

ETHICS AND WELL-BEING AT CITTA

Suggestions for good practice

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Ethics at CITTA: Suggestions for good practice

All research activities and other tasks carried out at CITTA are required to be conducted according to the ethical values of academic rigour and excellence, copyright protection, integrity, inclusiveness and professionalism. Inspired on these values, this document serves as a general source of possible guidelines alerting researchers for ethical issues/dilemmas and directing them to further readings. It is divided in two parts. The first part concerns research itself. The second part concerns issues that have a bearing on general institutional practices.

This document should be seen as a living one, always open for improvement and updates. It is produced in a participatory way. At its basis are workshops where CITTA members have the opportunity to revise it and add reflections inspired by their own personal or collective experiences.

This document does not serve as a replacement to the [Ethical Code of Academic Conduct](#) promoted by the University of Porto or the corresponding document promoted by the [University of Coimbra](#). Instead, it aims at inspiring CITTA researchers and staff members to conduct themselves more ethically and as a source of resources concerning ethics and well-being at work.

Part 1. Ethical issues concerning research activities

An extensive database of online documents about research ethics, publication ethics and good practice guidelines can be found [here](#). This database can be used to complement the information provided in these more succinct guidelines in the case of unaddressed issues emerge.

1.1 Informed consent and privacy

Researchers at CITTA performing interviews, focus-groups, questionnaires and any other data acquisition protocols involving people should assure the anonymity and integrity of the research participants. Any process involving data acquisition protocols should be done with informed consent from all individuals participating in the research. This informed consent must be provided on a perfectly voluntary basis and therefore researchers should not try to convince or influence individuals to offer informed consent against their will. In Appendix 1 a suggestion is proposed for a consent form to be handed out to research subjects prior to interviews. It can be adapted for other purposes besides interviews, e.g. participating on a focus group. This can be used as a general outline to be adapted according to the specific characteristics of different research projects and data gathering activities.

Note that **informed consent** is a key ethical principle to be adopted in any research set up involving human subjects. The [European Commission](#) puts it this way:

“Declared one of the most pivotal principles in research ethics in many international conventions and guidelines, informed consent is meant to guarantee the voluntary participation in research and is probably the most important procedure to address

privacy issues in research. Informed consent consists of three components: **adequate information, voluntariness** and **competence**. This implies that, prior to consenting to participation, participants should be clearly informed of the research goals, possible adverse events, possibilities to refuse participation or withdraw from the research, at any time, and without consequences. Research participants must also be competent to understand the information and should be fully aware of the consequences of their consent. Although informed consent is often seen in the context of clinical research, this principle is important for all types of research, including the social sciences.”

The University of Alaska Fairbanks proposes the following elements as useful to write an informed consent document (see the original source [here](#)):

1. “a statement that the study involves research
2. a description of risks or discomforts
3. a description of benefits to the subject or others
4. a disclosure of alternatives
5. a statement concerning confidentiality of records
6. description of compensation, if any, and availability of medical treatment in the case of injury
7. contacts for questions concerning the research, research related injury, or research subjects' rights
8. a statement that participation is voluntary”

The same document argues that the following additional elements can also be considered when writing such document, if and when appropriate:

- a. “presence of unforeseeable risks
- b. circumstances under which a subject's participation may be terminated
- c. possible additional costs to the subject
- d. consequences of decision to withdraw
- e. assurance that new findings that might affect the subjects decision to participate will be communicated to the subject
- f. approximate number of subjects involved in the study”

1.2 Data protection and processing

Researchers at CITTA should be aware that the European Union has produced specific legislation concerning data protection and processing and that infringement of this legislation can have very heavy consequences for individuals and organisations. These include payment of substantial fees and a ban on being permitted to undertake activities where data processing is made. This legislation was produced in 2016 but it came into effect only in May 2018. It is called “General Data Protection Regulation”. For details in English, see [here](#). For the full legal document in Portuguese, see [here](#). The University College of London has a detailed set of guidelines - [UCL General Data Protection Regulation](#). Researchers at CITTA can consult these guidelines for further insights.

In practical terms, these are the key aspects to take into consideration:

- Maintain desktop computers, laptops and other digital devices in good conditions, particularly in terms of frequent update of high-quality Antivirus, Fire-Walls and other software aimed at safe use of digital means;

- Encrypt all digital data with passwords and keep them in safe digital environments. One effective way of doing this is through a process called double encryption. It consists of using software such as 7-Zip to compress documents in a password-protected form. Then the documents themselves are also password protected. To do this in Microsoft Word, see [here](#). Windows folders can also be made password protected, for instructions see [here](#);
- Avoid circulating emails with sensitive data, particularly when using gmail, outlook, yahoo or any other commercial email service that does not guarantee high standards of data protection. Sometimes the best way to transfer data from one computer to another is simply using a password USB-stick (remember to delete data from it when it is no longer needed, and to format these devices with some regularity);
- Avoid using online questionnaire tools that have not subscribed to the abovementioned legal framework;
- When sensitive data is on paper or any physical support, keep it locked in a safe place and be careful about who has access to it;
- Destroy sensitive data after the research project is concluded.

