

PROJECT

H/2024/0982

Algorithmic Debt Interviews Study

In Progress

Human Research Ethics Application

Medium Risk

All Australian National University researchers (staff or students) who intend on conducting research involving the collection of data from human participants need to apply for ANU Human Ethics approval before starting their data collection.

If this is the first time applying for Human Ethics approval at ANU, please review the Human Ethics Website for information on the process and how to get started. Link: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/research-ethics-integrity-compliance/getting-human-research-ethics-approval/before-you-begin>

Templates for the ANU Participant Information Sheet, Consent Forms, Confidentiality Agreement and Media Release Form that you may need to upload with the application can be found on this page. Link: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/research-ethics-integrity-compliance/getting-human-research-ethics-approval/participant-information-sheet-consent>

Change tracking against version 1.0. Click the ↺ button to change target.

Introduction

Q1.0 Before completing this application, acknowledge that:

Acknowledge and Continue

Project Overview

Q1.1 What is the Project Title (as presented in the [Project Description/Protocol](#))?*

Algorithm Debt in Machine and Deep Learning Systems

Q1.2 Provide a summary of the research project in non-technical language*

The aim of this research is to understand Algorithm Debt (AD) from the perspective of Machine/Deep Learning (ML/DL) practitioners. We aim to uncover the causes, effects, and mitigation strategies for AD from ML/DL developers' viewpoints. AD is a new type of Technical Debt (TD) prevalent across multiple domains, resulting from the implementation of an algorithm or logic, and is characterised by its negative impact on the system such as lack of scalability, as the system evolves. TD refers to design decisions made during software development that can accumulate over time and impede future changes. ML/DL systems are those that incorporate ML/DL models or algorithms alongside non-ML components.

To achieve our aim, we will interview and distribute questionnaires to various groups of ML/DL practitioners.

This research will contribute to the current understanding of AD in ML/DL software. The findings will be consolidated into a theoretical framework of AD, guiding future research.

Q1.3 Which category/ies of the research best describes the project?*

461202: Empirical Software Engineering

Q1.4 In what environment/s will the research be conducted?*

- ☐ Clinics(s)
- ☐ Community centre(s)
- ☐ Cultural/religious organisation(s)
- ☐ Hospital(s)
- ☒ Online
- ☐ Private residence(s)
- ☒ Professional organisation(s)
- ☐ Public place(s)
- ☐ Research institute(s)
- ☐ School system(s)
- ☒ University(ies)
- ☒ Workplace(s)
- ☐ Other

Q1.5 What organisation/entity has overall responsibility for this project?*

The Australian National University, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics, specifically the ANU School of Computing, has overall responsibility for this project.

Q1.6 Describe how this research project is currently, or will be, funded.*

This research project is funded as part of a PhD scholarship. The funding is provided by the Australian National University (ANU) through the ANU PhD scholarship within the ANU Research School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics.

☒ As soon as ethics and any other relevant approvals have been provided.

~~7 Month~~ 4 Year s

Project Team

Project Team Details

Q1.9 List the members of your research team.

Full Name: Mr.Emmanuel Iko-OjoSimon

Q1.9.1 Title

Mr.

Q1.9.2 First Name*

Emmanuel Iko-Ojo

Q1.9.3 Family Name*

Simon

Q1.9.4 Preferred email address*

emmanuel.simon@anu.edu.au

Q1.9.5 Is this person the contact person for this application?*

True

Q1.9.5.1 Contact Email Address*

emmanuel.simon@anu.edu.au

Q1.9.5.2 Contact Phone Number*

0416687089

Q1.9.5.3 Contact Mailing Address*

All materials are to be submitted electronically and a contact mailing address is not required. Please provide email address instead

6/8 Rankeen Place, Lakeview Gardens

Q1.9.6 Is this person a student on this project?*

Supervisors are responsible for advising the student if ethics approval is likely to be required, what ethical considerations may arise in the student's research project, and how these may be addressed. In particular, a student and supervisor must come to an agreement about the scope, research questions, design and methods of the research

The ANU [student research ethics checklist](#) provides guidance on the basic steps that need to be taken by the student and their supervisor prior to an ethics application being submitted –Link: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fservices.anu.edu.au%2Ffiles%2Fguidance%2FANU%2520Ethics%2520Student%2520Checklist%25202019%2520-links%2520updated.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=false&dov=1>

For more information about student applications, see [Student and Supervisor responsibilities in research ethics](#). LINK: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/human-ethics-resources-training-and-support/student-and-supervisor>

Please note: The ANU HREC will not review high risk applications submitted by Undergraduate/Honours students given the highly variable timeframe for review and associated risks involving vulnerable populations.

True

Q1.9.6.1 Describe the supervisory arrangements, support and training.*

For this project, the student has 4 our supervisors: Dr Chirath, Dr Fatemeh, Prof. Alex, and Prof. Hanna.

Dr. Chirath Hettiarachchi is the primary supervisor of the student and is based in The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics. Dr. Chirath Hettiarachchi will be overseeing the overall progress of the research project, providing day-to-day guidance, and ensuring the research is conducted in an ethical manner. The primary supervisor will have regular meetings with the student to discuss research progress, address any issues, and provide feedback on the research activities and documentation.

Dr. Fatemeh is an assistant professor at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Fatemeh will offer additional expertise and support, particularly in developing the methodology and identifying potential participants. Additionally, she will contribute her insights to the analysis of results after data collection and ensure that the results are presented accurately and professionally. Dr. Fatemeh will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work. Prof. Alex Potanin is a Professor at the Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics and will provide expertise and support in the development of the methodology and identification of potential participants. He will contribute to the analysis of results and ensure that the results are presented accurately and professionally. Prof. Potanin will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work. Prof. Hanna Suominen is the chair of the supervisory panel and is a professor at The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics, ANU College of Health and Medicine, School of Medicine and Psychology, and the University of Turku, Faculty of Technology, Department of Computing. Prof. Hanna oversees the supervisory team, ensuring that the student receives consistent and coordinated support. She also ensures that the research adheres to the university's ethical standards and guidelines by offering professional guidance. The supervisory chair will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work.

