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Guidance on teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education



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Tel: 0116 252 9523; email: P4P@bps.org.uk.

For all other enquiries tel 0116 254 9568; email mail@bps.org.uk

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The British Psychological Society

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK

Telephone 0116 254 9568 Facsimile 0116 247 0787

E-mail mail@bps.org.uk Website www.bps.org.uk

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1. Background and rationale

The Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society (BPS) convened a ‘consensus group’ which has drawn up this framework document for ethics in psychology education. The membership of the group included representatives from different areas of professional psychology and psychology education, together with a specialist in philosophy and ethics.

The aim of this document is:

- to enable appropriate ethical knowledge and practice at all levels of study in psychology;
- to provide guidance that cultivates an ethical mindset in psychology students; and
- to provide practical resources to aid in the teaching of ethics.

The Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (BPS, 2009) contains an introductory section covering decision making, the rationale for the structure of the Code and an account of the ethical principles involved. In the section on decision making it states that consideration of ethics should permeate all activity related to psychology and that:

‘whilst ethics and psychology are distinct, there is nevertheless an overlap as both are concerned with behaviour.’

This guidance is designed to provide a framework for good practice in the teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education. It has been developed in the context of the Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and makes general points concerning psychology and education, such as how teaching environments can affect learning, as well as more specific points related to ethics.

The Ethics Committee thanks all of those people that were involved in the creation of this document and encourages individuals and departments to use it as a resource for teaching and assessment.

Prof Kate Bullen
Chair, Ethics Committee

Dr Tony Wainwright
Immediate Past Chair, Ethics Committee

Background

This work has been undertaken at a time when trust in the ethical standards of many institutions has been questioned (e.g. banks, care homes and the NHS). Whilst research, public debate and discussion on some of these ethical questions has never been more active there has been much disquiet regarding the reporting of unethical conduct in many areas of public life, including medical practice and academia (Goldacre, 2012; Stroebe et al., 2012). When reports of wrongdoing appear they are often followed by increased regulation and additional codes of conduct. Although the intent is to reduce unethical behaviour, there is little evidence that codes alone achieve this aim.

A further problem is that codes cannot provide specific responses to questions raised by emergent issues, such as the rapid development of technology. For example, using imaging techniques in research (e.g. fMRI scans) raises the question of whether participants should be informed if there are anomalies in their brain scans.¹ Existing codes can be applied to

¹ This area has emerged as a field of ethical discourse in itself, termed neuroethics (Levy, 2007).

this question, but this assumes that those involved have the skills to interpret and understand the relevant principles (BPS, 2014a). Consequently, developing our ability to teach students about ethics and ethical action, and to assess their levels of understanding, offers a way to counter misconduct and manage changing ethical landscapes. This guidance is intended as a contribution towards that goal.

2. A psychologically-informed approach to the teaching of ethics

In the following sections we present a model of ethical conduct that was developed by Rest (Rest, 1982; Rest & Narvez, 1994) and provides a good starting point for educators to consider the required levels of ethical competence at different levels of psychology education.

2.1 The Four Component Model (Rest, 1982)

Rest's model is psychologically-informed, conceptually elegant and easy to understand. Rest argues that (from a psychological perspective) ethical thinking can be seen as progressing through a number of stages, rather than being a unitary construct. His model includes four components which, taken together, identify the sequence of thoughts and actions that result in ethical behaviour. These are:

- **Ethical sensitivity:** Interpreting the situation, and identifying the presence of an ethical issue.
- **Ethical reasoning:** Formulating the morally ideal course of action by identifying the relevant ethical issues and using these principles to consider appropriate actions.
- **Ethical motivation:** Deciding what one actually wishes and intends to do.
- **Ethical implementation:** Executing and implementing what one intends to do.

Box A: Ethical sensitivity: example adapted from Herbert et al. (1990)

What ethical issues can be identified in the following vignette?

