

COMPSCI4038 Professional Skills and Issues

1 About

This handbook states the aims and expected learning outcomes of the Professional Skills & Issues (PSI) course. It provides administrative details about where information on the course can be found and the people involved in delivering the course. It gives a detailed schedule of all the activities planned for PSI, including the sessions at which attendance is mandatory. It gives a summary of all the coursework assignments, including their deadlines. It has two appendices that offer advice on group work and information gathering.

2 Motivation

This course is about developing **skills** and understanding **issues** that are important for IT professionals. It is also about ensuring our graduates have professional accreditation.

2.1 Skills

Professional skills we will look at include

- information gathering
- argumentation
- decision making
- reviewing
- writing

2.2 Issues

Professional issues we will look at include

- Crime, computer misuse, cybersecurity and privacy
- Ethical values and approaches
- Online safety, Free speech and internet misuse
- Professional ethics, licences and copyright
- Data protection and personal data
- Human rights and freedom of information

2.3 Accreditation

Why include PSI in the curriculum?

Our professional bodies (BCS and IET) insist that IT professionals should be familiar with professional, social, ethical, and legal issues in IT.

Our mainstream programmes are accredited by BCS and IET, on condition that the curriculum covers professional skills and issues.

Accredited programmes:

- BSc Computing Science
- BSc Software Engineering
- BSc/Beng/MEng Electronic & Software Engineering

3 Course aims and Intended Learning Outcomes

Graduates in Computing Science, Software Engineering, and related disciplines need to understand the social, ethical, legal, and professional as well as technical issues inherent in the widespread deployment of IT. They need to develop the ability to ask serious questions about the social impact of IT and to evaluate proposed answers to those questions. They need to know the laws and professional codes of conduct relevant to the IT industry (e.g., intellectual data protection, privacy, freedom of information, computer and Internet misuse, and professional responsibilities).

3.1 Course Aims

This course aims to:

- Stimulate thinking about the social and ethical implications of the widespread and sustainable use of IT;
- Develop students' awareness of the laws and professional codes of conduct governing the IT industry;
- Expose students to IT industry working practices, including the need for continuing professional development;
- Develop information gathering skills;
- Encourage students to adopt principled, reasoned stances on important issues in the topic area;
- Develop students' verbal and written argumentation skills.

3.2 Intended Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Identify the principal social, ethical, legal, and professional issues in information technology (IT);
- Explain the laws and codes of conduct relevant to the IT industry, and relate them to examples of IT in practice;
- Use analytical tools to break down complex ethical issues in IT;
- Develop and present arguments on social, ethical, legal, and professional issues in IT;
- Constructively criticise the arguments of others.

4. Administration

The course coordinators are **Peggy Gregory** and **Waqar Nabi** (contact details on course Moodle). There will also be additional material delivered by **Scott Ramsay**, the Deputy Head of Student Learning Development (Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics). **Aulia Ariani** is the learning and teaching administrator support for the course.

5 Course delivery

The course is delivered using a mixture of face-to-face teaching, asynchronous content that students are expected to utilise to prepare in advance of teaching sessions and to tackle assessments.

The course comprises of ten topics, one for each week

Wk	Date	Topic	Assessment
1	30/09	Doing the right thing: ethical, legal and social issues for IT practice	
2	07/10	Academic writing: critical thinking and making an argument	release essay spec
3	14/10	Values & Virtue: Ethics in action	
4	21/10	Ethical Decision Making + Critical reflection and learning seminar	
5	28/10	Crime and Cybersecurity: CMA, security & privacy	submit draft 30/10
6	04/11	Risk & Responsibility: Online Safety, freedom of speech & defamation	
7	11/11	Professionalism in Practice: Professional codes of conduct & EDI	release peer-r 13/11
8	18/11	Data & Decisions: DPA, GDPR and personal data	submit essay 20/11
9	25/11	Society & Surveillance: Human rights, surveillance & social issues	
10	02/12	IPR: Copyright, patents, confidentiality & licences + exam practice	exam revision
			exam

For each of the topics, students are expected to:

- *Attend the lecture for the module*
There is a one-hour lecture for each topic.
- *Attend the seminar for the module*
There is a one-hour seminar for each topic.
- *Read and review the lecture and seminar notes for the topic.*
The lecture and tutorial sheets are available on Moodle.
- *Read the extra reading*
Extra reading and video/audio material is available that helps you to further understand the legislation and other relevant concepts
- *Engage and consider content from the topic reading list.*
The reading list contains various articles and artefacts relevant to the topics. Students are expected to meaningfully engage with these in order to make an informed contribution to seminars and to prepare for the exam

6 Assessment

There are two pieces of assessment

1. Individual essay 60%
2. Written online exam 40%

6.1 Individual essay

Students are required to submit a draft and final individual essay for the course, as well as peer-review three student essays. Specific information on the assessment can be located in the individual essay assessment specification.

6.2 Exam

The exam will be held during the December Examination Diet. It will be 1 hour long and consist of scenario-based questions from which you will be asked to point out issues of legal, ethical and social importance. This is a closed-book examination with no crib sheet.