Q1.9.6.2 Identify the student's educational program.*

Doctorate

Q1.9.7 Institutional affiliation and position*

Institution: The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing, and Cybernetics

Position: PhD Student

I am a second-year PhD student at The Australian National University within the School of Computing, in the College of Engineering, Computing, and Cybernetics. My research focuses on characterising Algorithm Debt in Machine and Deep Learning systems.

Q1.9.8 Staff ID (optional)

u7585159

Q1.9.9 ORCID Identifier (optional)

0000-0002-8494-6885

Q1.9.10 Position on the research project*

PI

Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?*

For ANU purposes, the Chief Investigator needs to sign on behalf of the research team, all other members are not required to sign individually

False

Q1.9.12 Describe the research activities this person will be responsible for*

Iko-Ojo will be responsible for participant recruitment, ensuring that potential ML/DL practitioners are identified and invited to take part in the study. He will also obtain informed consent from all participants before they commence their involvement. Additionally, he will collect the data from participants by conducting interviews and administering surveys. Subsequently he will analyse this data and also document the results.

Q1.9.13 Describe the person's expertise relevant to the research activity.*

Iko-Ojo has previously undertaken a survey by administering questionnaires to school children, demonstrating his ability to manage participant recruitment and data collection. More recently, he participated in a survey by administering questionnaires to developers to evaluate a tool proposed for documentation debt, which highlights his competence in engaging with diverse participant groups. He has performed several data analyses in the past, making him familiar with the tools and techniques necessary for effective data analysis. To support this project, he has acquired NVivo from the ANU IT helpdesk to aid in the qualitative data analysis.

Full Name: DrChirath Hettiarachchi

Q1.9.1 Title

Dr

Q1.9.2 First Name*

Chirath

Q1.9.3 Family Name*

Hettiarachchi

Q1.9.4 Preferred email address*

Chirath.Hettiarachchi@anu.edu.au

Q1.9.5 Is this person the contact person for this application?*

False

Q1.9.6 Is this person a student on this project?*

Supervisors are responsible for advising the student if ethics approval is likely to be required, what ethical considerations may arise in the student's research project, and how these may be addressed. In particular, a student and supervisor must come to an agreement about the scope, research questions, design and methods of the research

The ANU [student research ethics checklist](#) provides guidance on the basic steps that need to be taken by the student and their supervisor prior to an ethics application being submitted -Link: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fservices.anu.edu.au%2Ffiles%2Fguidance%2FANU%2520Ethics%2520Student%2520Checklist%25202019%2520-links%2520updated.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=false&dov=1>

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False

Q1.9.7 Institutional affiliation and position*

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Chirath Hettiarachchi
Position: Supervisor
Institution: The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics

Q1.9.8 Staff ID (optional)

Q1.9.9 ORCID Identifier (optional)

Q1.9.10 Position on the research project*

Other

Q1.9.10.1 Name of Position*

Primary Supervisor

Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?*

For ANU purposes, the Chief Investigator needs to sign on behalf of the research team, all other members are not required to sign individually

False

Q1.9.12 Describe the research activities this person will be responsible for*

Dr. Chirath Hettiarachchi is the primary supervisor and is responsible for directly overseeing the overall progress of the research project, providing day-to-day guidance, and ensuring the research is conducted in an ethical manner. The primary supervisor will have regular meetings with the student to discuss research progress, address any issues, and provide feedback on the research activities, data analysis, and documentation.

Q1.9.13 Describe the person's expertise relevant to the research activity.*

Dr. Chirath is a research fellow, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise that makes him well-suited for his role in this research project. He has the capacity to supervise this project based on his prior experiences as a PhD, ensuring that all ethical protocols are strictly followed. His extensive experience in research writing equips him with the ability to provide valuable feedback on the data analysis and the documentation.

Full Name: DrFatemehFard

Q1.9.1 Title

Dr

Q1.9.2 First Name*

Fatemeh

Q1.9.3 Family Name*

Fard

Q1.9.4 Preferred email address*

fatemeh.fard@ubc.ca

Q1.9.5 Is this person the contact person for this application?*

False

Q1.9.6 Is this person a student on this project?*

Supervisors are responsible for advising the student if ethics approval is likely to be required, what ethical considerations may arise in the student's research project, and how these may be addressed. In particular, a student and supervisor must come to an agreement about the scope, research questions, design and methods of the research

The ANU [student research ethics checklist](https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fservices.anu.edu.au%2Ffiles%2Fguidance%2FANU%2520Ethics%2520Student%2520Checklist%25202019%2520-links%2520updated.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=false&dov=1) provides guidance on the basic steps that need to be taken by the student and their supervisor prior to an ethics application being submitted -Link: <https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fservices.anu.edu.au%2Ffiles%2Fguidance%2FANU%2520Ethics%2520Student%2520Checklist%25202019%2520-links%2520updated.pdf&embedded=true&chrome=false&dov=1>

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False

Q1.9.7 Institutional affiliation and position*

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Fatemeh Fard
Position: Supervisor
Institution: University of British Columbia
Dr. Fatemeh will offer additional expertise and support, particularly in developing the methodology and identifying potential participants. Additionally, Dr Fatemeh will contribute to the analysis of results after data collection and ensure that the results are presented accurately and professionally. Dr. Fatemeh will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work.