You visit an 82-year-old woman in her home. Previously she was healthy and independent. She has been deteriorating for five weeks, since her husband died. She has lost weight, is mildly delirious, and has taken to her bed. You think she needs to come into hospital for further investigations, but she adamantly refuses and insists that she will be better off at home.

There are many potential issues raised here, all of which would be worthy of attention. For example:

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| I. Autonomy | Will our actions respect the client's wishes?
How do you judge the client's competence to make decisions?
How can we prioritise interventions that maintain independence? |
| II. Beneficence | Does our plan make the situation better rather than worse?
Does our plan prevent harm?
Does our plan provide appropriate psychological or medical treatment? |
| III. Justice | Does our plan balance the needs of the client with the needs of the wider society?
Does our plan distribute health resources fairly and equitably?
Does our plan balance the interests and wishes of the client, family and friends fairly? |

2.1.1 Ethical sensitivity

Behaving ethically is based on ethical sensitivity. Noticing what ethical issues are raised by a course of action makes it more likely that ethical practice will follow (and failing to notice that there is any ethical issue to consider is an obvious threat to ethical practice).

Helpfully, research suggests that instruction in ethics can increase ethical sensitivity (Harkrider et al., 2012). For example, Park et al. (2012) showed that ethical sensitivity amongst senior nursing students was greater than amongst new students who had yet to begin ethical instruction. However, levels of ethical sensitivity are likely to vary considerably. Herbert et al. (1990) asked medical students to identify ethical issues from a vignette and found high levels of variability in the number of issues identified by different students (see Box A). As such, enhancing a capacity for ethical sensitivity is an important educational objective.

2.1.2 Ethical reasoning

Ethical reasoning is the capacity to be able to consciously articulate the rationale for taking a particular course of action. Rest (1982) suggests that exercises based on this component need to be matched to the developmental level of students.²

Although moral reasoning has been viewed as a logical process based on rational thinking (e.g. Kohlberg, 1981) the work of Daniel Kahneman and colleagues (e.g. Kahneman & Tversky, 1984) indicates that ethical reasoning is often subject to cognitive biases. They have explored the ways in which real decision-making deviates from rational models, arguing that moral judgements are often affected by various competing biases (see Boxes B and C with examples from a clinical and research setting). Maintaining an awareness of such biases is clearly important when trying to think through ethical dilemmas.

Box B: The ethics of receiving gifts from clients

A service operates a policy under which gifts from clients need to be declared and passed on to the team as a whole. What cognitive biases might influence whether an individual accepts a 'gift' – for example:

1. **Saliency:** Hearing of a colleague who has been suspended for not declaring a gift might make it more likely that workers would refuse a gift.
2. **Loss aversion:** If a worker had the gift in their possession, and then considered giving it up, they might be influenced by loss aversion. This bias could make it harder for them to pass the gift on, as once they have it, they will be less likely to want to give it up.
3. **Beliefs about disclosure:** Under controlled conditions, people tend to be more honest when they believe their actions will be known by others (Ariely, 2012). So, for example, in an unobserved individual therapy the risk of dishonesty is higher than in a group situation.
4. **Dissonance reduction:** People justify their actions by rationalisations, which allow them to justify keeping the gift on the grounds that it was too small to be shared.

² Gibbs (2014) is a particularly influential thinker whose book summarises the most recent work in this field. This is an advanced text, but written in an engaging style that tracks the developmental trajectory of moral reasoning.

Box C: Potential cognitive biases in research and data analysis

1. **Saliency:** People estimate how frequently something occurs based on how easily it comes to mind. If you rarely hear of researchers engaging in unethical research practices (and it won't be openly discussed for obvious reasons) you might assume it never happens. However, surveys suggest that unethical practices are common. For example, Martinson et al. (2005) report that 33 per cent of researchers admitted to engaging in some unethical research practices.
2. **Confirmation bias:** There is a human tendency to look for evidence that confirms hypotheses and to ignore other evidence. This can lead researchers only to report data that confirms their favoured hypothesis.
2. **Loss aversion:** If a researcher feared losing grant money due to non-significant outcomes they might engage in risky behaviour by cherry-picking or even falsifying data.
3. **Beliefs about disclosure:** Data analysis that goes unsupervised and is not made available to others is more likely to be susceptible to unethical practice.
4. **Dissonance reduction:** A researcher might justify manipulating data if they considered that the importance of their work overrode ethical considerations.³

It is important for teachers to be aware of these biases when providing ethics education. Rogerson et al. (2011) provide a comprehensive review of the work of Kahneman and colleagues as well as some practical suggestions for teachers of ethics.

