



Ethics and well-being at CITTA

Suggestions for good practice

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Ethics at CITTA: Suggestions for good practice

The research endeavours and associated activities undertaken at CITTA are governed by a steadfast commitment to the ethical principles of academic rigor and excellence, copyright adherence, integrity, inclusiveness, and professionalism. This document, rooted in these core values, aims to provide a comprehensive framework of guidelines to sensitively navigate ethical considerations and dilemmas, while also pointing researchers towards further in-depth resources. It is structured into two primary sections: the first focuses on the research process itself, and the second addresses broader institutional practices that impact the ethical landscape of our work.

Conceived as a dynamic entity, this manual is subject to continuous refinement and updates to reflect evolving ethical standards and practices. Its development is a collaborative effort, drawing on the collective wisdom of CITTA members through workshops designed to review, amend, and enrich the content with insights derived from their individual and shared experiences. This participatory approach ensures that the document remains relevant, practical, and grounded in the real-world challenges and opportunities faced by our research community.

This manual is intended to complement the [Ethical Code of Academic Conduct](#) endorsed by the [Ethics Commission of the University of Porto](#) and the analogous [code](#) set forth by the [Commission for Research Ethics of the University of Coimbra](#). It aims to motivate CITTA researchers and staff to adhere to higher ethical standards and serve as a resource repository on ethics and workplace well-being. It seeks to complement, but never replace, existing codes by fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility, providing tools and insights that support ethical decision-making, and enhancing the overall integrity and ethical climate within our research community. Through this document, we aim to encourage a deeper engagement with ethical principles, ensuring that our collective actions are scientifically excellent and ethically sound.

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

At CITTA, researchers engaging in interviews, focus-groups, questionnaires, and any form of data collection involving human participants are mandated to safeguard the anonymity and integrity of these participants. The cornerstone of such interactions is the procurement of informed consent from all individuals involved in the study. This consent must be freely given, without any coercion or undue influence from the researcher. Appendix 1 provides a template for a consent form, designed for initial use in interviews but easily adaptable for other contexts such as focus group participation. This template serves as a foundational guideline, customizable to fit the unique requirements of various research projects and data collection methods.

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical principle in research involving human subjects. As articulated in the European Commission's [Ethics for Researchers](#) report, informed consent is recognised across numerous international conventions and guidelines as crucial for ensuring voluntary participation and addressing privacy concerns in research. Informed consent involves three essential elements: the provision of adequate information, the assurance of voluntariness, and the confirmation of the participant's competence. Participants must be comprehensively informed about the research objectives, potential risks, the right to refuse or withdraw at any time without repercussions, and their capacity to understand and consent to their involvement fully.

The following elements can be seen as fundamental for a high-quality informed consent document:

- A declaration that the activity is research-based.
- An explanation of any potential risks or discomforts.
- Information on the benefits to the subject or others.
- Disclosure of any alternatives to participation.
- Guarantees regarding the confidentiality of records.
- Details of any compensation or medical treatment available in case of injury.
- Contact information for inquiries about the research, potential injuries related to the research, or the rights of research subjects.
- A statement emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation.

Additionally, the document should consider including, where relevant:

- The possibility of unforeseeable risks.
- Conditions under which participation may be terminated by the researcher.
- Potential additional costs to the participant.
- The implications of withdrawing from the study.
- An assurance that new information affecting participation will be promptly communicated.
- The estimated number of participants in the study.

These guidelines aim to ensure that all research conducted under the auspices of CITTA adheres to the highest informed consent standards, respecting the dignity, rights, and welfare of all participants.

1.2 Data management, protection, and processing

Researchers at CITTA need to be cognizant of the specific legislation enacted by the European Union regarding data protection and processing. Non-compliance with this legislation can result in severe repercussions for both individuals and organizations. Consequences may include the imposition of significant fines and a prohibition on engaging in activities involving data processing. This legislation, known as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), was established in 2016 and became effective in May 2018. For a comprehensive explanation in English, click [here](#). For access to the full legal text in Portuguese, click [here](#).