Q1.9.8 Staff ID (optional)

Q1.9.9 ORCID Identifier (optional)

Q1.9.10 Position on the research project*

Other

Q1.9.10.1 Name of Position*

Supervisor

Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?*

For ANU purposes, the Chief Investigator needs to sign on behalf of the research team, all other members are not required to sign individually

False

Q1.9.12 Describe the research activities this person will be responsible for*

Dr. Fatemeh will be responsible for directly supervising the student by offering additional expertise and support, particularly in developing the methodology and identifying potential participants. Additionally, Dr Fatemeh will contribute to the analysis of results after data collection to ensure that the results are presented accurately and professionally. Dr. Fatemeh will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work.

Q1.9.13 Describe the person's expertise relevant to the research activity.*

Dr. Fatemeh is an assistant professor with significant experience supervising graduate students, making her well-equipped to support the student in this research project. Her research area in empirical software engineering positions her to offer valuable insights and guidance that are highly relevant to the project. Dr. Fatemeh's expertise ensures that the student will receive comprehensive support, particularly in empirical methodologies and data analysis, thereby enhancing the overall quality and rigor of the research. Additionally, Dr. Fatemah is an expert on Machine and Deep Learning, providing the opportunity to offer insights based on the scope of the research by working to identify relevant questions for the interviews and questionnaire for the Machine and Deep Learning community.

Full Name: Dr.AlexPotanin

Q1.9.1 Title

Dr.

Q1.9.2 First Name*

Alex

Q1.9.3 Family Name*

Potanin

Q1.9.4 Preferred email address*

alex.potanin@anu.edu.au

Q1.9.5 Is this person the contact person for this application?*

False

Q1.9.6 Is this person a student on this project?*

Supervisors are responsible for advising the student if ethics approval is likely to be required, what ethical considerations may arise in the student's research project, and how these may be addressed. In particular, a student and supervisor must come to an agreement about the scope, research questions, design and methods of the research

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False

Q1.9.7 Institutional affiliation and position*

Co-supervisor: Prof. Alex Potanin
Position: Professor
Institution: The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics

Prof. Alex Potanin will serve as a supervisor in this project.

Q1.9.8 Staff ID (optional)

Q1.9.9 ORCID Identifier (optional)

Q1.9.10 Position on the research project*

Other

Q1.9.10.1 Name of Position*

Primary Supervisor

Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?*

For ANU purposes, the Chief Investigator needs to sign on behalf of the research team, all other members are not required to sign individually

False

Q1.9.12 Describe the research activities this person will be responsible for*

As a supervisor in this project, Prof. Alex will provide expertise and support in the development of the methodology. He will also contribute to the analysis of results and ensure that the results are presented accurately and professionally. Prof. Potanin will participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the student's work.

Q1.9.13 Describe the person's expertise relevant to the research activity.*

Prof. Alex is an expert in Software Engineering and has led several projects involving human participants and ethics approval. Prof. Alex is currently supervising several PhD students and currently has a student who has gained ethics clearance from the ANU, showcasing his extensive experience and competence in overseeing research projects with ethical implications. His experience as an experience software engineer and a researcher with many PhD student will be important to support the project by crafting the appropriate methodology based on software engineering principles and also provide feedback during the data analysis and documentation.

Full Name: ProfessorHannaSuominen

Q1.9.1 Title

Professor

Q1.9.2 First Name*

Hanna

Q1.9.3 Family Name*

Suominen

Q1.9.4 Preferred email address*

hanna.suominen@anu.edu.au

Q1.9.5 Is this person the contact person for this application?*

False

Q1.9.6 Is this person a student on this project?*

Supervisors are responsible for advising the student if ethics approval is likely to be required, what ethical considerations may arise in the student's research project, and how these may be addressed. In particular, a student and supervisor must come to an agreement about the scope, research questions, design and methods of the research

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For more information about student applications, see [Student and Supervisor responsibilities in research ethics](https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/human-ethics-resources-training-and-support/student-and-supervisor). LINK:
<https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/human-ethics-resources-training-and-support/student-and-supervisor>

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False

Q1.9.7 Institutional affiliation and position*

Prof. Hanna Suominen

Position: Supervisory chair

Institution: The Australian National University, School of Computing, College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics

ANU College of Health and Medicine, School of Medicine and Psychology University of Turku, Faculty of Technology, Department of Computing, Turku, Finland

Q1.9.8 Staff ID (optional)

Q1.9.9 ORCID Identifier (optional)

Q1.9.10 Position on the research project*

Other

Q1.9.10.1 Name of Position*

Supervisory Chair

Q1.9.11 Does this person have authorisation to sign the application on behalf of all members of the research team?*

For ANU purposes, the Chief Investigator needs to sign on behalf of the research team, all other members are not required to sign individually

True

Q1.9.12 Describe the research activities this person will be responsible for*

Prof. Hanna Suominen oversees the supervisory team and the direct supervision of the overall project, ensuring that the student receives consistent and coordinated support. Prof. Hanna will also ensure that the research adheres to the university's ethical standards and guidelines by offering professional guidance. Prof. Hanna will also participate in regular meetings and provide feedback on the data analysis, and documentation.

Q1.9.13 Describe the person's expertise relevant to the research activity.*

Prof. Hanna as a professor comes in with a broad range of experiences. Prof. Hanna is working in the Health field, so has participated in several human surveys needing ethics approval. These experiences will be useful in ensuring that all ethical protocols are adhered to while carrying out the project. More so, Prof. Hanna's experiences as a professor will guide the methodology, data analysis, presentation, and the documentation of the results.

Disclosure of interests

Q1.10

Do any members of the research team (including persons not listed in this application), have any financial or non-financial interests related to this research?*

No

Q1.10.1 Explain the nature and extent of the interests and to which member of the team they apply.*

Not answered

Q1.10.2 Explain how you intend to manage these interests and any potential conflicts that may arise.*

Not answered

Restrictions

Q1.11 Are there any restrictions or limits on publication of data or dissemination of research outcomes of this project?*

No

Q1.11.1

Detail the restrictions or limits on publication of data arising from the research project and explain how these will be balanced with relevant accessibility expectations.*

Not answered

Evaluations

Q1.12 Has the scientific or academic merit of the research project been evaluated?*

Yes

Q1.12.1 What was the review process and what was the outcome?*

Senior academics within the ANU with expertise in Machine Learning, Deep Learning, and software engineering were involved in the conceptualisation and design of the project. The review process included an evaluation by the student's supervisory panel, which ensured that the research methodology, objectives, and potential impact were analysed.