2.1.3 Ethical motivation

Being able to spot an ethical problem and identify the relevant ethical issues takes us only part of the way towards ethical practice. Being motivated to act ethically is the next step, and so it is helpful to understand why motivation might be lacking.

Ethical motivation links to the values we have (for example, if someone overly values publication productivity they may be more motivated to pursue unethical research practices). Social psychological factors may also impact on willingness to engage in actions that could carry a personal cost. For example, amongst people who work together as a team identifying with the group could outweigh ethical considerations, resulting in a reluctance to report unethical behaviour (such as malpractice). As a result, individuals may be clear about the ethical question (sensitive to it) and they may also be able to reason through the most ethical course of action (ethical reasoning), but their motivation to act could be compromised (see Box D).

³ Diederik Stapel is a Dutch social psychologist who was recently found to have falsified a large amount of data. He talks about some of the reasons he did this at the following link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJhvYpMxG_k. See also Barkan et al. (2012) for some further examples.

Box D: Ethical motivation – some examples

Conformity and resistance: Many studies have shown the extent to which we are all affected by social norms and our sense of group identity (Tajfel et al., 1971). People may find themselves obeying authority unthinkingly (Benjamin & Simpson, 2009), and if the ‘in-group’ with which they identify is engaged in unethical behaviour it may be hard for them to achieve sufficient psychological distance to resist this. Studies that look at resistance (Haslam & Reicher, 2012) suggest that the institutional context can play a critical role in encouraging motivation and facilitating the implementation of ethical action by fostering a sense of being part of a group that is committed to ethical practice.

Consider this example from an online discussion amongst postgraduates who were responding to a request for members to take part in a study that, it transpired, had not received ethical approval. Most participants in the discussion felt that the postgraduate’s supervisor should not be informed because the purpose of the site is to support postgraduates, not to report them. Contributors to this discussion demonstrated ethical sensitivity, but their motivation to act was affected by a sense of loyalty to their fellow student.

The Bystander Effect: This is the name given to the tendency for people to fail to act when they assume that others are in a position to take action (Levine & Crowther, 2008) and again would be likely to come into play in a team situation as, for example, in many healthcare settings.

2.1.4 Ethical implementation

Putting an ethical plan into action depends on many skills including a capacity for leadership, effective prioritising and risk management. Individuals may have to make a decision regarding which, of many competing ethically relevant actions, should come first. For example, informing a participant of a potential brain abnormality uncovered during research on (supposedly) healthy participants would be fulfilling the requirement to avoid potential harm to the participant. However, as researchers are not radiologists this action also contravenes the principal that psychologists should operate within their area of expertise (and so, of course, other systems would be needed to be in place).

Organisational contexts often exert pressures to act in a variety of ways, each of which may be ethically justified on their own, but doing one may compromise another. For example keeping good records and recording risk may limit the time available to spend with patients in a clinical context.⁴ Dilemmas like this represent day-to-day decisions in some professional contexts, and skills at prioritising to minimize harm are essential. Examples of ethical dilemmas associated with ethical implementation are shown in Box E.

⁴ An effect described as the iatrogenic effect of risk management systems. (Wiener, 1998)

Box E: Ethical Implementation example

What psychological characteristics could influence the implementation of a plan to deal with examples of ethical misconduct?

