

# Assignment 1

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**Due** Apr 22 by 18:00      **Points** 30      **Submitting** a file upload  
**File Types** doc, docx, pdf, and txt

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## Aims

The aim of this assignment is to improve your understanding of trust, fairness, and accountability; and to improve your critical thinking by applying ethical theories to reason about ethical issues related technologies and to communicate this to the community at large.

## Overview

This assessment asks you to apply critical ethical thinking to a particular application of technology and to use an ethical framework to argue the ethical suitability of the application. It then asks you to rebut your own argument using another ethical framework.

## Tasks

Select **one** of the case study options below, and complete the following tasks for that option.

### Case study options

#### *Option 1: Public transport patrolling*

*[Content warning: this case study contains a hypothetical crime prevention approach to counter sexual harassment]*

Consider a hypothetical project collaboration between Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and the Victorian Police force.

PTV have been gathering and studying data on harassment and theft at their public tram and bus stops. Their analysis shows two major findings:

1. Women passengers report a significantly higher rate of harassment than men passengers. While men report a slightly higher rate of theft and violence against them, women report more than three times the rate of sexual harassment. This is predominately while waiting at bus and tram stops.
2. Particular suburbs in Melbourne have higher harassment and theft at tram and bus stops than others; in some cases, the theft and harassment rate is more than double at some stops than others.

PTV and Victoria Police propose a project to develop a decision-support system that is trained based on the historical data. This system will be trained using statistical machine learning to recommend (to police officers on patrol) which areas to patrol each night, focusing on those areas with the higher reported crime rate. The attending police will file reports, allowing the system to be updated with new data regularly.

### *Option 2: COVID safety monitoring in the workplace*

Consider a hypothetical product from a commercial company, who are offering systems to verify physical distancing requirements in workplaces for COVID safety.

The system uses security cameras to monitor staff in the workplace and measure how far apart they are at all times. There are two main functionalities:

1. If two or more people are standing less than 1.5m apart, the system matches their identity against the database of staff IDs and then sends the staff members an automated email warning to remind them of the physical distancing requirements.
2. If any staff member is sent three automated email warnings in any 4 week period, their manager is sent a report of the safety breaches, which can be used for further action.

This system is sold directly to organisations who can use it in their workplace to ensure they are maintaining COVID safe regulations.

## Task 1 [No more than 800 words]

For your selected case study, present an argument of the ethical suitability of the proposed project in each case study using *one* of the four ethical theories or frameworks discussed in class: deontological, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, or ethics of care (do not use 'principlism' for this assignment). Make sure that you note which of the four ethical frameworks you use.

**Note:** The marking criteria (below) explicitly encourages you to consider *virtue ethics* or *ethics of care*.

In your argument, you should apply the framework to at least three of the following key ethical ideas or principles: trust, privacy, fairness, accountability, and safety. You may refer to other ethical ideas or principles, but you will be primarily assessed on how you have used these ideas or principles. Use your selected ethical theory/framework to help explain and justify how you use these ideas or principles.

Limit your argument to no more than 800 words.

## Task 2 [No more than 800 words]

Using one of the *other* four ethical theories above (again, not principlism), present an argument against your argument from Task 1. Write this in a style as if the two arguments are each written by two different people who adopt different viewpoints about the proposed project and who adopt the two different ethical frameworks/theories that you select. Task 2 should be a rebuttal of Task 1. Make sure that you note which of the four ethical frameworks you use.

Again, you should apply the framework to at least three of the following key ethical ideas or principles: trust, privacy, fairness, accountability, and safety; and note which of the above four ethical frameworks/theories you use in support of your positions.

**Note:** As in task 1, the marking criteria (below) explicitly encourages you to consider *virtue ethics* or *ethics of care*.

Limit your argument to no more than 800 words.

## Submission requirements

Upload your submission to the Assignment 1 submission on Canvas.

Submissions must be in the form of .doc, .docx, or .pdf files, and must conform to the following requirements:

- 12 point font
- Arial font only for Word documents, or Sans Serif for Latex
- 1.5 line spacing
- Use Harvard citation style for references (if any are used)
- Clearly defined paragraphs
- Figures and images can be used, but each figure counts for 200 words, so use them sparingly (if at all) and use them well!