The review was conducted by Dr. Chirath, Dr. Alex, Prof. Hanna, and Prof. Graham all within the School of Computing. The project was also reviewed as part of the students' thesis proposal review on the 11 July 2024.

The outcome of the review was positive, with the project being approved with minor conditions. These conditions included ensuring participant confidentiality, providing detailed information about the potential risks and benefits of the research, and securing informed consent from all participants.

Subsequent to the review, changes were made to the research design, including the addition of more diverse participant recruitment strategies and refinement of the survey and interview questions to ensure clarity.

Q1.12.2 Attach evidence of the outcome of the scientific or academic review process. (optional)

No file uploaded

Q1.13 Has this research project had prior ethics review?*

No

ETHICS COMMITTEE	OUTCOME
No previous ethics review has been added to this HREA Form.	

Q1.14 Will any further or additional specialised review of this application be sought?*

No

REVIEW ENTITY	WHEN REVIEW SOUGHT
No specialised review has been added to this HREA Form.	

Location

Q1.15 Will this research project be conducted at multiple sites?*

No

Q1.16 Will separate institutional approvals or authorisations be required prior to commencing research at each site?*

No

Methods

Q1.17 From the list below, select all the research methods that will be used in the research project.*

- ☐ Action research
- ☐ Biospecimen analysis research
- ☐ Data linkage research
- ☐ Ethnographic research
- ☐ Epidemiological research
- ☐ Interventional/ Clinical Trial research
- ☐ Observational research
- ☒ Survey/Interview/Focus Group research
- ☐ Textual analysis research
- ☐ None of the above

Participants

Q1.18 Indicate with whom or with what the research will be conducted *

Q1.19 Will your research involve participation of any of the following?

- ☐ Women who are pregnant and the human fetus
- ☐ Children and young people
- ☐ People highly dependent on medical care who may be unable to give consent
- ☐ People with a cognitive impairment, intellectual disability or mental illness
- ☐ People in dependent or unequal relationships
- ☐ People who may be involved in illegal activities
- ☒ People in other countries
- ☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Method Specific

You have indicated that the following methods will be involved in your research:

- **Survey/Interview/Focus Group research**

The following pages of the HREA have been customised based on the use of these methods.

If you wish to revise your choice of methods return to the Methods section.

Survey/Interview/Focus Group research

M8.1 What process/es will your research project use?*

Surveys

Interviews

Focus groups

If the project involves conducting semi structured interviews, please review the following guidance materials on 'sensitive and personal information' before proceeding with submission: Link <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/confidentiality-and-privacy>

It is important to be aware of what information constitutes 'sensitive, personal information', covered under provisions set out in Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. Link: <https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/your-privacy-rights/your-personal-information/what-is-personal-information>

Other ANU resources for handling sensitive personal information

- ANU Privacy Policy. Link: https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppl/document/ANUP_010007
- ANU Privacy Awareness Training. Link: <https://www.anu.edu.au/privacy/training-and-resources>

If the project is collecting gender data of participants, please ensure this information is collected in accordance with the ANU gender inclusion policy. Link: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/specific-research-areas/gender-and-sexuality-in-research>. Demographic data to be collected may also include sensitive personal information, triggering legal obligations under Australian Privacy Law – see the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs), particularly APP3 and APP5, regarding required advice and notification of the collection of personal information.

M8.2 How will you engage with your participants?*

Face to face

Via telephone, texting or messaging services, or online collaboration tools

Indirectly, via an online provider

M8.3 How will personal identifiers be retained or removed over the course of your project?*

For the interviews, pseudonyms such as INTERVIEW1, INTERVIEW2, etc., will be used during transcription to maintain anonymity. We will not use any attribution within published materials to ensure the confidentiality of participants. All audio recordings recordings will be deleted afterwards.

For the questionnaires, data will be collected using ANU's Qualtrics, but no identifiable data will be included in the questionnaire. The forms will be anonymous and will not contain any email address fields. Additionally, the data will be presented in aggregate form, ensuring no personal information is presented in a way that could identify individuals. After coding the data for data analysis the any key code will be destroyed, rendering the data anonymous.

M8.4 Will participants have the opportunity to review or edit their responses or contributions prior to data analysis or publication?*

No

M8.4.2.1

Explain why the participants will not have the opportunity to review or edit their responses or contributions prior to data analysis or publication.*

Participants will not have the opportunity to review or edit their responses or contributions prior to data analysis or publication due to several reasons. Qualtrics does not allow respondents to reopen the survey on their own but has a retake link the retake link which must link must be shared by someone with access to the survey in Qualtrics.

Also, for the interviews, due to the time and resources involved in conducting interviews, participants will not be able to have another session to edit or modify their responses. To this end, we will send the questions to the participants ahead of time.

The participant information sheet will include a clear explanation that participants will have to complete the form only once. Participants agree to this condition when they consent to participate, ensuring that the research is conducted ethically and transparently.

M8.4.1.1 Indicate the relevant section/s of your [Project Description](#) that details this opportunity.*

We detailed this under Section 6: **data collection**.

M8.5 Is it foreseeable that your project will explore topics that may cause distress for participants?*

No

Participant Specific

You have indicated that the following will be involved in your research:

- **Human beings (via active participation), including their associated biospecimens and/or data**

You have indicated that the following participants will or are likely to be involved in your research:

- **People in other countries**

The following sections of the HREA have been customised based on the involvement of this/these participants.

If you wish to revise your choice of participants return to the Participants section.