1. Fear: There are many contemporary examples of individuals raising questions of ethical misconduct. These accounts have many things in common: most people report there is some form of retaliation. Commonly their efforts are either not believed or discounted (Miceli & Near, 2005; Miceli et al., 2012). Unsurprisingly, fear is a common reason for failing to implement ethical action.
2. Difficulty/Fatigue: Yong and Simonsohn (2012) uncovered three cases of fraudulent data that had been published in peer reviewed social psychology journals. In an interview for the journal *Nature* they reported having evidence for a fourth case that they may not pursue because the effort required to uncover misconduct is draining and time consuming.
3. Perverse reward systems: Behavioural ethics has started to develop a conceptual framework for understanding why people do not act ethically, particularly in business environments (see Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011 for a review). The introduction of the target culture into the NHS illustrates how targeting can have perverse outcomes, leading to improvements in some areas but at substantial cost in others, as staff lose sight of broader implications for practice (Seddon, 2008).

2.2 Mapping the Society's Principles and the Four Components – The Matrix Approach

Mapping the Society's principles of competence, responsibility, integrity and respect against the four components (ethical sensitivity, ethical reasoning, ethical motivation and ethical implementation) produces a number of themes that can be used in curriculum development. See Appendices.

For each educational environment – pre-tertiary, undergraduate, postgraduate (research), postgraduate (practitioner training) and PD level – we suggest that a subset of the principles outlined in the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* are prioritised, as not all will be equally relevant. For research and professional doctorates all elements of the code would be included.

As an illustration, an understanding of ethics in relation to record-keeping would be highly relevant for professional practice, but much less so for pre-tertiary students.

We use the term 'ethical competence' to denote a capacity for action as well as understanding. Although it is entirely possible for someone to live an ethical life and have no explicit knowledge of the discipline of psychology, our guidance is aimed at the education of students of psychology, and this knowledge forms a necessary part of that education.

Although a matrix approach has emerged as one solution to tracking and developing ethical competence, it should not be taken to indicate that acquiring discrete items of knowledge is sufficient. Psychology offers a variety of theories and approaches to education, learning and professional practice, which we do not cover in this guidance.

In the discussion of different programmes and educational levels the structure we have adopted is indicative and we recognise that some programmes need to adapt the guidance to their own circumstances.

3. Ethics education in pre-tertiary psychology

At this level of study a broad approach to ethics is recommended, allowing for the fact that a career choice involving psychology may or may not have been made by the student at pre-tertiary level psychology. In general the age at which most students undertake pre-tertiary studies is a critical period during which they will form opinions about the kind of person they want to be. Consequently, an understanding of ethical behaviour at this juncture could have a positive impact on students' development. In addition, as large numbers of students study psychology at this level, instilling an understanding of ethics could have benefits for broad sections of society.

3.1 Underlying principles

All components from Rest's model and all the Principles in the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* are relevant at this level. However, not all of the Society's standards will be tolerant as pre-tertiary students will not practice as psychologists. They are required to undertake practical work (although this is no longer directly assessed in all programmes). While all the principles that underpin the code (e.g. respect, responsibility, integrity and competence) are applicable, an emphasis on ethical sensitivity and reasoning is likely to be most appropriate, although if practical work with humans is assessed then ethical motivation and implementation may be relevant.

The study of ethics at this level should provide students with the following:

- Knowledge of ethical guidelines (e.g. the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and *Code of Research Ethics* and other professional guidelines).
- An understanding of changes in ethical considerations over time and contexts.
- An ability to identify ethical considerations (with an emphasis on valid, informed consent and why debriefing is important, for example).
- An ability to provide a rationale for ethical decisions.
- Lifelong skills in reasoning and acting ethically.
- Recognition of equality and diversity issues.

Teachers play an important role in instilling the ideas of personal values and ethical thinking and in providing a role model for students. If teachers themselves are seen to be behaving ethically their students are more likely to follow suit.