To adhere to these regulations practically, researchers should focus on the following key principles and practices:

- Obtain explicit consent from data subjects for processing their personal data, especially for sensitive information. Consent must be freely given, specific, informed, and unambiguous. Inform stakeholders of the rights of data subjects, including the right to access their data, the right to have inaccurate data corrected, the right to have their data erased (the “right to be forgotten”), the right to restrict processing, and the right to data portability. The right of data portability is a provision that allows individuals to obtain and reuse their personal data for their own purposes across different services. This right enables data subjects to receive the data they have provided to a researcher in a structured, commonly used, and machine-readable format, and to transmit those data to another entity without hindrance from the researcher to which the data have been provided.
- Collect only the data that is strictly necessary for the purposes for which it is processed. Ensure that the use of data is limited to the specific purposes for which it was collected, as outlined to data subjects at the time of collection.

- Data breaches likely to result in a risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals must be reported to the appropriate data protection authority within 72 hours of the organization becoming aware of it. If the breach poses a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals, those individuals must also be notified without undue delay.
- Avoid all transfers of personal data outside the European Union. Such transfers are only allowed where the European Commission has decided that the third country, a territory or one or more specified sectors within that third country, or the international organization in question, ensures an adequate level of data protection.
- Ensure that desktop computers, laptops, and other digital devices are well-maintained, particularly with regular updates of high-quality antivirus software, firewalls, and other tools essential for secure digital operations. In case of doubt, please contact the computer services of your university/department/faculty.
- Secure all digital data through encryption, utilizing passwords and storing them in secure digital environments. An effective strategy is double encryption, which involves compressing documents with password protection using software like 7-Zip, in addition to password-protecting the documents themselves. For encryption instructions in Microsoft Word, see [here](#). To password-protect Windows folders, see [here](#).
- Refrain from distributing emails containing sensitive data, especially through commercial email services like Gmail or Outlook, which do not meet the highest data protection standards. Often, the safest method for transferring data between computers is via a password-protected USB stick (ensure that the data is erased when no longer needed and format these devices after using them in this way).
- Avoid using online questionnaire tools that do not comply with the legal framework.
- When handling sensitive data in physical form, secure it in a locked location and monitor access carefully.
- Properly dispose of sensitive data once the research project is concluded.

By implementing these measures, CITTA researchers can ensure compliance with GDPR and safeguard sensitive data effectively.

Furthermore, researchers at CITTA will benefit from developing their understanding of the FAIR principles of data management. The FAIR principles were first introduced in a 2016 publication titled [The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship](#) in the journal *Scientific Data*. These principles were developed by a group of stakeholders, including funders, publishers, and scholars, during a workshop in Leiden, the Netherlands, in 2014. The goal was to address the challenges of data management and usage in the digital age, ensuring that data produced by research activities could be more easily shared, accessed, and reused, not only within the scientific community but also in the broader context to advance knowledge and innovation.

The FAIR acronym stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable, each representing a key facet in the management and stewardship of digital assets:

- Findable: Making data easy to find for both humans and computers through the use of unique identifiers and searchable metadata.
- Accessible: Ensuring that once data is found, it is accessible with clear and open access protocols, possibly requiring authentication and authorization.
- Interoperable: Enabling data to be integrated with other data and to interoperate with applications or workflows for analysis, storage, and processing.

- Reusable: Ensuring that data can be reused in different contexts, which requires rich, accessible metadata, clear data usage licenses, and adherence to community standards.

These principles have been widely adopted by the research community, funding bodies, and data repositories as a framework for making research data available and usable to the widest possible audience, yet in a safe and ethical way.

1.3 Plagiarism

Researchers at CITTA must recognize the critical and varied nature of issues related to plagiarism. As a foundational resource, FEUP offers comprehensive guidelines on publication practices, accessible [here](#). For detailed insights specifically concerning plagiarism, researchers can explore a wealth of online resources, such as those available at this [website](#). These resources are instrumental in fostering an understanding of academic integrity and ensuring adherence to ethical standards in research and publication.