People in other countries

P7.1 How will local cultural values be acknowledged and reflected in both the design of the research and the conduct of researchers?*

In designing the questionnaire, we will avoid questions that might be sensitive or inappropriate in certain cultural contexts. Additionally, we designed the research to be inclusive and accessible to participants from diverse cultural backgrounds. This includes considering factors like language barriers. To this end, we used simple English to to describe the participant information sheet, agreeing to consent, and to writing out the questions by avoiding the use of heavy vocabulary.

Furthermore, we will include the participant information sheet and seek consent from the participants before the interview and completing the questionnaire.

P7.2 How will the design of the research take into account local power relations, inequalities and divisions?*

To design the research with inequalities and divisions in mind, our recruitment strategy will use multiple methods by visiting places such as CSIRO, Government agencies, using our contacts from the Computer Advisory Board and also contacting individuals from social media (e.g. , social media, professional networks) to ensure a diverse range of ML/DL practitioners from various genders, social, and cultural backgrounds. We will offer flexible participation options, such as online interviews, and preferred time to accommodate participants' preferences and comfort levels.

Also, we plan anonymity and confidentiality of participants when presenting any results from the different countries and the results will be analysed as an aggregate and not individually.

P7.3 Countries Research Project Will Be Conducted*

COUNTRY	HAS ETHICS REVIEW PROCESS	REPORT TO LOCAL BODY
Nigeria	False	False
United States of America	False	False
Canada	False	False

P7.4

Describe any factors that may make it problematic to conform to ethical standards expressed in the [National Statement](#) and what steps will be taken to address these matters.*

While we recognise that gifting can be an important aspect of building relationships in some cultures, we will not be offering any gifts to participants. This policy is to ensure that there is no undue influence or perceived coercion in participation.

P7.5 Do you plan to engage individuals from any country in which the research will be conducted to help conduct the research?*

No

P7.5.1 Who do you intend to engage and how will you employ them?*

Not answered

P7.5.2 How will the capacity and expertise of these individuals to conduct the research be assessed?

Not answered

P7.5.3

How will you ensure that these individuals conduct the research in a manner that accords participants no less respect and protection than the [National Statement](#) requires?*

Not answered

P7.6 To whom will participants direct any questions, concerns or complaints about the research?*

Participants are to direct all questions and concerns to Emmanuel Iko-Ojo at emmanuel.simon@anu.edu.au or +61416687098. Participants can also contact the primary supervisor, Dr. Chirath Hettiarachchi, at Chirath.Hettiarachchi@anu.edu.au. Or the Ethics Manager, The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee, The Australian National University, Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427, Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

P7.7 How will you engage with participants and their communities with respect to their expectations of the research project?*

All information regarding the research will be included in the participant information sheets and the participants will be required to provide consent. These information will be written in basic English to ensure comprehension. This will include clear explanations of the study's aim, process, potential risks, benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation.

Participants will have access to contact details for further clarification and can ask questions to ensure they fully understand the information provided. For interviews, these documents will be sent via email prior to the interview, and participants must provide their consent before the interview begins. For the questionnaire, the participant information sheet and consent form will be presented on the first page, ensuring participants review and accept the terms before proceeding.

P7.8 How will you manage these expectations in light of any resource limitations of the research project?*

To manage participants' expectations in light of any resource limitations of the research project, we will clearly communicate the aim and benefits of the research from the onset through the participant information sheet. We have identified that there are no risks associated with the research, and participants will be informed that there are no direct benefits from participating and the study is completely voluntary. This ensures that participants are clearly aware of what to expect from their participation.

Project Details

Recruitment

For more information, please refer to the ANU page: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/recruiting-research-participants>

Recruitment - General

Q2.1.1

Indicate how you will identify and recruit participants for your research, referencing any relevant section/s of your [Project Description/Protocol](#).*

Initially, participants (Machine and Deep Learning practitioners (ML/DL)) will be contacted by Iko-Ojo Simon in various ways depending on the nature of their participation. Please refer to Section 6 of the Project Description.

We will visit organisations such as CSIRO, government agencies, and contacts from the Computing Advisory Board of the ANU School of Computing to directly engage with potential participants. During these visits, we will explain the purpose of our research and invite interested individuals to participate.

Also, participants will be identified via their social media profiles, particularly on professional networks like LinkedIn. We will reach out to individuals who have indicated that they have relevant experience in ML/DL.

The identified participants will receive detailed participation documentation via email, which will include information about the study, the interview process, and the time commitment required via the participant information sheet. Additionally, we will email sample questions to the participants for them to prepare ahead of the interview day. Each interview is expected to last from 30 minutes to a maximum of one hour and will take place after consent has been obtained.

The questionnaire will be implemented using ANU Qualtrics and the link will be shared primarily through social media platforms (LinkedIn and X -- formerly Twitter) where the questionnaire will be posted. The participant information sheet will clearly indicate that completing the questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes and is optional. The recruitment will be part of the consent process.

Exclusion Criteria: Participants will not be eligible to participate in this research project if they lack experience in ML/DL or have experience solely in statistics and data science projects.

Participants must have experience using at least three of the following frameworks: TensorFlow, Keras, DL4J, Caffe, PyTorch, MXNet, and Microsoft Cognitive Toolkit.

Additionally, you must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Q2.1.2 How will your recruitment strategy take account of the ethical considerations relevant to the specific people you are recruiting?*

We will design the consent form to be as clear as possible in English, ensuring that participants are provided with detailed information about the research in an easily understandable manner. Recognising the varying levels of English proficiency among developers from different countries, we will develop the consent form, participant information sheet, and questionnaire using simple and unambiguous language.

Also, we will emphasise that participation is voluntary and that there is no obligation to participate. More so, we do not aim to offer any remuneration which may make participants participate as a result of the incentives.

