**Research Support Spring Symposium, 16 April 2018**

**Session 2A: Ethics; or, Why we don’t blow up sheep**

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**Quiz: On the basis of the information provided, which of the following projects are likely to raise ethical considerations and therefore require formal ethical review?** Make a note of the reasoning behind your answers.

*Group 1*

1. Archaeological excavation of tribal sites in a Commonwealth country.
2. Computational modelling of plasmas relevant to astrophysical problems.
3. An analysis of anonymised public data sets to determine the likelihood of women from different ethnic groups taking their full maternity leave entitlement.
4. Analysis of syntactic patterning in seventeenth-century religious texts.

*Group 2*

1. Field study looking at biodiversity of plant life in an area where the Foreign Office advises all but essential travel.
2. School-based study of language development in children with autism.
3. Research looking at reactions to The Great Exhibition of 1851 using national archives of contemporaneous diaries.
4. A government-funded project to enhance technology for the remote capture of conversations.

*Group 3*

1. MoD-funded research to support the safety of autonomous vehicles
2. Analysis of conversations on social media regarding the legalisation of Class A drugs.
3. A study looking at the effects of pesticides on endangered pollinators.
4. An interview-based study of overseas visitors’ engagement with British commemorations of World War II.

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**Session 2A: Ethics; or, Why we don’t blow up sheep**

**Quiz: Answers crib sheet**

**Quiz: On the basis of the information provided, which of the following projects are likely to raise ethical considerations and therefore require formal ethical review?** Make a note of the reasoning behind your answers.

* *The full answers provided in italics make a distinction between ‘Yes’, ethical review definitely required; ‘Yes, likely’: probably required; and ‘Unlikely’ as opposed to an outright No – given that the devil is in the detail.*
* *It’s worth flagging up the principle of proportionality: depending on the detail, cases involving less risk could go through a fast track review, or just require a conversation with an ethics committee Chair in the first instance.*

Group 1

1. Archaeological excavation of tribal sites in a Commonwealth country.

*Answer: Ethical review likely to be necessary. There may well be social and cultural sensitivities to take into account, including past British colonial history, in the conduct and ownership of the research. If the country is classified as an ‘emerging economy’, the project will need to take particular care to ensure reasonable use of local resources and benefit to the local communities.*

1. Computational modelling of plasmas relevant to astrophysical problems.

*Answer: Ethical review unlikely to be necessary: project is desk-based and involves theoretical modelling of plasma properties using computer calculations.*

1. An analysis of anonymised public data sets to determine the likelihood of women from different ethnic groups taking their full maternity leave entitlement.

*Answer: Ethical review will be required. Consent is less of an issue since the data sets are publicly available and anonymised. However, the potential application of the findings raises ethical issues. To what extent is there a risk that the findings could be misused to discriminate against female employees/potential employees of child-bearing age from particular ethnic groups? The ethics committee will need to weigh this consideration against the potential benefits of the research.*

1. Analysis of syntactic patterning in seventeenth-century religious texts.

*Answer: Ethical review unlikely to be necessary: no identifiable risk of harm on basis of information available.*

Group 2

1. Field study looking at biodiversity of plant life in an area where the Foreign Office advises all but essential travel.

*Answer: Ethical review will be required. Although the research itself may not entail risk of harm, the location of the study is potentially dangerous for the researcher, who will have to make the case as part of ethical review, having undertaken a risk assessment and consulted the University’s Insurance Officer.*

1. School-based study of language development in children with autism.

*Answer: Ethical review will be required. The project will need to demonstrate to the ethics committee that measures are in place to safeguard the welfare and interests of the children, including appropriate consent procedures for this vulnerable group.*

1. Research looking at reactions to The Great Exhibition of 1851 using national archives of contemporaneous diaries.

*Answer: Ethical review unlikely to be necessary. The sources have been placed in the public domain and the topic is unlikely to raise significant sensitive issues for any known descendants.*

1. A government-funded project to enhance technology for the remote capture of conversations.

*Answer: Ethical review will be required. One end use of this technology is surveillance, which raises civil rights issues, particularly given the source of funding. The ethics committee will need to weigh the project’s benefits in terms of security with the risk of harm to civil.*

Group 3

1. MoD-funded research to support the safety of autonomous vehicles

*Answer: Ethical review will be required. Drones can be used in both military and civilian applications, and the ethics committee will need to weigh up the benefits of the work against the risks in terms of harm. It will also need to review the security arrangements for any sensitive data.*

1. Analysis of conversations on social media regarding the legalisation of Class A drugs.

*Answer:* *Ethical review will be required. The ethics committee will need to consider issues around privacy, and the researcher will also need to address how any evidence of potentially criminal activity would be handled within the law.*

1. A study looking at the effects of pesticides on endangered pollinators.

*Answer: Ethical review likely to be necessary. Although insects aren’t covered by the Animals Act, the project will need to justify the scale of any use of endangered species, and the research methods will need to take into account risk of harm to any subjects and to the environment as a whole.*

1. An interview-based study of overseas visitors’ engagement with British commemorations of World War II.

*Answer: Ethical review will be required as human participants are involved. In particular, the research design will need to take social, political and cultural sensitivities into account.*