: Approval of previous minutes<br>
ACTION 01: KS to publish the minutes. | Katarina Scaife            |
| 2.        | 1.2.1–23.1: Study plan advice Qualtrics form<br>
ACTION 01: BR to send the DPO the Level One application | Bjorn Ross                 |
| 3.        | 1.2.4–23.1: Ethics committee membership<br>
ACTION 01: ABM to follow-up with Joy before the next meeting about getting a new member for the committee. | Alexandra Birch-Mayne      |
| 4.        | 2–23.1: AI interaction with hate speech on social media project<br>
ACTION 01: UH to arrange a meeting with Lotte Segal to follow-up on the previous discussion. ABM and BR to also attend. | Uta Hinrichs, Alexandra Birch-Mayne, Bjorn Ross |
| 5.        | 5.1–23.1: Ethics workshops – Autumn workshop update<br>
ACTION 01: UH will follow up with Atoosa Kasirzadeh about their availability. | Uta Hinrichs              |
| 6.        | 6–23.1: UG4 Projects – meeting with UG4 project coordinator<br>
ACTION 01: ABM to draft two paragraphs one outlining ethics information for students and the other for markers and then send to the committee for input. | Alexandra Birch-Mayne      |
| 7.        | 7–23.1: AOB<br>
ACTION 01: KS to create a list for the committee with contact information for all the ethics committees/officers across the University. | Katarina Scaife            |

## Minutes of Meeting

### 1.1–23.1: Approval of previous minutes
Committee were invited to give feedback on the minutes for the September meeting.

**DECISION 01:** Committee agreed that the September minutes were a fair representation of the meeting.

**ACTION 01:** KS to publish the minutes.

### 1.2–23.1: Matters arising

#### 1.2.1–23.1: Study plan advice Qualtrics form
The committee discussed the status of the form in conjunction with the Level one application Participant Information Sheet (PIS) sub-template (agenda item 1.2.2). BR reported that the Level one application sub-template form needs to be sent to the Data Protection Officer (DPO). This is to ensure that the DPO is satisfied with simplified legalese used -- as the PIS is intended for research not using personal or sensitive data.

**ACTION 01:** BR to send the DPO the Level One application
1.2.2 – 23.1: Level one applications PIS sub-template
Discussed under Item 1.2.1 – 23.1 above.

1.2.3 – 23.1: Process for an application to be resubmitted with changes
In the two previous meetings, there was discussion about the process for applications required to resubmit with proposed changes (where the initial application would need to be rejected due to the significant amount of revision needed). This was initially raised by UH in July, who was sent guidance on the administrative process for rejecting an application in RT by Victoria Lindstrom. In September, Victoria Lindstrom also sent this guidance to ABM.

The conversation shifted to the problems with processing applications with multiple amendments. Of note, the email chain of applications in RT become long and sometimes difficult to follow. Alternatives were discussed. For example: a new application could be made for changes and remain separate to the original. However, the pitfalls of this approach would be that this would create more applications in RT and it would be challenging to follow those applications and keep them linked together.

DECISION 01: Committee decided to continue with the current approach of using the same email thread for applications with multiple changes.

NO ACTION – ITEM RESOLVED

1.2.4 – 23.1: Ethics committee membership
ABM contacted Joy Candlish (Director of Professional Services) about the Ethics Committee needing a new member after Frank Keller had to step back as a member. ABM has not yet heard back.

ACTION 01: ABM to follow-up with Joy before the next meeting about getting a new member for the committee.

1.2.5 – 23.1: SharePoint and committee servicing updates
KS reported the before leaving the committee (as Officer), Victoria Lindstrom had completed their action to create a SharePoint site for the committee as an intended central source for resources and documents for committee use.

