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**School of Computer Science**

**Research Ethics Checklist**

**for Taught Module Activities   
(UG, PGT and PGR students)**

* This checklist must be completed for every research project that involves human participants, use of personal data and/or biological material, b*efore* potential participants are approached to take part in any research.
* Any significant change in the design or implementation of the research should be notified to [cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk](mailto:cs-ethicsadmin@cs.nott.ac.uk) and may require a new application for ethics approval.
* It is the applicant’s responsibility to follow the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of the study. **This includes providing appropriate information sheets, consent forms and recruitment materials, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.**
* Completion of this form confirms that you have read and understood the guidelines on the [CS Intranet](http://workspace.nottingham.ac.uk/display/CompSci/Research+Ethics+Guidelines+for+Academic+Staff%2C+Researchers+and+Students) regarding:
  + what is defined as *personal data;*
  + what is required for *valid consent;*
  + the key requirements of the Data Protection Act (2018), which includes GDPR
* The supervisor is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement when completing this form.
* **Sections I to V should be completed by the student undertaking the study, in discussion with their supervisor.**
* The **student** is responsible for submitting the completed form according to the instructions provided by the module convenor (normally on Moodle).

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| **SECTION I: Applicant Details** | |
| 1. Applicant’s name | **Students on modules COMP3004 and COMP4105 Designing Intelligent Agents** |
| 2. UoN Email address | **This is an UG/PGT coursework and the convenor is applying on behalf of all students as a standard activity; contact address is the convenor: Colin.Johnson@nottingham.ac.uk** |
| 3. Status | **This is an UG/PGT coursework and the convenor is applying on behalf of all students as a standard activity across the module.** |
| 4. Student ID | **This is an UG/PGT coursework with a standard activity across the module, and each student on the module will have their own student ID** |
| 5. Degree name | **BSc/MSci/MSc programmes in the School of Computer Science** |
| 5. Module name/number or MA/MSc/MPhil course and department | **COMP3004/COMP4105** |
| 6. Supervisor’s name | **Colin Johnson** |
| 7. Supervisor’s email address | **Colin.Johnson@nottingham.ac.uk** |

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| **SECTION II: Project Details** | |
| 1. Project title | **COMP3004/COMP4105 Coursework** |
| 2. Proposed start date and latest end date of study | **5th June 2021 – 30th June 2024** |
| 3. Date and version of this submission | **1st June 2021** |
| 4. Type of submission? | **Revised submission (after first reviewer comments)** |
| 5. Application ID (if known[[1]](#footnote-1)) |  |
| 6. Description of Project, including aims/objectives and procedures.  **Students on the modules COMP3004 and COMP4105—Designing Intelligent Agents—may be carrying out a short online user study as part of their coursework for this module. This will consist in either asking users to carry out a task using the software that they have written for this coursework and comment upon that, or else to examine the outputs from the software. The aim of this will be for the students on the module to receive feedback from potential users of the software or its outputs to inform the evaluation part of their coursework report.**  **Participants would be recruited opportunistically. They would typically consist of fellow students on the course, and friends and adult family members of the student. Invitations to take part in the study will either be by voice/messaging, or by an email such as the following: “You are invited to take part in an online study as part of my coursework for the Designing Intelligent Agents module at the University of Nottingham. You will be asked to [fill in brief details of task] and [fill in brief details of how feedback will be given].”**  **Here are a number of typical examples of what users in the study might do:**   * **To evaluate computer-generated poems or robotic artworks** * **To interact with a computer-generated video game or board game and comment on the results** * **To interact with a chatbot and comment on the interaction** * **To interact with a computer simulation of buying/selling behaviour and comment on the interaction** * **To view videos of simulated mobile robots and analyse their behaviour**   **The comments will be provided through:**   * **a questionnaire using Microsoft Forms from the student’s University account,** * **and/or free-text submission to the student’s University email address or using Microsoft Forms from the student’s University account.** * **and/or an interview conducted using Microsoft Teams from the student’s University account.** | |
| **Students on the project must ensure that:**   * **personal data about the users is not recorded or used** * **users are adults, are able to consent to participation, and not from a vulnerable population** * **this is an online study not a face-to-face one** * **no monetary or equivalent compensation is given for participation** * **users are able to fully consent to the study, have been asked for their consent to participate, and a copy of the information sheet given to them** * **users are informed of their right to withdraw up to the point where their data has been included in the coursework report** * **the task should not involve material that is likely to cause distress, embarrassment, trauma or offence, or involve sensitive topics** * **data is destroyed once the coursework is submitted** * **if users are required to install software on their own devices, instructions about hardware and software requirements, installation, and uninstallation should be given.**   **This is confirmed by students by filling out a form on the module Moodle page confirming the above statements.**  **A copy of this document and the accompanying documentation will be placed on the Moodle page for the module, and students should include in their coursework report the following statement: “I have followed the guidance given in the module about research ethics in the user study in my coursework for this module.”.**  **If students require participants to install any software on their own machines, they should make it clear that this is at the participants risk and that they should remove the software after participating, and should give details of any requirements including:**   * **hardware specifications** * **OS versions** * **storage** * **network speed** * **browser versions** * **plug-ins** * **known issues with the software** * **details of any accounts that need to be created** * **any privacy policies that participants will be required to accept by using the software** | |