3.2 Learning approaches

The specific approaches used for teaching and learning ethical thinking may vary depending on the flexibility of the pre-tertiary syllabus and the prevalence of practical work or exams (BPS, 2013). However, the following provides a framework for the introduction of ethics at this level:

Practical coursework

- **Use of vignettes.** Vignettes can be used for all students, with provision made for the different levels of study. For example, students are expected to show increasing skills of knowledge, understanding, application and evaluation. The same vignette could

be used with beginner and advanced learners with the expectation that a beginner would engage with it at a *knowledge-based level* whereas a more advanced learner would be expected to provide some *evaluation* of ethical issues.

- **Demonstration of knowledge.** Knowledge of material (in this case ethical competences) can be purely descriptive. For example ‘outline what is meant by valid, informed consent’.
- **Evaluation of ethical competencies.** Requires higher level cognitive skills and understanding. For example ‘explain why x researcher believed that it was necessary to deceive participants about the true nature of this study and explain how this could have been addressed’.

3.3 Assessment

Some means by which teachers can encourage and check the development of ethical competences are:

- Teacher feedback
- Students’ self-appraisal, peer review and peer assessment
- School exams and exam practice (short and extended responses)
- Synoptic/comparison tasks
- Assignments, projects, presentations
- Independent sourcing of material, literature review
- Ethics portfolio with examples of good and bad practice
- Ethics discussion forum
- Reflective diaries
- Design of novel research alone/in teams
- Application/evaluation of ethical issues in previously seen and novel material
- Use of stimulus materials to prompt discussion: use of media resources in the public domain.

4. Ethics education in undergraduate psychology

The delivery and award of undergraduate level in psychology in UK higher education institutions (HEIs) is informed by the requirements of two national bodies – the Society and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The Society standards for the accreditation of undergraduate degrees (BPS, 2014b) and the QAA benchmark statement (QAA, 2010) are clear about the importance of the teaching of ethics to UK undergraduates. The following suggestions cover how the teaching and assessment of the above requirements might be achieved.

4.1 Underlying principles

In many ways, teaching ethics at undergraduate level is no different to teaching any other subject. The key to a successful outcome is to identify what we want to achieve at the end of the process and then to work backwards through that process to identify the *knowledge element* (what do we want students to know?), the *process element* (how are we going to teach/how are students going to learn?), and the *assessment element* (how will we know students have learned?). To address the above requires the identification of goals for ethics instruction/teaching. Each goal has an increasing level of engagement and demand on students, aimed at developing their skills from a surface level to a deeper level of understanding and practice. Rest's (1982) four-component model of ethical practice is congruent with the following in terms of *ethical sensitivity*, *reasoning*, *motivation* and *implementation*.

- Sensitivity to ethical issues and developing a 'moral sensibility' or 'ethical mindfulness' which incorporates an awareness of the rights and needs of others, and the ethical implications of situations. Students would be required to *identify/list* the ethical elements of a problem or scenario.
- Recognition of ethical issues in order to see the ethical implications of specific situations or choices. Students would be required to describe and *demonstrate understanding* of the ethical elements of a problem or scenario.
- Ability to analyse, critically review and evaluate ethical dilemmas. Students would be required to *compare* and *contrast* competing values and actions, and suggest options for resolution of a problem or scenario, with reference to established ethics codes such as the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and the *Code of Human Research Ethics*.
- Exercise reasoning about ethical responsibility to suggest and justify a course of action that accepts a tolerance for ambiguity, and recognises that there is often no single ideal solution to ethically problematic situations. Students would be required to synthesise information and create effective solutions to a complex problem or scenario.