Researchers at CITTA must understand that [plagiarism manifests in several forms](#) beyond the widely recognized [textual plagiarism](#). It constitutes an ethical breach not only when one replicates text without proper attribution but also in the following scenarios:

- Plagiarism of [Ideas](#): This occurs when an individual adopts another's ideas, theories, explanations, or intellectual contributions without acknowledgment, creating the false impression of original authorship.
- [Duplicate Publications](#): Engaging in the practice of publishing multiple works that essentially convey the same ideas or data constitutes redundant or duplicate publication. This also includes the segmentation of data into minor parts for the purpose of generating multiple publications from a single analysis or dataset, known as "salami slicing".
- [Self-Plagiarism](#): Using one's previously published ideas or text in a new work without proper citation of the original publication is considered self-plagiarism. It misleads the audience about the novelty and originality of the current work.

To assist in identifying and preventing plagiarism, various online plagiarism detection services are available, such as PlagAware, PlagScan, Turnitin and Grammarly. These tools can be invaluable for researchers seeking to ensure the integrity of their work.

1.4 Protection from harm

Researchers at CITTA must exercise utmost caution to prevent harm resulting from their research activities. It is imperative to conduct all research in alignment with health and safety principles (refer to the dedicated section). Although the research themes addressed by this centre might not present ethical complexities akin to those in medicine or fields directly involving the human body, the potential for misinformed decisions to cause significant issues should never be underestimated. Various forms of harm can arise from research activities, including but not limited to:

- Harm to physical integrity
- Harm to psychological well-being (refer to the section on bullying)
- Infringements on privacy or reputation (refer to section on informed consent and privacy)
- Violations of human dignity
- Other forms of harm

Potential victims of such harm extend beyond research participants and may include:

- Research participants, as previously mentioned
- The researchers themselves and/or their colleagues (refer to the section on Health and Safety)
- The general public
- Animals
- The natural environment (refer to the section on Environmental Sustainability)
- Material objects possessing economic, symbolic, historic, or any other form of societal or personal significance
- Other entities or values

Harm may arise for various reasons, some of which might be deemed justifiable, such as actions that cause immediate minor harm but are expected to yield significant benefits in the medium or long term. These instances should be considered exceptional, and researchers encountering such dilemmas are advised to consult with the University of Porto's Ethical Committee. It is important to note that the logic of weighing costs against benefits has its limits; certain costs are inherently unacceptable, especially those involving violations of [human rights](#), regardless of the potential benefits. While some argue that human rights violations might be permissible under extreme circumstances, such situations are categorically beyond the scope of CITTA researchers' activities. For further guidance on best practices in research and harm prevention, please see [here](#).

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

CITTA is actively engaged in research projects centred on driving behaviour and vehicle innovation. These initiatives often necessitate the involvement of car drivers under real-world conditions to validate certain hypotheses, presenting unique ethical challenges. To ensure the ethical conduct of such research, CITTA researchers are advised to adhere to the following principles:

- Confirm that involving human subjects in real driving scenarios is indispensable. This involves exploring alternative methods that might achieve similar research outcomes without exposing participants to potential risks. The use of CITTA's driving simulator is always preferable, whenever possible.
- Thoroughly assess whether the anticipated benefits of the research significantly outweigh the risks. This calculation should consider both the societal benefits and the personal risks to participants.
- Diligently work towards minimizing risks to participants while striving to maximize the research's societal benefits. This involves implementing stringent safety measures and continuously evaluating potential hazards.
- Ensure that all participants provide informed consent, fully understanding the research's scope, associated risks, and their rights as outlined in section 1.1.

