

Framework for Ethical Learning Technology (FELT)

ALT's Framework for Ethical Learning Technology (FELT) is designed to support individuals, organisations and industry in the ethical use of learning technology across sectors. It forms part of ALT's [strategic aim](#) to *strengthen recognition and representation for Learning Technology professionals from all sectors*.

The need for such a framework has become increasingly urgent as Learning Technology has been adopted on a larger scale than ever before and as the leading professional body for Learning Technology in the UK, representing 3,500 Members, ALT is well placed to lead this effort.

We [define Learning Technology](#) as the broad range of communication, information and related technologies that are used to support learning, teaching and assessment. We recognise the wider context of Learning Technology policy, theory and history as fundamental to its ethical, equitable and fair use.

Building on ALT's professional accreditation framework, [CMALT](#), which was expanded to include ethical considerations for professional practice and research in 2019, a working group of 120 members helped define this framework alongside tools and resources for individuals, institutions and industry.

Scope of the framework

The purpose of this document is to articulate a framework for ethical professional practice in Learning Technology, not a set of rigid rules that apply to particular tools, technologies or contexts.

The framework is designed to address the diverse range of contexts in which Learning Technology professionals work and are aligned with CMALT. This framework is intended to be used alongside ethical policies for research as well as subject- or industry specific code of practice, such as BERA's *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, Farrow's *Framework for the Ethics of Open Education* (2016) and IFLA *Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers* (2016).

The next phase of work will be focused on collating case studies and example policies that will show ethical approaches in practice. We are looking to develop mappings between this framework and other relevant frameworks in collaboration with professional and sector bodies.

Awareness

- Respect the autonomy and interests of different stakeholders
- Be mindful, reflective and reflexive
- Think critically about your practice and consider the wider environment(s) you can influence
- Recognise the limits of one's own knowledge and the possibility of unconscious bias

Professionalism

- Demonstrate accountable, evidence-led practice
- Commit to ongoing professional development and enhancing your skills
- Act with integrity and honesty
- Ensure practice complies with relevant laws and institutional policies
- Apply knowledge and research to advocate for and enhance ethical approaches

Care and Community

- Practice care of oneself and others
- Promote collegiality and mutual understanding
- Minimise the risk of harms
- Recognise responsibilities and influence beyond your institution
- Share and disseminate best practice

Values

- Support the agency and development of learners
- Promote fair and equitable treatment, enhancing access to learning
- Develop learning environments that are inclusive and supportive
- Celebrate diversity as a route to innovation
- Design services, technologies to be widely accessible
- Be accountable and prepared to explain decision-making
- Be as open and transparent as is appropriate



Association for Learning Technology (ALT) 2021
go.alt.ac.uk/EdTechEthics

See the Appendix for the full text version.

What is the purpose of the framework?

FELT is designed to support individual practitioners using digital technologies for learning, teaching and assessment and institutions as well as the edtech industry.

Practitioners

For Learning Technology professionals in education and training, the framework is designed to provide clear guidance, pathways to accreditation and practical tools, such as:

- Reflective self-assessment tool with questions/prompts to reflect on the ethical use of Learning Technology
- Examples from accredited CMALT portfolios
- Case studies from different contexts with reflective prompts
- Prompts to facilitate conversations with users and colleagues
- Self-guided reflective prompts for personal reflection

Institutions

For institutions such as universities, colleges, schools and other providers, the framework is designed to inform policies and strategic decision making in the use of digital technologies for learning, teaching and assessment. We are developing resources specifically for institutions, including:

- List of example policies from other institutions
- Prompts for discussion with vendors/suppliers
- Prompts for discussion with users including students
- Case studies from institutions
- Case studies from vendors/suppliers
- Mappings to other professional/ethical frameworks

Industry

For commercial edtech providers and companies the framework offers ways to demonstrate how ethical considerations are taken into account and support customers during the procurement process.

In addition to the resources mentioned above, we are designing a checklist modelled on the DELICATE checklist for Learning Analytics with kind permission from the authors.

The purpose of the checklist is not to encourage a 'box-ticking' approach to ethical professional practice, but to bring together key questions and considerations to prompt discussion between institutions and edtech companies.



What's next

The work to further develop the framework is now underway. We invite you to:

- **Keep informed:** Members will receive a quarterly update about the new framework. If you are not already a Member, consider joining or sign up to our public monthly updates;
- **Join the summit:** we are holding an annual summit meeting online, helping you learn about the new strategic developments and research;
- **Contribute:** We are actively looking for contributions in order to develop a robust baseline of policies and practice.