4.2 Knowledge element: What should the ethics undergraduate curriculum look like?

Although the majority of undergraduate students will have studied psychology at pre-tertiary level, substantial numbers will not have done so. The first year of any UK undergraduate degree is faced with the challenge of bringing all first-year students up to

the same level of knowledge and skills before they progress to the second year of the degree scheme. All students require the basics of ethical thinking and practice in the following areas as this assures a common experience for all first year undergraduates. It also provides a baseline for progression during subsequent years of the degree scheme. Students should know about and have the ability to demonstrate the following:

- Ethical fundamentals required to conduct research with human participants:
 - An introductory understanding of the history of research ethics
 - Guidance contained in:
 - The Society's guidance and *Code of Ethics and Conduct, Code of Human Research Ethics*
 - *The Concordat on Research Integrity* (Universities UK, 2012)
 - Economic and Social Research Council *Framework for Research Ethics* (ESRC, 2015)
 - The academic and institutional requirements and standards for ethical conduct and ethics review of research
 - Wider ethical issues – starting to think and act professionally, which will additionally include the following:
 - Consequentialist, deontological and virtue ethics (introductory level)
 - Ethical mindfulness; appreciating ethics issues, understanding and practicing ethical reasoning
 - Addressing equality and diversity
 - Understanding how participants' autonomy, privacy and dignity can and should be protected
 - Realising the ethical dimension of relationships between staff and students, and among students
 - Assessment; fairness and validity
 - Authoring: plagiarism and integrity in writing and publishing
 - Statutory requirements, including when working with vulnerable groups (e.g. Mental Capacity Act 2005).

4.3 Process element: How should students learn and be taught?

The following three considerations can be helpful when deciding the choice of teaching methods to achieve the outcome of an ethically aware graduate:

1. Making teaching and learning an active process.
2. Ensuring that teaching and learning have real-life relevance through the use of case studies that are meaningful.
3. Providing teaching and learning opportunities that generate wide-ranging discussions and stimulate students to debate and appreciate the contested and situated nature of ethical dilemmas and problems.

To achieve the above, a range of possible methods can be employed:

- Formal lectures interspersed with small group teaching.
- Guided analysis of the ethical implications of key studies and research methods (e.g. Solomon Asch's studies of conformity, Mary Ainsworth's studies of attachment using the Strange Situation, cognitive experiments designed to avoid ceiling effects).

- Seminar groups considering the ethical implications of case studies.
- Use of social media and notions of public vs private in a digital world.
- Use of media diaries, journals and logs of issues arising in popular entertainment, broadcasts and news.
- Role play and debates – recreating a Research Ethics Committee (REC) to debate the ethical parameters of classic studies such as Milgram’s or Zimbardo’s (Smith & Haslam, 2012). Developing debates around issues such as ‘This house believes that psychologists should not be involved in the development of reality TV programmes’, or ‘This house believes that experimentation on animals can never be justified’.

The overall ethos of the teaching and learning process can be enriched through the development of a ‘problem-based learning approach’ where students are encouraged to jointly engage with ethics issues and take risks in a safe and supportive environment. Ethical parameters and ground rules of any small group work need to precede the development of the group. Supporting students through the generating of ground rules of civility, courtesy and respect for diverse views that can be voiced and debated is central to genuine engagement with ethical debates. The study of ethics is always challenging and students need to know that the group is a safe space for discussion of issues that can be potentially testing for their moral codes. Finally, it is important that students are made aware of the opportunities for de-briefing that should be made available to them by the teaching staff co-ordinating the learning activities.

The educator as role model

A key resource available to students is their teacher and a central element of effective ethics teaching in undergraduate psychology is having a teacher who models and practises the ethical values they teach. Jointly generated and agreed ground rules, and learning contracts between the students and the teacher that are applied consistently in daily encounters with students, are prerequisites for the conduct of the learning process and effective teaching of ethics in psychology.

4.4 Assessment element: How do we evaluate what students have learned?

Assessing knowledge is the easiest aspect of the evaluation of effective ethical learning. Students can be assessed through traditional examination and knowledge-based learning formats, such as case studies that ask students to identify the main ethical considerations, questions on the main codes of ethical practice, essays on the challenges of obtaining valid, informed consent, or the identification and definition of vulnerability.

