

# Ethical disclaimer

*This tool helps you set the ethical terms at the start of your project. Use your imagination to think of unethical situations and discuss what you'll take responsibility for as designers.*

## PROCESS

- 1
- Describe the current situation of your design context.
- 2
- List all the people/companies/institutions that have an interest in, or are affected by your design. Both direct stakeholders such as users and your client and indirect such as maintenance.
- 3
- Write down your intentions. Be specific in terms of users, context and purpose. The more explicit, the easier you can discuss them with stakeholders throughout the project.
- 4
- Imagine the context with your design in it. (If you don't know yet what you're designing, think of ways to change the current situation.) Think of situations with your design which might be unethical. Think from the perspective of the different stakeholders. How will they use/contribute to/gain from/be harmed by your design? Use post-its to speed things up.
- 5
- Discuss for which of the unethical situations you will take responsibility by moving them down to the left or right section of the template. Substantiate your choices.

*Note: the ethical disclaimer is a living document. As the design develops and becomes more concrete, so will the potential unethical situations. Therefore it is important to update the disclaimer at project milestones and discuss changes with all stakeholders.*

## SPECS

- Suggested Time**  
45 - 60 minutes
- Materials needed**  
This template, post-its, pens
- Participants**  
Design team, stakeholders if possible
- Process phase**  
Framing, envisioning, validating

### 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION IS...

Group brainstorming often suffers from unequal participation, dominar louder voices, and poor visibility of quieter contributors’ ideas. Traditior sticky-note methods capture content but not participation patterns, an digital tools that attempt to solve this often separate participants from tangible and collaborative experience.

### 2. THE STAKEHOLDERS ARE...

- Direct Stakeholders: research participants, students, designers
- Indirect stakeholders: course staff, IT support stuff, future users

### 4. UNETHICAL SITUATIONS WITH OUR DESIGN...

*What dark, wrong or weird situations can you come up with? What would be really wrong?*  
*What happens when it is used over a longer period of time?*  
*What if it is used by the 'wrong' people? Or shared by different people?*  
*What if it is used in a different context? Or for a different purpose? Or combined with other technology?*  
*Who can access it? What happens if people hack it?*

- Images or recordings used without consent.
- Data stored insecurely or shared externally.
- Visualizations misrepresenting idea importance.
- Exclusion of colour-blind or neurodiverse participants.
- Misuse of system for surveillance or productivity tracking.
- Overstimulation causing distraction or discomfort.

### 5. WE TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR...

*Which situations fall within the ethical scope of the project? Why?*

- Ensuring informed consent and privacy protection.
- Designing accessible visual features (colour + shape).
- Preventing bias or misrepresentation in visuals.
- Secure data management and anonymization.
- Creating psychologically safe user testing environments.

### 3. OUR DESIGN INTENTIONS ARE...

*What do you want to change in the current situation? Why?*

Our design aim is to create an augmented system that captures sticky notes in real-time through a camera, groups them into clusters, and visualises these as flower-like patterns on a screen. This helps participants quickly identify shared themes and encourages a more engaging, inclusive discussion. By blending digital feedback with hands-on collaboration, the system strengthens group awareness and supports equal participation. Rather than ranking ideas, it highlights relationships and contribution density.

### 5. WE DO NOT TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR...

*Which situations are outside the ethical scope of the project? Why? Which might be someone else's responsibility?*

- Misuse of the system outside intended educational or collaborative contexts.
- Unauthorized modification of the prototype for surveillance or managerial monitoring.
- Long-term use beyond our testing phase where institutional data policies differ.