For latex users, use the standard arxiv style on Overleaf (Create a new project -> Academic Journal - > Show all gallery items -> Search 'arxiv' and select the template "Style and Template for Preprints (arXiv, bio-arXiv)". Make sure you set to 1.5 spacing and use Sans Serif font style.

## Late submission policy

Submissions that are late will be penalised 10% per day (so 3 marks per day) up to 7 days.

If you require an extension due to personal or medical reasons, please contact the staff *before* the due date requesting the extension. Thanks!

## Criteria

### Support & development of ideas [8 marks]

The ideas in the report are well developed and the argumentations are well supported. The positions taken in the report are clear.

Make sure that the statements and arguments you make are supported; that is, backed up by facts, data, reasons, or beliefs that are likely to be held by your audience. An argument is weak if it is not supported by facts and reasons.

### Mastery of subject content [10 marks]

The essay demonstrates an understanding of the subject content and the ability to use this understanding to critically analyse a problem and support their argument.

To construct an argument, it is important that you take the time to re-visit the relevant modules and related material in the subject with the assignment in mind. Take notes and highlight important points.

### **Ethical frameworks [2 marks]**

The ethics of care framework has been used in task 1 or task 2.

The virtue ethics framework has been used in task 1 or task 2.

An argument and rebuttal using utilitarianism and deontology is acceptable, however, these two frameworks are more straightforward to understand and apply. For those who really want to engage with the subject content, using the other two frameworks will attract 1-2 marks.

### **Organisation [4 marks]**

The essay is well organised and follows a clear structure.

Structure your essay so that each paragraph presents one argument. The first sentence of each paragraph should clearly signal the topic of the paragraph. If a paragraph is an argument of a point, begin the paragraph with the claim you want to make, and then use the rest of the paragraph to support that claim (see more below)

Aim to keep each paragraph reasonably short: somewhere between three and five sentences. Aim to keep sentences of a sufficient length: between 15-40 words is a rough guide. A sentence is too long if a reader gets to the end of the sentence and cannot remember the start of the sentence. Read your report out loud and if you need to take a breath during a sentence, it may be too long.

### **Clarity [4 marks]**

The essay is clear to the reader.

A reader is always reading your writing from a different perspective from you, with a different background and a different level of understanding of what the essay says. If some parts of your essay are a bit unclear to you, then they will definitely be unclear to the reader. If they are clear to you, this does not mean they will be clear to the reader. It is important that when you re-read your essay to yourself, you think about reading it as if the content is entirely new to you, and highlight and passages that you think could not be clear.

Note that there is a strong relationship between the clarity, organisation, and the support & development of ideas criteria, and demonstrating mastery of the subject content. A clear, well structured argument that is well supported and well developed will make it easier for a reader to understand the ideas, and making it easier to verify that you have developed mastery of the subject content.

### **Presentation & grammar [2 marks]**

The paper presentation is clean: spelling, grammar, complete sentences, formatted correctly, etc.

While a reader may still understand your essay, sloppy spelling & grammar and an inconsistent format give off an impression that the writer did not pay attention to detail, and can form a negative impression before a reader has even read a single sentence.

## Academic integrity

The [University of Melbourne academic integrity policy](https://academicintegrity.unimelb.edu.au/policy.html).

(<https://academicintegrity.unimelb.edu.au/policy.html>)

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## Plagiarism declaration

By submitting work for assessment I hereby declare that I understand the University's policy on [academic integrity \(https://academicintegrity.unimelb.edu.au/\)](https://academicintegrity.unimelb.edu.au/) and that the work submitted is original and solely my work, and that I have not been assisted by any other person (collusion) apart from where the submitted work is for a designated collaborative task, in which case the individual contributions are indicated. I also declare that I have not used any sources without proper acknowledgment (plagiarism). Where the submitted work is a computer program or code, I further declare that any copied code is declared in comments identifying the source at the start of the program or in a header file, that comments inline identify the start and end of the copied code, and that any modifications to code sources elsewhere are commented upon as to the nature of the modification.