Research Ethics 2ects
Outline – Aalto University

Level
Doctoral studies, recommended for first or second year of study. The course is 2 ECTS and comprises of 46 hours of independent study and 8 hours of workshop.

Timetable
The course runs over 4 weeks online 29.9. - 30.10.2017
Assessment 1 – Mon 9.10.2017 - Ethical issues and challenges in my own research
Workshop 1 – Fri 13.10.2017 - 12-4pm, Room U8, Otaniemi Campus (attendance compulsory)
Assessment 2 – Mon 16.10.2017 - Peer Review
Assessment 3 – Tue 17. – 27.10.2017 - Discussion board on ethical issues
Workshop 2 – Tue 24.10.2017 – 1-5pm, Room U8, Otaniemi Campus (attendance compulsory)
Assessment 4 – Mon 30.10.2017 - Reflection and solutions to ethical issues
Assessment 5 – Mon 30.10.2017 – Deadline for online quizzes

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://moodle.tsv.fi/) and during two compulsory workshops. You will be sent an enrolment key to login. The course languages are 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

Workshop 1 and 2

At the beginning of Workshop 1 the group will together choose key themes to cover during the contact teaching. You are expected to arrive at the workshop with three ethical questions or concerns related specifically to your research work or your research field generally. It is helpful to look at the online material in some detail prior to the workshop to develop your questions.

The workshop is designed using team-based learning principles and will be using digital groupwork tools including Flinga and Presemo. All you need is something connected to the internet – laptop, pad or smartphone.

During the workshop you will be working in groups around questions and case studies related to the topics you have chosen. Short lectures on key topics will also be included. At the end of the workshop 1 you will be given a homework task to complete prior to the next workshop.

Online course material

The online course has four sections. Sections are independent and follow a 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

Assessment 1 - Ethical issues and challenges in my own research

Write a description of ethical issues that have emerged or may emerge in your own research, and reflect on their implications for your research. For example, you may reflect on how the ethical issues could influence the research plan or the way the research is carried out. Whom does the ethical issues concern? In what stages of your research do you need to address these ethical issues? How do you plan/how have you solved the ethical issues? Could there be alternative ways to handle the ethical issues?
It is recommended you complete at least Section A content before this assessment task. The length of the paper is approx. 2 pages.

Assessment 2 - Peer Review

You will receive a description of ethical challenges by two of your fellow students. 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 submissions. You are asked to comment and reflect on the following aspects: have ethical challenges been recognised well considering the research context? Can you think of additional research ethical issues that have not been recognised in this submission? Would you find ways to improve it? Or challenges that have not yet been recognised? Include any examples you are aware of how other people have approach similar challenges in the past (maybe your own research experience).
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 page.

**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 a challenge they have either had or think they could have in their research related to working with others. **Your submission should be at least 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 basic principle is also, that 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 on ethical challenges in your research and reasoned solutions to them. You are expected to:
- show evidence that you are aware of key ethical principles in research and are able to apply them to your own research work.
- show evidence that you can broadly recognise ethical challenges around your research work.
- show evidence that you are aware of the key responsibilities for researchers as identified in Finnish Guidelines on Responsible Conduct of Research in your research work.

You can make use of assessment 1 and the peer reviews you received. Please indicate how your thinking has changed during the course and what impact (if any) the peer reviews had on your perception of the challenges and/or solutions to them.

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@helsinki.fi or via Moodle message facility.