Week 2 **Tutorial**

Ethics in Industry

Ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do. *Potter Stewart (20th Century US Judge)*

Definitions

Morality (noun) principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behavior.

Ethics (noun) otherwise known as "moral philosophy", the branch of knowledge which studies moral principles from the perspective of reason.

Ethical Code an agreed set of moral principles adopted by an organisation to inform the decisions and govern the actions of its members.

Talking Points

- Where do ethical principles come from?
- What are the benefits of ethical practice?
- Why do organisations adopt ethical codes?

Doing the ethics technique

In groups, choose at one of the cases below and complete the application of Doing the Ethics Technique.

> **Case 1**
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> Jeremy works with an international non-profit organisation, SolarSolver, who won a tender to develop a portable solar panel kit for rural villages in China. The initial estimate for the kit was $600,000.The final price was over $1 million. The organisation provided a number of excuses / reasons for the excessive costs, including over-ambitious expectations; a relatively immature understanding of solar technologies; changes in the scope of the project; no allowance made for in-country set-up support during the project; and no allowance for the tendering process. A spokesman stated that the department did not have "adequate development skills at the outset of the process…".
>
> *Adapted from Case Study (c) Australian Computer Society 2004*

Case 2

SDX Alliance is a large company that sells computers, computer components, and software. Ralph is hired as an entry-level software engineer at SDX Alliance. His first project was to assist in writing the code for SDX Alliance's new hard disc controller. He had previously worked on a similar system interning at a start-up and had written a code which greatly enhanced the performance of their product. Ralph quietly re-uses this same code in the SDX Alliance product, and does not think to tell anyone that he has used the code from his last job. His manager is thrilled with the speed improvements this code brings to the product.

Before the product is released, it has to undergo a four-month long quality assurance process review. During the review of the product, it was found the code which Ralph developed had been copyrighted by the startup he had previously worked for. Even though Ralph had developed the code, his previous company still owned the intellectual property rights to it.

When his manager informed Ralph of the problem, Ralph admits he did not realize he had made a mistake because he was not familiar with copyright laws. Ralph then goes on to explain that the start-up he used to work for is now out of business and is unsure if SDX Alliance would be able to get in contact with the owner of the copyright. If SDX Alliance can't use Ralph's code, then it will have to rewrite the entire code of the product, delaying its release by many months.

Source: Santa Clara University. (2017). Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Retrieved from https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/more/engineering-ethics/engineering-ethics-cases/solar-falsifier/

Case 3

Brad is a production engineer at a bicycle company. Part of his job includes inspecting broken bikes and drafting the design plans for their repair.

One day, Brad receives instructions from his supervisor to repair a bike whose brake cables had snapped. When Brad inspects the bike, he notices the cables had snapped because they were made from a low-quality material. He suspects that this bike had been custom designed, and that the customer simply did not know what materials would be best suited for the brake cables. Therefore, when Brad drafts his design plans for the repair of the bike, he incorporates a more durable material for the cables.

When Brad goes to repair the bike, he finds out the customer had specifically requested that the bike be repaired, but no aesthetic changes should be made to the bike. Brad's design for the bike will change the look of the bike, but it will also make the bike more durable. When Brad goes to his manager and asks him what to do, his manager tells him that "the customer is always right" and he should repair the bike as the customer requested.

Brad knows he could repair the bike according to the customer's wishes, but if he does, the bike will break down again in a few months, perhaps dangerously. However, if he implements his design improvements, he risks going against his manager and the wishes of the customer.

Source: Santa Clara University. (2017). Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. Retrieved from https://www.scu.edu/ethics/focus-areas/more/engineering-ethics/engineering-ethics-cases/is-the-customer-always-right/