To supplement these ethical guidelines, the following practical recommendations are offered to further enhance safety and ethical compliance:

- Design experiments with paramount consideration for safety, minimizing the likelihood of accidents or injuries. This involves a comprehensive analysis of experimental protocols, settings, vehicle types, and timings to identify the safest possible conditions.
- Conduct a detailed risk assessment prior to deploying test vehicles in real conditions. This should outline strategies and protocols for risk mitigation and address potential emergencies or accidents.
- Implement pilot tests to ensure the experimental setup does not compromise traffic safety or interfere with normal driving conditions adversely.

- Ensure that vehicles used have the necessary permissions to operate under experimental conditions. Modifications to vehicles for research purposes may require additional clearances from traffic authorities.
- Maintain strict compliance with all driving laws and regulations throughout the experiment. The experimental protocol should not encourage or necessitate any illegal activities.
- Verify that all drivers hold a valid license and are in appropriate physical and psychological condition to participate. Drivers must declare absence of impairment by substances that could influence driving capabilities.
- Confirm that the vehicle is adequately insured for the specific purposes of the experiment. The insurance policy must cover the unique conditions of the experiment, and all relevant documents should be readily available.
- Consider involving police, local authorities, or emergency services during the experiment to enhance safety and ensure swift response to any incidents.

1.6 Tentative guidelines for using ChatGPT and other generative AI tools

Recent advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) have transformed generative AI tools like ChatGPT into invaluable resources for work. However, it is crucial for users to grasp the limitations inherent to such technologies. Many of these tools, with certain exceptions noted [here](#), do not have internet access and rely solely on the data available from their most recent training update. This limitation means that AI tools may not possess the most current information, potentially leading to outdated or irrelevant responses to new information trends. Furthermore, they should not be considered reliable sources of factual information, necessitating users to verify all AI-provided data rigorously.

It is essential to understand that these tools are not designed to function as search engines or as producers of finalised texts. Instead, their responses are based on statistical models that infer the most probable answer to a given prompt when considering the database they were trained with. Therefore, texts generated by AI should serve as a foundation for critical thinking and creativity rather than as ready-to-use products assumed to contain accurate facts and logical ideas.

Despite these limitations, AI tools can be exceptionally beneficial for brainstorming, provided users know how to craft prompts effectively and interpret generated texts as the outputs of highly limited, yet surprisingly capable, language models. Each AI tool operates based on specific algorithms, necessitating a user's understanding of these mechanisms to leverage the technology effectively. Moreover, upgrades to the AI tool may alter its functionality, requiring users to adapt their interaction strategies on a regular basis.

This field is constantly developing, and opinions diverge on the ethics associated with their use. Researchers at CITTA are therefore advised to use their personal practical wisdom and ethical judgment when using these tools while keeping themselves alert, updated and informed. Relevant information can be found at the Northwestern University Libraries Research Guides, accessed via this [link](#). The [Sentient Syllabus Project](#)'s "Understanding AI Issues" is yet another important resource to be accessed [here](#), as it explains how these technologies work and the consequent issues that arise from their architecture.

Part 2: Ethical and well-being considerations in institutional practices

CITTA is committed to fostering not just a culture of ethical research but also to embodying an organizational ethos rooted in high ethical standards. This section provides guidance on enhancing the everyday working environment at CITTA, applicable to everyone in our community, including researchers, administrative staff, and support personnel.

2.1 Health and safety

Sitting Posture: Long hours of sedentary work pose a health risk, often leading to back pain and other physical issues. We encourage all staff members to assess and improve their sitting posture regularly. Guidelines for maintaining a healthy posture can be found [here](#).

Movement and Breaks: To counter the negative effects of prolonged sitting, it's advisable to take short breaks every 30 minutes. During these breaks, stand up, hydrate, perform some light stretching, and practice deep breathing. Looking out of a window at a distant point can help relax the eyes and prevent strain. We urge colleagues to support each other in adopting these healthy habits to enhance overall well-being.

2.2 Environmental concerns and fair trade

All members of the CITTA team are encouraged to exercise mindful discretion in their procurement decisions, prioritizing environmentally sustainable products and services whenever feasible. Equally important is the consideration for products that adhere to fair trade practices, supporting equitable trade benefits for producers in developing countries. For a deeper understanding of the “10 Fair Trade Principles”, further details can be accessed [here](#).