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| 7. Will data from the project potentially support an academic publication? *(Not just a dissertation or assessment.)* | | | **No** |
| 8. Will personal data (including photos, video or audio) or biological materials be collected, recorded or used?  **No**  *.* | | | |
| ***What data*** *(or materials) will be collected or used* | **Reports from a sample of users about their experience with software or its outputs in the form of answers to questionnaires, free-text comments, or responses to interviews.** | | |
| *What if any* ***constraints*** *apply to use of this data (or materials)* | **User’s consent** | | |
| ***How*** *will this data (or materials) be:* | | | |
| *collected or obtained* | **Via questionnaires, free-text comments, or responses to interviews** | | |
| *processed before analysis* | **Anonymised if needed** | | |
| *stored and secured* | **The data will be stored on student’s personal devices or on their university IT account storage, and deleted after the project has been submitted** | | |
| *formatted* | **Text files, word-processing documents, spreadsheets.** | | |
| *organised* | **Multiple user responses will be combined into a single document** | | |
| *analysed* | **Through statistical summaries or thematic analyses** | | |
| *reported in publications, including reports and dissertations* | **An anonymised summary will be presented in student coursework reports** | | |
| ***How*** *and* ***when*** *(if ever) will this data (or materials) be:* | | | |
| *reused* | **No** | | |
| *archived, indexed, published or otherwise made available to others* | **No** | | |
| *deleted or destroyed* | **Deleted after coursework submission** | | |
| *If human subjects are involved then at what point(s) can they* ***withdraw*** *and what will happen in each case?*  **They can withdraw up to the point at which the coursework report has been written. If they ask to withdraw then their data will be removed from the student’s study and deleted.** | | | |
| *What will happen to this data if/when you* ***leave*** *the University?*  **It will be deleted before the students leave the University** | | | |
| 9. Will personal data or commercially sensitive (i.e. “restricted”) data be collected or stored?  **No**  *If Yes, please give details below for the University data asset inventory.* | | | |
| ***Title*** *of data asset* | | **n/a** | |
| ***What*** *personal/sensitive information (fields) does it contain?* | | **n/a** | |
| *Data* ***owner*** | | **n/a** | |
| *Data* ***stewards*** *(and responsibilities)* | | **n/a** | |
| *Data* ***users*** | | **n/a** | |
| *Data* ***location*** | | **n/a** | |

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| **SECTION III: Research Ethics Checklist (Part 1)** | |
| **Please answer all questions:** | **Yes/No** |
| 1. Does the study involve participants who are unable to give informed consent (e.g., children, people with learning disabilities or dementia[[2]](#footnote-2), prisoners, your own students)? | **No** |
| 1. Will the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable[[3]](#footnote-3)? | **No** |
| 1. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g., covert observation of people in non-public places)? | **No** |
| 1. Will it be necessary for participants to be kept in ignorance, misled or deceived at any point in the study (e.g., if revealing the full aims of the project during the consent process would undermine the research)? | **No** |
| 1. Will the study involve the discussion of sensitive topics (e.g., sexual activity, drug use)? | **No** |
| 1. Will participants be asked to discuss anything or partake in any activity that they may find embarrassing or traumatic? | **No** |
| 1. Is it likely that the study will cause offence to participants for reasons of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or culture? | **No** |
| 1. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g., food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? | **No** |
| 1. Will body fluids or biological material samples be obtained from participants? (e.g., blood, tissue etc) | **No** |
| 1. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study? | **No** |
| 1. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life? | **No** |
| 1. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing for each participant? | **No** |
| 1. Will financial inducement (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? | **No** |
| 1. Is this medical or clinical research on human participants?[[4]](#footnote-4) | **No** |
| 1. Will the study involve the recruitment of patients, staff, tissue sample, records or other data through the NHS or involve NHS sites and other property?[[5]](#footnote-5) | **No** |
| 1. Will the study involve the use of animals?[[6]](#footnote-6) | **No** |