NO ACTION – ITEM RESOLVED

2 – 23.1: AI interaction with hate speech on social media project
ABM and UH reported that they met with Lotte Segal, Lead of the School of Social and Political Science Ethics Panel (SPS Ethics) about the issues surrounding reviewing and approving ethics for projects where research takes place on social media and consent cannot be obtained. It was agreed at the meeting that this is a challenging issue for all ethics panels. However, SPS Ethics has a different approach providing consultation rather than approving or disapproving PhD and Staff applications. The committee deliberated if the approach would be applicable at Informatics, but concluded it was not feasible. It was proposed that a working group could be set up to develop an ethics questionnaire tailored towards social media studies. UH suggested that they arrange a follow-up meeting with Lotte to discuss. In addition, it was suggested that a separate workflow could be developed for social media research ethics applications.

DECISION 01: The committee agreed it would be helpful to explore creating a “second stream” for ethics applications of this nature.

ACTION 01: UH to arrange a meeting with Lotte Segal to follow-up on the previous discussion. ABM and BR to also attend.
3 – 23.1: White paper
ABM reported on the meeting with Helen Hastie, the Head of School. At the meeting, ABM presented the challenges the Ethics Committee face in processing ethics applications that research Large Language Models (LLMs) and raised the proposed white paper intended to be an in-depth exploration of the ethics issues relating to LLMs. Helen Hastie was supportive of the research, but ABM explained to the committee that the proposal will need to be brought to the Strategy Committee.

ABM also told the committee that she also raised the issue of missing student applications. Helen expressed concern and gave an example of the ethics process at another university where all students are instructed to submit an ethics application. The Committee deliberated if this was a feasible and applicable approach for the Committee to adopt. They concluded it would not be feasible due to the administrative burden and doing so may diminish students’ understanding of why some proposed research projects require an ethics review as part of the research process.

4 – 23.1: Application Review – standing item
No items to discuss.

5 – 23.1: Ethics workshops – standing item

5.1 – 23.1: Ethics workshops – Autumn workshop update
UH has sent the potential November dates to Atoosa Kasirzadeh but has not yet received a reply.
ACTION 01: UH will follow up with Atoosa Kasirzadeh about their availability.

5.2 – 23.1: Ethics workshops – Spring workshop
The committee discussed the necessity of having two workshops in a year and determined that the spring workshop would be held too late to be of benefit for final-year undergraduate students.
DECISION 01: The spring workshop is not needed as the November workshop should be sufficient.

6 – 23.1: UG4 Projects – meeting with UG4 project coordinator
ABM reported to the committee what was discussed in the meeting with Hiroshi Shimodaira, UG4 project coordinator. The outcome of that meeting was the implementation of a December checkpoint to remind students to do their ethics applications. It was agreed that the ethics deadline should be the end of the year.

The committee had a broader conversation on where the responsibility is placed for ensuring ethics procedures are followed with both students and their supervisors being highlighted. Strategies for verifying ethics processes were discussed and suggestions were made about what would be feasible for markers to look for. It was agreed that while markers could not police this, they could (provided they have ethics awareness) flag potential ethics issues – such as missing PIS and consent forms in appendices. Communications to supervisors, markers, and students were also discussed in terms of content in relation to expectations.

DECISION 01: The committee agreed that it was important to communicate that ethics is on the marking schedule and that there is an ethics application deadline to markers and students.

ACTION 01: ABM to draft two paragraphs one outlining ethics information for students and the other for markers and then send to the committee for input.
7 – 23.1: AOB

KN raised an upcoming ethics application that he will submit for the committee to review. Elements of the application was noted to be beyond the committee’s remit of expertise. Therefore, it was suggested that it another ethics committee is contacted for advice. However, it was pointed out that the committee do not have the contact information for all the other committees across the school.

DECISION 01: The committee agreed that it would be beneficial to contact other ethics panels in the University for advice and that a list of the contact information for other committees would be helpful for reference.

ACTION 01: KS to create a list for the committee with contact information for all the ethics committees/officers across the University.

Next meeting:

- 7 November 2023: 9.30 – 11 am