Also, the interviews, and the questionnaire administration will be transparent, we will clearly describe the purpose of the research, what participation involves, and how data will be used. We will ensure that participants have access to all necessary information (participant information sheet) for them to make an informed decision.

We will prioritise the privacy and anonymity of participants from all countries. The questionnaire will be designed not to collect any personal data, and responses will be anonymised to protect participants' identities.

Consent

For more information, please refer to the ANU page: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/informed-consent>

Consent – Consent 1

Q2.2.1 Indicate the relevant section/s of your [Project Description/Protocol](#) that address/es consent.*

For the interviews, participants will receive participant information sheets detailing the study's aim, process, potential risks, and benefits of the projects to the ML/DL community through their emails and will be required to indicate oral consent or written consent. This will be facilitated by Iko-Ojo Simon. Please refer to Section 6 of the Project Description. These documents will be emailed to participants prior to the interview, and participants are to indicate their consent before the interview begins.

For the questionnaire, participants will have the participant information sheet and the consent form on the first page of the form, ensuring they review and accept the terms before proceeding.

The participants will have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have, before they make an informed decision about their participation. This allows participants to reflect on the terms provided without feeling rushed or coerced.

The consent process will be overseen by Iko-Ojo, who will ensure that all participants fully understand the study's requirements and implications before consenting. This process guarantees that consent is obtained ethically, respecting the participants' autonomy and ensuring they are well-informed about their participation in the research.

Q2.2.2 Will you be obtaining consent from some or all participants to participate in the research?*

The ANU Participant Information Sheet (PIS) and consent templates can be found here: Link: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/getting-ethics-approval/information-sheets-consent-forms>

Please upload the project PIS and consent forms with the application

Q2.2.2.1 What is the scope of consent that you will be seeking?*

☐

Specific

☒

Extended

☐

Unspecified

Q2.2.2.2 How will consent be obtained?*

☒

Written

☐

Verbal

☐

Implied

Q2.2.2.3 Are you proposing to obtain consent using limited disclosure?*

No

Q2.2.2.3.1 Are you proposing to obtain consent using active concealment or planned deception?*

NA

Q2.2.2.3.1.1.1

How will you ensure that the research meets the guidance provided in [National Statement 2.3.1](#) regarding the use of limited disclosure without active concealment or planned deception?*

Not answered

Q2.2.2.3.1.2.1

How will you ensure that the research meets the guidance provided in [National Statement 2.3.2](#) regarding the use of limited disclosure with active concealment or planned deception?*

Not answered

Consent – Consent 2

Q2.2.3 Are family members, authorised representatives or any others involved in the participants’ decision to participate in the research?*

No

Q2.2.3.1

Outline the family members, authorised representatives or others that will be involved in the decision to participate in the research and the extent of their involvement.*

Not answered

Q2.2.4 Will there be an opportunity to confirm or re-negotiate consent during the research project?*

No

Refer to the relevant section/s of your Project Description/Protocol that detail the process for confirming or re-negotiating consent at Q2.2.1.

Based on your answer to Q1.18, Q2.2.5 is not relevant to this project and has been hidden automatically by the HREA system.

Q2.2.6

Describe any ethical considerations related to the approach to consent that you will be seeking and your strategies for addressing and managing these issues.*

To ensure participants from other countries with basic English skills fully understand the study, clear and concise language will be used in the participant information sheet and consent forms, minimising complex vocabulary.

Contact details will be provided for participants to ask questions and clarify any doubts about the study. Considering local socio-economic factors, no form of remuneration will be provided to avoid undue influence, coercion, or exploitation, ensuring participation is entirely voluntary. Participants will also be assured that their decision to participate or not will not impact any existing professional relationships if any exists.

Consent – Alternatives to Consent

- [The National Statement](#) and the [guidelines under Section 95 of the Privacy Act 1988](#) and [guidelines approved under Section 95A of the Privacy Act 1988](#) do not consider the opt-out approach to be a form of consent. For clarity, it is also not a form of, or equivalent to, implied consent. Rather, the opt-out approach and a waiver of the requirement for consent are both alternatives to consent that, in appropriate circumstances, enable the conduct of research with human beings or using their biospecimens or data without the consent of the participants.

- The practice of delayed or deferred consent is not supported by the National Statement in emergency care, intensive care research or any other type of research. This practice may also not be considered legal in some States and Territories. Additionally, validation of any form of retrospective consent is contrary to the [National Statement](#).

Q2.2.7 Are you proposing to use an opt-out approach with respect to some or all of the participants?*

No

Q2.2.7.1 How will you ensure that the research meets the guidance for approving an opt-out approach, as listed in [National Statement 2.3.6](#)?*

Not answered

Q2.2.8 Are you requesting a waiver of the requirement for consent with respect to some or all participants?*

No

Q2.2.8.1 How will you ensure that the research satisfies the guidance for waiving consent as listed in [National Statement 2.3.10](#)?*

Not answered

Risk

For more information, please refer to the ANU page: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/minimising-risks-of-harm>

Risk - General

Q2.3.1

Describe the risks or harm or discomfort and any burdens or inconvenience associated with your research, referencing any relevant sections of your [Project Description/Protocol](#) as appropriate.*

While we do not anticipate any known physical, psychological, cultural, social, economic, or legal harms associated with this research, participants might experience inconvenience due to the time commitment required. To mitigate this we structure the questionnaire to be answered approximately within 20 minutes by having mostly closed ended questions and the interview within a maximum of 1 hour.

Despite our efforts to keep the identity of participants confidential, they may be identified through their experiences. Therefore, we recommend that they not disclose any information that would incriminate them or cause others to take an unfavourable view of them. Overall, the risks associated with participating in this research are considered to be minimal.

Q2.3.2 Describe how these risks will be minimised, mitigated or managed.*

To mitigate this the risk of personal identification, we recommend that participants do not disclose any information that would incriminate them or cause others to take an unfavourable view of them. Also , we structured the questionnaire to be answered approximately within a short period of 20 minutes by having mostly closed ended questions and the interview from 30 minutes to a maximum of 1 hour.