2.3 Harassment and discrimination in the workplace

Harassment is a harmful behaviour where individuals use their physical strength, institutional authority, or other forms of power to intimidate or coerce others, often to force compliance or submission.

Discrimination in the workplace refers to unfair or prejudicial treatment of employees based on certain characteristics such as race, gender, age, religion, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic. This treatment can manifest in various forms, including hiring, firing, promotion, compensation, job assignments, training opportunities, and other terms and conditions of employment.

The University of Porto has published in 2022 its Code of Good Conduct for the Prevention and Combat of Harassment and Discrimination in the Workplace, which can be found [here](#). The University of Coimbra is developing a similar document, which can be accessed [here](#) in its preliminary form.

At CITTA, it is imperative that all researchers not only refrain from engaging in problematic behaviours but also actively support those who may be victims. It is important to recognize that actions, even if not maliciously intended, can be perceived as harassment and discrimination, especially in diverse environments where cultural or background differences might lead to misunderstandings. These situations, while complex, are not insurmountable and require sensitive handling to resolve.

- Harassment can manifest in various forms, including but not limited to:
- Physical harassment: Physical harm such as hitting, kicking, or pushing.
- Sexual harassment: Unwanted sexual advances or remarks.
- Verbal harassment: Insults, threats, or any form of verbal abuse.
- Social harassment: Spreading rumours, social exclusion, or any action intended to socially isolate the victim.

- Discriminatory harassment: Targeting individuals based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes.
- Cyberbullying: Utilizing digital platforms to harass or demean someone.

NOTE THAT ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM OF HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION AND NOT ONLY THOSE WHO SEEM TO BE VULNERABLE.

To effectively address bullying, CITTA researchers and staff are advised to:

- Document incidents, including dates, times, and any available evidence.
- Aim for an early resolution, recognizing that the aggressor may be unaware of the impact of their actions.
- Seek support from senior staff, colleagues, or external sources such as friends, family, mental health professionals, legal counsel, or human resources experts.
- Report the issue to the University's Ethical Committee if internal resolution efforts are unsuccessful.
- Consider legal action for serious cases, as many forms of harassment may constitute criminal offenses.

By fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding, and by taking decisive action against bullying, CITTA can contribute to a safer, more inclusive academic community.

2.4 Equality of opportunities

CITTA is dedicated to fostering an institutional culture where fairness and equality underpin all work and employment practices, including hiring, promotion, compensation, and general treatment. This commitment extends to ensuring that decisions are free from bias related to gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, race, nationality, or disability. Our goal is to provide every researcher and staff member within CITTA equal opportunities to excel based on their unique talents and capabilities.

In the context of Portugal, it's important to acknowledge the significance of leveraging resources and adult learning opportunities available through PESSOAS 2030: Programa Temático Demografia, Qualificações e Inclusão. We highly recommend visiting the PESSOAS [website](#), especially for staff involved in drafting job postings and employment contracts, as well as those in managerial or leadership roles. This resource is invaluable for aligning with our principles of equality and inclusion, ensuring our practices not only meet but exceed the standards of fairness and equal opportunity.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES IN PORTO

In case of feeling unwell or observing distressing symptoms in someone else, immediately reach out to the Health and Safety Officer at FEUP-DEC, Joana Bailão, located in room G123, reachable via internal extension **1505**. Familiarize yourself with FEUP's Safety Procedures here, which detail actions for various emergencies, including medical incidents, fires, gas leaks, floods, earthquakes, and evacuations, along with instructions on using fire extinguishers and fire blankets. It is crucial to review these procedures in advance rather than during an actual emergency. For instance, in a severe medical emergency, should you call the national emergency number (112) or the internal emergency number (115) first? (Correct sequence: 112, then 115). Additional vital contact information is provided below for easy reference.

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

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES 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

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 – assine 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 _____, ____ / ____ / _____