1.3 Plagiarism

Researchers at CITTA should be aware of the seriousness and diversity of issues around plagiarism. As a general resource, FEUP provides guidelines on how to publish and these can be found [here](#). For further information specifically about plagiarism, researchers have several online resources, for example those provided by this [website](#). FEUP also provides specific guidelines concerned with plagiarism, find them [here](#).

Researchers at CITTA should be aware that there are several types of [plagiarism](#). The most well-known is [plagiarism of text](#), however that is not the only one. It is also plagiarism when an author:

- Uses someone else's ideas, theories, explanations, or other intellectual outputs in a way that leads to the impression that these were developed by him- or herself. This is [plagiarism of ideas](#).
- Produces [redundant or duplicate](#) publications, that is, different publications with basically the same ideas or data. Note that publications can also be considered redundant or duplicate when data is artificially segmented in minor parts so that a specific analysis leads to multiple published outputs. This is [self-plagiarism](#).
- Uses his/her own published ideas or text in a new publication without citing his/her initial work. This is yet another form of [self-plagiarism](#).

There are various internet-based plagiarism detection services, per example PlagAware, PlagScan or Turnitin. These can be useful tools for researchers. A critical review of some of these services is provided [here](#).

1.4 Protection from harm

Researchers at CITTA should be very careful to avoid that harm results from their research activities. These should always be done taking into account health and safety principles (see dedicated section). Even though research on the topics covered by this research centre are not as ethically intricate as those undertaken in medicine and other fields that

directly interfere with the human body, one should not underestimate the capacity that misled decisions can have in inducing problems. Indeed, several forms of harm can occur as a result from research activities, for example:

- Against physical integrity
- Against psychological integrity (see section on Bullying)
- Against reputation or privacy (see section on Consent to publish and privacy)
- Against human dignity
- Other

The victims of harm can be more than research participants. Harm can be inflicted upon:

- Research participants as mentioned, but also
- Oneself and/or colleagues (see section on Health and Safety)
- People in general
- Animals
- Natural environment (see section on Environmental sustainability)
- Material objects with economic, symbolic, historic or any other form of societal or personal value
- Other

Harm can be inflicted because of many reasons. Some of them can be accepted as justifiable, for instance when an action causes an immediate small harm but will in the medium or long term lead to a great benefit. These should be seen as exceptional cases and a researcher facing this situation should engage with the Ethical Committee of the University of Porto. Note that there is a point beyond which this cost-benefit logic does not longer apply. Certain costs are unacceptable as a matter of principle, for example when they entail the violation of [human rights](#). This applies even when the benefits might be very high. Some argue that the violation of human rights might be acceptable in extreme circumstances, however these circumstances are for all intents and purposes outside the domain of activity of researchers at CITTA. Further insights about good practice in research and avoidance of harm can be found [here](#).

1.5 Specific suggestions for those involved in real-world car driving experiments

CITTA has a number of research projects focused on driving behaviour and vehicle enhancement. These projects might require the use of car drivers in real-world conditions. In some cases, only through experimentation in these conditions it becomes possible to test certain hypotheses. This raises a number of ethical challenges. Researchers at CITTA working on this area are therefore invited to make sure that:

1. The use of human subjects in real driving conditions is absolutely necessary (this requires considering whether there are suitable alternatives);
2. The benefits resulting from the research are sufficiently large to justify the risks incurred;
3. All possible efforts are made to minimize risks to individuals while maximizing the benefits of the research for society;
4. Informed consent is always given (taking into consideration the guidelines presented above in section 1.1)

Additionally to these more general points, the following practical suggestions are offered:

1. It is recommended that the research experiments are conducted in a way that maximises safety and reduces as much as possible the probability of accident and/or injury. This means that a detailed analysis of alternative experimental protocols, locations, types of vehicles, times of the day, and other specific conditions is performed before the experiment.
2. It is recommended that a risk assessment exercise is conducted before the use of a test vehicle in real conditions. These should include the specification of strategies and protocols aimed at reducing risk and dealing with problems, unexpected events, or accidents in the case they do occur.
3. As part of the risk assessment exercise, it is recommended that pilot tests are performed before running the experiments. The purpose of this is to make sure that the settings of the experiments are safe and do not interfere negatively with normal and safe traffic conditions.
4. Vehicles used in real driving conditions should have valid permission to circulate. Note that changes and adaptations made to vehicles so that they can perform as tools for experiments might lead them to require special permissions for use in real driving conditions – consult the traffic authority in case of doubt.
5. Experiments should be conducted in ways that respect the legal code and driving regulations at all times. The protocol of the experiment should not invite or suggest any form of illegal conduct.
6. The driver must have a valid driving licence and present him- or herself in suitable health and psychological conditions. Before conducting a test drive, the participant should sign a document where he/she declares that is not under the influence of any substances that might impair driving (alcohol, illicit substances, and medical substances).
7. The vehicle must have a valid insurance. Note that the conditions of the insurance policy need to be valid for the specific use of the vehicle made in the experiment. Make sure that the necessary legal documents are available for scrutiny by the local police or in case of accident or malfunction.
8. In some cases, it might be constructive to count with the presence of the police or other local authorities or emergency services during the experiment. This possibility should be considered to increase safety and guarantee that appropriate responses to setbacks are adopted if and when necessary.

Part 2. Ethical and well-being issues concerning general institutional practices

CITTA aims at being not only a group of people that conducts ethical research. It also aims at being an organisation that operates according to high ethical standards. This part of the guidelines offers some ideas concerning daily life at the centre. This applies not only to researchers, but to all staff members including secretaries and assistants.

2.1 Health and safety

Sitting. Staff members at CITTA are not exposed to many risks, however they typically sit for long periods of time at their desks. It is widely known that sitting for prolonged periods

of time can lead to back pain and other ailments. For this reason, it is recommended that researchers check whether they adopt a correct sitting posture. To test this, please go [here](#).

Moving. It is advisable not to stay seated for periods longer than 30 minutes. After this period of time, the best is to stand up, drink some water, stretch some muscles and breathe for a couple of minutes. Try to find a window and look at the most distant point you can identify. This helps relaxing your eyes and can help preventing some eye problems. Then one can resume work knowing that the body is better prepared for it. Colleagues should support each other in developing and maintaining these simple routines.

EMERGENCIES IN PORTO

If you feel unwell or someone nearby presents alarming signs, make sure to immediately contact the Health and Safety Officer of FEUP-DEC. This person is Joana Bailão, room G123, internal extension number 1505. The Safety Procedures of FEUP can be found [here](#), and tell you what to do in dangerous situations, medical emergencies and while offering first aid, during fires, gas leaks, floods, earthquakes, evacuations, and how to use a fire extinguisher or a fire blanket. The best is to study these procedures before the emergency and not during it! For example, do you know whether in the case of a serious medical emergency you should call first the national emergency number (112) or the internal emergency number (115)? (Right answer: first 112, then 115). Some other important telephone numbers are listed below.

Emergency contacts

Emergency internal number: #115 (FEUP Internal Network), or +351 912 233 377

External Entities

National Emergency Number 112
Firefighters 225 073 700
Porto Volunteer Firefighters 226 151 800
National Civil Protection 226 197 650
Emergency Poisoning Number 808 250 143
Health Assistance 808 24 24 24
Police: PSP 225 574 900
Police: GNR 223 399 600
Police: PJ (piquete) 225 088 644

FEUP first aiders

Ana Carvalho, SICC 4757
Carlos Maia, CICA 3043
Daniel Reis, CICA 3049
Emília Soares, DEMec 1526
Joana Bailão, DEC 1505
Fernando Pontes, SDI 3866
José Luís Moreira, DEQ 3686
Ramiro Soares, DEMM 3122
Ricardo Barbosa, UAD 3521
Rui Carvalho, DEEC 3287

EMERGENCIES IN COIMBRA

If you feel unwell or someone nearby presents alarming signs, make sure to immediately contact the Health and Safety Officer of FCTUC-DEC. This person is Ricardo Oliveira, internal extension number 422 227. Some other important telephone numbers are listed below.

Emergency contacts

National Emergency Number 112

Firefighters 239 822 122

Volunteer Firefighters 239 822 323

National Civil Protection 239 792 812

Emergency Poisoning Number 808 250 143

Health Assistance 808 24 24 24

Police: PSP 239 863 000

Police: GNR 239 794 300

2.2 Environmental concerns and fair trade

All staff members at CITTA should make informed choices regarding the products and services they acquire. Environmentally friendly products and services should be given as much preference as reasonable, as well as those associated with fair trade sources. More information about fair trade can be found [here](#).

2.3 Bullying

Bullying can be defined as the act of using greater physical or institutional powers to intimidate a person or group, typically to induce the bullying victim(s) to do or comply with something. The University of Coimbra is presently working on a document aimed at preventing bullying at work. Its preliminary form can be found [here](#). CITTA researchers should avoid committing bullying and do their best efforts to help victims of bullying. Note that some actions might be done without ill intentions but be interpreted as bullying. This can happen when people from different cultures or backgrounds interact. These situations are complex but can be solved. An example where an experiment at university grounds on reactions to physical bullying can be watched [here](#). What would you do?