Also, participants will have the flexibility to choose interview times that are most convenient for them. Additionally, for For the questionnaire, participants can complete it at their convenience within the study period. This approach aims to minimise any inconvenience or disruption to their schedules.

Benefit

Q2.4.1 Describe the benefits associated with your research, referencing any relevant sections of your [Project Description/Protocol](#) as appropriate.*

It is unlikely that participants will personally benefit from participating in this research, but their participation will contribute towards a theoretical framework of Algorithm Debt. By Investigating AD, this study seeks to contribute to the field of TD by contextualising AD within the experiences of ML/DL practitioners, thereby enhancing the practical relevance of establishing AD as a unique TD type. More so data from this research will enable further and in-depth research on Algorithm Debt, which could lead to improved ML/DL systems.

Q2.4.2 Explain how benefits of this research justify any risks of harm or discomfort and any burdens or inconvenience associated with the research.*

There are no known risks associated with whether or not you participate in this research apart from the time inconvenience. However, participating in this research will help to develop a theoretical framework for Algorithm Debt. The proposed framework will improve our understanding of the factors (causes and effects) that cause ML/DL practitioners to incur Algorithm Debt. Furthermore, a list of prevention strategies for its timely management will be provided as a guideline to ML/DL software developers.

Q2.4.3 How will you manage participants' expectations of the perceived benefit of participating in the research?*

In our research, we make sure that all participants understand that there are no personal benefits to their participation. This information is clearly communicated on the participant information sheet. We will use simple English to communicate this, so that anyone who understands basic English, regardless of country, can understand this aspect of the research.

Data and Privacy

Please also review the information provided on the ANU Ethical Data Management page: Link: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/ethical-data-management>

Data Characteristics

For more information, please refer to the ANU page: <https://services.anu.edu.au/research-support/ethics-integrity/key-ethical-concerns/confidentiality-and-privacy>

Q3.1 Indicate the type of information/data you will be collecting for this project. *

- ☒ Personal information
- ☐ Sensitive information
- ☐ Health information
- ☒ Not personal information

Q3.2 Indicate the type of information/data you will be using in this project: *

- ☐ Personal information
- ☐ Sensitive information
- ☐ Health information
- ☒ Not personal information

Q3.3 Indicate the degree of identifiability of information/data you will be collecting for this project. *

- ☒ Individually identifiable information
- ☐ Re-identifiable (coded) information
- ☒ Non-identifiable information

Q3.4 Indicate the degree of identifiability of information/data you will be using in this project. *

- ☐ Individually identifiable information
- ☐ Re-identifiable (coded) information
- ☒ Non-identifiable information

Q3.5 Describe any ethical considerations relating to the collection and/or use of the information/data in this project*

There will be no personal identifiers or details that will be required for the questionnaires. Though email addresses will be collected to contact potential participants for the interviews, during the interviews only pseudonyms will be used when transcribing the interviews. Participants email will not be used for any form in the analysis and the data will be completely de-identified. Data collection and usage will follow the methods detailed in the Methodology Section of the Project Description, ensuring participant privacy and compliance with National Statement.

Q3.6 Identify the source/s of the information/data that you will be collecting and/or using in this project. *

- ☒ Individual participants and/or relatives or associates of participants
- ☐ Medical/health/mental health record
- ☐ Electoral roll
- ☐ Held by a law enforcement agency or judicial body
- ☐ Publicly held database (Commonwealth)
- ☐ Publicly held database (State or local)
- ☐ Privately held database

Q3.7 Describe any ethical considerations relating to the source of information/data as indicated in the response to the previous question.*

In addressing the ethical considerations related to the source of data, we will ensure that we obtain any data from individuals with their explicit consent using the consent form and detailing what the project entails in participant information sheet.

Q3.8 Was the information/data that you are using previously collected for a purpose other than research? *

No

Q3.8.1 Provide a rationale for your use of information/data for a purpose other than that for which it was originally collected.*

Not answered

Activities Planned for/with Data

Q3.9 Do you plan to disclose any personal information/data in this project to a third party? *

No

Q3.9.1 To whom do you plan to disclose the personal information/data?*

Not answered

Q3.9.2 Describe how you will protect the privacy of the participants and the security of the personal information/data that you will be disclosing?*

Not answered

Q3.10 How will you protect the privacy of participants and non-participants in any notes and/or publications arising from your research. *

Confidentiality will be protected as far as the law allows. To protect the privacy of participants and non-participants in any notes and/or publications arising from our research, all data collected, will anonymised. More so, we do not plan to collect any personal identifying information from the participants. Published results will only be reported in aggregate, and personal or organisational details will be anonymised, and will not be identifiable within published outputs.

Q3.11 Are there any restrictions on your ability to assure the confidentiality of participants? *

No

Q3.11.1 Describe how you will explain to participants the restrictions on your ability to give them an assurance of confidentiality. *

Not answered

Q3.12 Do you plan to share any individual research results obtained during this research to the participants? *

No

Q3.12.1 Describe any ethical considerations relating to the sharing of individual research results with the participants. *

Not answered

Q3.13 Describe how you will handle any secondary or incidental findings that arise from the analysis of personal information/data. *

During this research, we do not aim to collect any sensitive personal information that could lead to identification of any participant during the data analysis in any possible way. However, if we identify any personal information or data, we do p=not plan to release such information/ data as part of the result to ensure full privacy of the participants.

Q3.14 Describe how the information/data will be stored, accessed, archived and/or destroyed. *

Please refer to Section 6 of the Project Description. The data collected from both surveys and interviews will be securely stored in the cloud (i.e., OneDrive) within the School of Engineering and Computer Science at the Australian National University (ANU). The data stored on these cloud infrastructures are encrypted at rest and during transit.