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| **SECTION III: Research Ethics Checklist (Part 2)** | |
| **Please answer all questions:** | **Yes/No/NA** |
| 1. For research conducted in public, non-governmental and private organisations and institutions (such as schools, charities, companies and offices), will approval be gained in advance from the appropriate authorities? | **NA** |
| 1. If the research uses human participants, personal data or the use of biological material, will explicit consent be gained? | **Yes** |
| 1. Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving explanation? | **Yes** |
| 1. If data is being collected, will this data be anonymised before publication or sharing? | **Yes** |
| 1. Will participants be assured of the confidentiality of any data? | **Yes** |
| 1. Will all data be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act? | **NA** |
| 1. Will participants be informed about who will have access to the data? | **Yes** |
| 1. If quotations from participants will be used, will participants be asked for consent? | **Yes** |
| 1. If audio-visual media (voice recording, video, photographs etc) will be used, will participants be asked for consent? | **Yes** |
| 1. If digital media (e.g. computer records, http traffic, location logs etc) will be used, will participants be asked for consent? | **Yes** |
| 1. If the research involves contact with children, will appropriate safeguards be in place (e.g. supervision, DBS checks if required)? | **NA** |
| 1. If research data itself is to be published, shared or reused (e.g. alongside a publication or in an archive) will participants be asked for consent? | **NA** |

* If you have answered ‘No’ to all questions in SECTION III Part 1 and ‘Yes’ to all relevant questions in SECTION III Part 2 the project is deemed to involve **minimal risk** - go to the signature page.
* If you have answered ‘Yes’ to any of the questions in Part 1 or ‘No’ to any of the questions in Part 2 the project is deemed to involve **more than minimal risk**. Please explain in SECTION IV why this is necessary and how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised.

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| **SECTION IV: If the project involves more than minimal risk, please explain why this is necessary and how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised** |
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**RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST – SIGNATURE PAGE**

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| **SECTION V: Applicant Declaration** | | |
| **Please confirm each of the following statements:** | | **Yes/No** |
| The project is deemed to involve **minimal risk** as defined in SECTION III | | **Yes** |
| I confirm that I have read the University of Nottingham Code of Research Conduct and Research Ethics | | **Yes** |
| I confirm that I have read the guidance documents listed on page 1 | | **Yes** |
| I confirm that the information provided in this application is correct | | **Yes** |
| I confirm that I have included all of the associated documents\* with this application | | **Yes** |
| Signature of applicant\*\* |  | |
| Date | 1st June 2021 | |

*\* All applications for projects involving human participants (or their tissue) must be accompanied by an information sheet, privacy notice, consent form and recruitment materials (e.g. posters, flyers, text for emails) where relevant.*

*\*\* if this you are submitting this form electronically to Moodle or from your University email then type your full name*

* The **student** is responsible for submitting the completed form (and associated documents\*) once they have agreed it with their supervisor, according to the instructions provided by the module convenor (normally on Moodle).
* The **supervisor** is responsible for checking and confirming that the application is complete and appropriate, and either referring it to the CS Research Ethics Committee, or approving it themselves (see approval policy below). This should be recorded according to the instructions provided by the module convenor (normally on Moodle).

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| **SECTION VI: Supervisor Approval Policy** | |
| **By approving an application, the supervisor is confirming that:** | |
| The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate for this research project | **Yes** |
| The procedures for recruiting participants and obtaining informed consent are appropriate | **Yes** |
| The collection and handling of data is appropriate and in accordance with the Data Protection Act | **NA** |
| **The supervisor must specify which of the following applies:** | |
| The supervisor has received training in research ethics and the project involves minimal risk (as assessed in section III) and therefore this project **DOES NOT REQUIRE** consideration by the Research Ethics Committee | **Yes** |
| (or if applicable) This project conforms to a standard model associated with this module/course that has already been approved the Research Ethics Committee and therefore **DOES NOT REQUIRE** further consideration by the Research Ethics Committee  *Approved model application (ID or title/date):* |  |
| (Otherwise) This project **DOES REQUIRE** consideration by the Research Ethics Committee |  |

1. Normally each ethics application will be allocated an ID by the University *after* its initial submission [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. If participants are adults who lack the mental capacity to give informed consent then you must obtain approval from an “appropriate body” approved by the Secretary of State (instead of this committee). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. “who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation” (Department of Health (2000): *No Secrets: guidance on protecting vulnerable adults in care)* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. If Yes then you must obtain approval from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences REC (instead of this committee). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. If Yes then you must obtain NHS REC and R&D approvals from the relevant Trusts (instead of this committee). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For work with animals always seek advice from the University’s Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB). If the animal(s) are vertebrates or cephalopods then you must obtain approval from AWERB (instead of this committee). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)