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# Research Ethics 2ECTS

## Outline – Aalto 1/2019

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### Level

Doctoral studies, recommended for first or second year of study. The course is 2ECTS and comprises of 54hours of study.

### Timetable

The course runs over 4 weeks online **8.3. - 8.4.2019**

Assessment 1 – Mon 18.3.2019 - Ethical issues and challenges in my own research

**Workshop 1- Tue 19.3.2019, 8am-12pm – Lecture Room U8 Main Building Otaniemi**

Assessment 2 – Mon 25.3.2019 - Peer Review

Assessment 3 – Tue 26.3. – 8.4.2019 - Discussion board on ethical issues

**Workshop 2 - Tue 2.4.2019, 8am-12pm – Lecture Room U8 Main Building Otaniemi**

Assessment 4 – Mon 8.4.2019 - Reflection and solutions to ethical issues

Assessment 5 – Mon 8.4.2019 – Deadline for online quizzes

**NOTE: attendance at workshops is compulsory**

### Learning outcomes

At the completion of this course a Doctoral candidate is able to

1. recognise and analyse key research ethical questions
2. formulate ethical research plans and responses to ethical challenges by applying key ethical theories and approaches
3. recognise and understand key ethical principles guiding research and how they apply to research work
4. understand the Finnish Responsible Conduct of Research guidelines, processes for dealing with research misconduct, and processes for applying research license or ethical review
5. identify rights and responsibilities as a researcher
6. understand how ethical decisions and choices influence society and research community

### Mode of study

The course will be taught online (<http://www.findocnet.fi/>). **Your enrollment key is RE119.**

The course language is English (materials in Finnish are also accessible on the Moodle site). Most of the course is self-directed and allows for great flexibility with when and where it is done.

However, assessments have strict deadlines.

### Course Content

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## Online course material

The online course has four sections. Sections are independent and follow a general research project lifecycle. The sections build theoretically on each other in a sequential manner. Each section will include online lecture material, reading material, and assessment tasks. Course literature consists of book chapters, scientific articles (max 100 pages) and web-based material. All literature for the course is available on the course platform in e-format.

### **Section A: Ethical theory and importance of research ethics**

This section focuses on developing skills to analyse and recognise ethical challenges in research. This section also provides guidance and practice for recognising ethical principles and questions in research practice. The student will engage with different perspectives on ethical questions in research and reflecting on how these perspectives apply to their own research, ethical thinking, and more generally in their field of study.

### **Section B: Planning for ethical research**

This section focuses on ethical questions that arise at the planning phase of research. These include ethical aspects on data acquisition and management; conflict of interest, need for ethical license or ethical review; data ownership; working with others; applying for research funding; working in a research groups; and preparing to publish. The students explore the research planning process from an ethical perspective and learn to recognise different questions that apply to their own research work and to research in general. During the section students apply the learning to their own research planning identifying and clarifying ethical elements in that plan.

### **Section C: Research practice and ethics**

This section focuses on the ethical questions arising from doing research work. These include collecting data, collegial openness, dealing with ethical problems as they arise, supervision, misconduct of fabrication and falsification, and dealing with misconduct claims. The students reflect on and analyse the potential ethical challenges for their research work and seek ways to primarily prevent them or if necessary, how to resolve issues in an ethically appropriate manner aligning with Responsible Conduct of Research guidelines.

### **Section D: Sharing research results in an ethical manner**

The last section focuses on sharing research results either via peer-reviewed publications or more openly with the society through media and expert roles. The topics covered in this section include plagiarism and misappropriation, authorship, peer review, choice of journals, dealing with the media and being an expert. The students expand their ethical analysis from their own research work towards the interaction of research and society. Through engagement with the ethical perspective and questions presented, they start to develop their ability to identify how ethical guidelines define their broader researcher role.

## Assessment tasks

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## Assessment 1 - Ethical issues and challenges in my own research

Describe an ethical challenge/question/concern in your research work in enough detail for someone not familiar with your research to understand it. This may require describing your research in some detail and/or elaborating on the context of your ethical issue. Please note that there are students from 7 different universities so the research contexts are widely different.

The course material will assist you in identifying topics for this assessment task if you have difficulty thinking of what to write.

It is essential you spend time formulating your ethical issue description and have a relatively clear understanding yourself of the situation/issue/question/concern. Lesson A2 in the course materials will help you to formulate your description.

The purpose of your essay is to invite feedback and review from a fellow student. To maximise the opportunity to get quality feedback, you may wish to write:

- Specific questions you would like answers to
- Offer different options and ask for their opinion on the best one
- Ask for help in solving your challenge in a format 'what would you do?'

The essay review process is **double blind** (reviewer and author are both anonymous) unless you specifically include your name in your submission.

The length of the description is approx. 2 pages.

## Assessment 2 - Peer Review

You will receive two essays to review. Each is a description of ethical challenges written by a fellow PhD student in Assessment 1. The Moodle system will treat you anonymously - you will not be told whose work you are reading and you as the commentator will also remain anonymous. If you are happy to share who you are, you are welcome to include your name in your review. People write their essays differently. Your general task is to reflect and comment on the ethical issues you have been presented. If the essay includes clear questions your task will be a lot easier. If not, you can comment and reflect on the following aspects: have ethical issue been recognised/described well considering the research context? Would you find ways to improve it? Do you believe this is a significant ethical concern? What would you need to know to respond to a situation like that? What do you think is an appropriate way to deal with the described situation/issue?

The purpose of commenting and reflecting is to **support each other** to create ethically strong research. Consider carefully what you write and think of yourself as the constructive you yourself would like to have.

The Peer Review should be approximately 1-2 pages.

## Assessment 3 - Discussion board group activity on ethical issues

This is a **compulsory group activity** for the course. You will be allocated into groups of 4-6 students.

Each member of the group will post an integrity challenge they have either had or think they could have in their research related to working with others. Your submission should be at least

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half page long (approx. 250 words), giving enough details to allow others to understand the situation. Please be mindful how you share your stories and consider the privacy and confidentiality towards others involved. The groups should be considered confidential spaces - what is discussed in this group should not go beyond this group.

You are expected to comment on the challenges of at least two of your group member and provide thoughtful insight and suggestions on how to best manage the often unavoidable challenges around working with others. Typically a response is similar length to the issues originally discussed i.e. half a page at least. The emphasis is on problem-solving and support.

#### **Assessment 4 - Reflection and solutions to ethical issues**

For this assessment you are asked to submit an essay to describe **three most significant ethical issues** in your research. A good description will:

- Give enough context and background for the questions to be understood
- Reflect on the rights and responsibilities of researchers in responding to the challenges
- Provide examples of appropriate ways to respond to the recognised issues
- Reflect on how your thinking about these issues has changed during the ethics course

You can make use of assessment 1 and the peer reviews you received.

The essay should be approximately 3-4 pages.

#### **Assessment 5**

Quizzes associated with each topic are compulsory. You can attempt each quiz 3 times. If the quiz requires a password, it is 'ethics'. You are expected to study the material before attempting the quiz.

## **Evaluation criteria**

Pass / Fail

The course completion requires:

- active engagement with the course material,
- completing compulsory assessment tasks detailed above.

The course evaluation is based on adequately achieving learning outcomes as evidenced in the assessment tasks.

## **Coordinator**

Dr Henriikka Mustajoki is the course coordinator. You can contact Henriikka on [henriikka.mustajoki@gmail.com](mailto:henriikka.mustajoki@gmail.com) or via Moodle message facility.