Additionally, a copy of the data will be stored (only for analysis) on my ANU local laptop, which is fully password-protected and frequently updated with operating system security patches. This data will be accessed by my supervisors and I.

Consequently, the research data stored in ANU One Drive will be retained for at least five years following the publication of the PhD thesis arising from the research. After this period, the de-identified data will be archived at the Australian Data Archive (www.ada.edu.au) for future research related to Algorithm Debt, potentially conducted by other researchers.

Q3.15 Describe any ethical considerations relating to the storage of, access to or destruction of information/data in this project.*

All collected data will be stored securely to prevent unauthorised access and ensure participant confidentiality. Data from the questionnaire and interview transcripts will be stored on my ANU local laptop, which is fully password-protected and frequently updated with security patches. Physical data, such as interview notes, will be kept in locked, secure cabinets within the School of Engineering and Computer Science at the Australian National University (ANU) and will be destroyed after the transcription and analysis.

Access to the data will be restricted to the research team members directly involved in the project. The data will be stored for a minimum of five years following the publication of the PhD thesis, in accordance with ANU's data retention policy. After this period, the de-identified data will then be archived at the Australian Data Archive (www.adu.edu.au) for potential future research use.

Q3.16 Will the outcomes of this project be disseminated to the participants?

Yes

Q3.16.1.1

Describe how the outcomes of the project will be disseminated to the participants, or refer to the relevant section/s of your [Project Description/Protocol](#) which deals with this matter.*

The outcomes of this project will be disseminated to the participants through publication in a peer reviewed journal. A project page will also be created on GitHub where the results will be made available and the link will be share with participants while filling the questionnaire. Individual findings specific to participants will not be included in this general dissemination.

Q3.16.1.2 Describe any ethical considerations relating to any dissemination of outcomes to the participants.*

We will clearly inform participants in the participant information sheet about how the results will be disseminated, including the mediums and potential public availability. Also, we will ensure that the dissemination of results does not compromise the anonymity of the participants. There will be no personal identifiers and sensitive information that will be included in any public reports or publications. Published results will only be reported in aggregate.

Q3.16.2.1 Justify why the outcomes of this project will not be disseminated to the participants.*

Not answered

Q3.17 Describe any foreseeable future activities for which information/data collected and/or used in this project may be made available.*

The data may be used for secondary analysis for research related to Algorithm Debt which may include sharing the data with other researchers working on Algorithm Debt in Machine and Deep Learning Systems.


Q3.18 Describe any ethical considerations relating to the planned or possible future use of information/data in this project.*

We will ensure that participants are informed about the possibility of their data being shared with other researchers for research purposes only. This will be explicitly stated in the participant information sheet. We will also let the participants know that the data they provide will be first stored at the ANU One Drive, a local secure computer, and later achieved at the Australian Data Archive. We ensure that all participants accept these terms by including these in the participant information sheet.

Generate HREA document

Upload

Q4.1 Attach the [Project Description/Protocol](#) to your HREA.*

 [ANU Project Description.pdf](#)

Project description/protocol

Q4.2 Are there any other relevant documents associated with conducting your research project?*

Yes

No file uploaded

HREC

Q4.3 Select the Organisation that hosts the HREC or other review body*

Pre-filled from the associated organisation of this project.

School of Computing

Q4.4 Select the HREC or other review body to which you are applying.*

Pre-filled from the managing committee of HREA.

Human Ethics Office

Q4.5 Under which review pathway are you intending to submit this application?*

Low risk review pathway

Note: The institution to which you applying will review your application and determine the level of risk of the research project. Your answer to this question will only inform them of the intended review pathway.

Q4.6 Will this application be reviewed under the National Mutual Acceptance scheme?*

No

Declaration

ANU process for submission of HREA within REMS.
Please note that HREA declaration points 2-4 below are not applicable to ANU.

- ANU does not use the HREA signoff feature. Please select 'wet ink sign after printing' under Q4.7 noting that no printing or signing is required.
- Proceed to the 'overview' tab to submit the application. You will then be prompted to complete a declaration.
- Honours, Masters and HDR candidates require a supervisor to be listed. Supervisors must also sign off on projects prior to approval being granted.

I, **Hanna Suominen** certify that:

Q4.7 How will Hanna Suominen agree to these terms? Wet ink sign after printing

Attachments

FILENAME	TITLE	FORM / FILE DESCRIPTION	VERSION/DATE	UPLOADED	
ANU Project DescriptionV2.pdf	Project Description	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Project Description	V2 04/Sep/2024	04/Sep/2024 9 months ago	<div>Added</div>
Sample Invitation Mail Interview.pdf	Sample Mail Invitation Interview	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Participant Information Sheet Interview	No version 02/Aug/2024	02/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Participant Information sheet Interview Final.pdf	Participant Information Sheet Interview	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Participant Information Sheet Interview	No version 02/Aug/2024	02/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Participant Information sheet Questionniare Final.pdf	Participant Information Sheet Questionnaire	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Participant Information Sheet Questionnaire	No version 02/Aug/2024	02/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Questionnaire Questions.pdf	Questionnaire Questions	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Questionnaire Questions	No version 02/Aug/2024	02/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Confidentiality agreement - Apr 2021.pdf	Confidentiality Agreement	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Confidentiality Agreement Form	No version 01/Aug/2024	01/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Written consent form - Apr 2021.pdf	Written Consent	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Written Consent Form	No version 01/Aug/2024	01/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Oral consent form - Apr 2021.pdf	Oral Consent Form	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Oral Consent Form	No version 01/Aug/2024	01/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
Interview Questions.pdf	Sample Interview Questions	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Sample Interview Questions	No version 01/Aug/2024	01/Aug/2024 10 months ago	
ANU Project Description.pdf	Project description/protocol	Human Research Ethics Application Medium Risk Project description/protocol	No version	01/Aug/2024 10 months ago	<div>Removed</div>

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