How to contribute

Year 1, September 2021 - September 2022

In the first year our focus is on collecting examples of case studies and policies from individuals and institutions. Specifically we are looking for:

- Example policies from other institutions (ideally openly licenced)
- Case studies of professional practice from different contexts
- Case studies from institutions
- Case studies from vendors/suppliers

Year 2, September 2022 - September 2023

In the second year our focus will be on developing pathways to accreditation and expanding the framework via mappings to other standards. Specifically we are looking for:

- Examples from accredited CMALT portfolios
- Mappings to other professional/ethical frameworks

Resources and references

The development of this framework has been informed by many references and resources contributed by the working group. We are continuing to collate references and resources as part of the development of the framework.

Core Principle: Professionalism

[*BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*](#), (2018)

[*A Framework for the Ethics of Open Education*](#), Farrow, R. (2016). *Open Praxis*, 8(2), 93-109

[*IFLA Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers*](#) (2016)

[*AoIR Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*](#), Ethics Working Committee (2019)

[*Understanding critical data literacy beyond data skills*](#), Atenas, Javiera, Havemann, Leo, Khun, Caroline, & Timmermann, Cristian. (2021, August 3)

[*An annotated version of the AECT Code of Professional Ethics 2018*](#), Digital Pedagogy Lab (2020)

[*Code of practice for learning analytics*](#), Jisc (2018),

Core Principle: Values

[*Ethical Use of Technology in Digital Learning Environments: Graduate Student Perspectives*](#) (2020) by Verena Roberts, Barbara Brown, Michele Jacobsen, and Christie Hurrell ([introduction](#), [blog](#)) also known as #EdTechEthics, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

[*Nel Noddings, the ethics of care and education', The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*](#), Smith, M. K. (2004, 2020)

[*Education before Regulation: Empowering Students to Question Their Data Privacy*](#), Caines, A. and Glass, E. (October, 2019)

[*Principles for Ethical Use of Personalized Student Data*](#), University of Athabasca (2020)

Core Principle: Care & Community

[*Teaching Ethics with Theatre of the Oppressed and Liberating Structures*](#), Maha Bali

[*Is This Technology Ethical? Analysis Helper for Educators and the Ethical EdTech Wiki*](#) by Technoethics DigCiz

Core Principle: Awareness

[Ethical use of Student Data for Learning Analytics](#), The Open University (2014)

[Learning Analytics Principles and Purposes](#), University of Edinburgh (2018)

[Ethical OS Toolkit](#) (2018), the Institute for the Future (IFTF) and Omidyar Network

[Learning analytics data use policy](#), University of Wollongong (2020)

[Center for Humane Technology](#)

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the input of all members of the working group, everyone who has provided input during the consultation and in particular:

- Bella Abrams, Sharon Flynn and Natalie Lafferty who chaired the working group;
- Dr Robert Farrow and Professor John Traxler who provided input to the development of this document;
- Colleagues from the Open University and the University of Edinburgh who helped test and develop the contribution process.

We would also like to thank everyone who contributed resources and references which informed the development of the framework and all who commented on the early drafts and resources.

Thank you all for participating in this important strategic project.



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Appendix

How the framework was developed - October '20 - September '21

The development of the framework was led by an open working group. The [working group](#) was led by [ALT Trustees](#) Bella Abrams, Sharon Flynn and Natalie Lafferty and includes learners and representatives from industry.

Work to establish ALT's new ethical framework started in October 2020. Following the initial period of establishing the working group and holding regular meetings, we collected input and feedback which informed the next phase of work.

In January 2021 we started work on drafting the ethical principles and resources and over the course of three months, this resulted in a draft document that was then circulated for wider consultation.

We conducted an open consultation from 7 May - 9 June 2021 and received 165 responses - thank you!

The consultation asked for feedback and input about different elements of the framework:

- Ethical principles for professional practice in Learning Technology
- Putting principles into action - reflective practice, practical tools and a checklist

75% of respondents are Members of ALT, and includes individuals working in all education sectors, including 12% of responses from industry, with the majority being from Higher Education. We published the [summary findings](#) at ALT's Annual General Meeting and the next working group meeting.

Resources and references that informed the development of the framework

How to define ethical approaches to using Learning Technology is a complex and wide-ranging topic. During the development of this framework we gathered a large number of [resources and references](#) that informed its development and helped us learn from others who have done work in this area.

As part of the framework, we will continue to update and expand our knowledge of the wider context and continue to make this openly accessible for the community via our website.

Find out more about the development of the framework [here](#).

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