There are different [forms of bullying](#). These include:

- Physical bullying (hitting, kicking, pushing, grabbing)
- Sexual bullying (forcing someone to engage sexually; but also *making comments of a sexual nature*)
- Verbal bullying (shouting, verbal attack and threats, joking, making humiliating comments)
- Social bullying (spreading rumours about someone, exclusion)
- Racial or gender-related bullying (using any other type of bullying as described above targeted against a given person or group due to their race, gender or sexual orientation)
- Cyber bullying (using the internet to perform any other type of bullying as described above)

Note that anyone can be a victim of bullying and not only those who seem to be vulnerable.

[Possible actions](#) that researchers at CITTA can do to address bullying include:

- Keep a written record of the bullying events and any evidence you might have that these took place
- Seek an early resolution for the problem as soon as possible (do not let the situation escalate). Perhaps the perpetrator is not aware that he/she is having this negative effect on you, so speak with him/her as soon as possible
- Seek help with senior staff or with colleagues
- Seek help with someone outside work, for example a friend or family member, but also a psychologist, a lawyer or a human resources manager
- Seek help and or present a complaint to the University Ethical Committee
- Make a formal charge in the police as most forms of bullying constitute a criminal offence

2.4 Equality of opportunities

CITTA aims at promoting an institutional environment where individuals are contracted, promoted, paid, and generally treated in ways that are fair and not influenced by their gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, nationality or disability. The aim is to give to all researchers and staff members at CITTA equality of opportunities so that they can achieve the best results according to their unique abilities. In the Portuguese context, it is relevant to take into consideration the resources and adult learning opportunities offered by [POISE](#): *Programa Operacional Inclusão Social e Emprego*. The consultation of the POISE website is recommended, particularly to staff members responsible for the writing of job applications and employment contracts and for those in leadership positions.

Appendix 1 – Consent form for participation in interviews

Note: This form can and should be adapted to match the specific characteristics of each research project

Formulário de consentimento para participação em entrevista

Título do projecto de investigação _____

Investigador(a) que conduz a entrevista _____

Entrevistado(a) _____

Informação para o entrevistado

1. Muito obrigado pela sua disponibilidade para participar nesta investigação como entrevistado.
2. Este formulário de consentimento está-lhe a ser apresentado para saber quais são os seus direitos como entrevistado e as regras de conduta ética pela qual este projeto de investigação se rege. **Uma cópia será para si e outra ficará na posse do(a) investigador(a).**
3. Tem o direito de interromper esta entrevista a qualquer altura e sem ter de oferecer justificações para o efeito. A sua participação deve ser perfeitamente voluntária e nada o obriga a participar.
4. A sua participação neste projeto como entrevistado é e será totalmente anónima.
5. Por favor, leia com atenção os seguintes pontos e – caso concorde com os mesmos – assinie este documento.
 - a. Esta entrevista será gravada e uma transcrição poderá ser escrita.
 - b. Acesso à gravação e/ou à transcrição será restringido apenas a si (caso queira) e a membros da equipe de investigação deste projeto.
 - c. Poderão ser utilizadas excertos da entrevista em publicações em revistas académicas e relatórios, contudo isto acontecerá de tal maneira que será impossível associar esses excertos à sua pessoa. Todo o uso que for feito da informação que oferecer será anonimizado.
 - d. Tanto a gravação como a transcrição da mesma serão encriptadas com palavra-chave e todos os cuidados serão tomados para que esta não seja acedida por terceiros.
 - e. Pode a qualquer momento contactar o investigador e/ou o seu(s) coordenador(e)s para obter informações adicionais sobre esta matéria.
 - f. Caso ache esta investigação problemática, deverá contactar a Comissão de Ética da Universidade do Porto ou qualquer dos membros da Subcomissão de Ética de Ciências Sociais e Humanas da mesma Universidade. Pesquise na internet “membros da comissão de ética da Universidade do Porto” e encontrará os contactos.

Ao assinar abaixo declara que entende e concorda com os pontos acima descritos. Caso não concorde ou queira fazer emendas/adendas, o espaço no verso desta folha deverá ser utilizado para anotar as emendas/adendas que estipule com o investigador que fará a entrevista.

O/a entrevistado(a)

O/a entrevistador(a) / investigador(a)

Local e data de realização da entrevista _____, ____ / ____ / ____

Emendas/adendas:

O/a entrevistado(a)

O/a entrevistador(a) / investigador(a)

Local e data de realização da entrevista _____, ____ / ____ / ____