Assessing emerging ethical awareness and critical thinking is more taxing as it is a developmental process that requires reflection. The use of learning logs or diaries that require students to critically evaluate their own ethical thinking could provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their learning and engagement as they work towards the goal of becoming ethically aware psychology graduates. Assessing logs and diaries would have both formative and summative elements with an overall pass/fail as the final outcome.⁵

⁵ Managing this outcome with a credit-bearing module would need to be a matter of internal discussion within an HEI

5. Ethics education in postgraduate research psychology

5.1 Underlying principles

Postgraduate students should be able to engage with ethics at a level that is guided by existing codes but does not exclusively rely on them. It would therefore be advantageous for a curriculum of ethical instruction at this level to begin with an overview of the main points of the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* in a way that prompts an in-depth discussion of the main principles. For example, students could be encouraged to think about how much information is required for participants to provide valid and informed consent, whilst also allowing for an element of deception that is often necessary in experimental designs (e.g. subliminal priming experiments). Gottlieb, Handelsman and Knapp (2008) suggest that students whose ethical awareness goes beyond an understanding of professional principles will reliably seek valid and informed consent as a natural extension of their ethical identity. The aim of effective instruction in ethics should be to foster such an ethical identity in graduate students.

Following Rest's model, once students have been sensitised to ethical issues they should be equipped with the ability to apply reasoning and avoid an over-reliance on codes or principles which may conflict. Research suggests that providing students with training that enables them to foresee consequences and view a problem from different angles can improve ethical decision-making (Antes et al., 2009; Groessl, 2012; Harkrider et al., 2012). In addition, providing students with experience of using reasoning to solve ethical dilemmas may help them to recognise when their own decisions might be affected by biases (see section 2.1.2) or other priorities (Mumford et al., 2008; Rest, 1982).

A curriculum at this level should also cover the application of legal requirements that might affect postgraduate students such as the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Mitchell and Carroll (2008) suggest that instances of ethical misconduct amongst PhD students may rise due to increasing numbers of students and diminishing resources to supervise them effectively. Although cases of misconduct may occur due to a lack of ethical awareness they may also arise from naivety or ignorance of rapidly changing requirements for data storage and protection. A curriculum for ethical instruction at this level should therefore include information relating to how the DPA relates to research data, how data should be stored and the type of information participants should be given about the storing and access of their data.

The overall aim at this level of study should be to develop an ethical identity that will enable postgraduate students to not only conduct research that is ethically responsible, but also interact with others (including research participants, students and colleagues) in a manner that fulfils the overarching principles of ethical behaviour.

5. 2 Learning approaches

Much of the literature on approaches to ethical instruction in psychology centres on requirements for applied professional psychologists. Mathews (1991) suggests that a lack of formal ethical teaching in non-professional graduate courses may give the impression that

ethics are the remit of practising psychologists and not research students. Although the focus of instruction in research ethics may be different to that of practising psychologists, the aim of developing an ethical identity should transcend such distinctions.

The matrix approach (see section 2.2) makes it clear that each principle outlined in the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* has some relevance for postgraduates. For example, at the basic level it takes ethical sensitivity to recognise the need to refer to codes of conduct; it takes some reasoning to work out what is relevant; it takes motivation to act on the basis of the codes. The following are suggested as starting points for teaching at this level:

- **Introduce students to their own personal values.** The ethical acculturation model set out by Gottlieb and colleagues (Gottlieb et al., 2008) suggests three potential routes for ethical decision-making which either rely on ethical codes of practice ('assimilation'), personal values ('separation') or incorporate personal and professional values ('integration'). The authors recommend that students start by identifying their own personal values and compare these ideals with ethical guidelines. An ethical autobiography that asks students to state how they have implemented ethical guidelines in their research could also be used to establish individual levels of ethical awareness and provide a starting point for discussion of existing codes.
- **Embed ethics** (Illingworth, 2004). The embedded approach aims to equip students with the ability to apply a style of reasoning that permeates all of their thinking, not just in relation to obvious ethical issues. Within this approach specific teaching methods that Illingworth reports as being successful include the use of film, novels and autobiographies to encourage discussion as well as vignettes to illustrate ethical issues.
- **Use context to support learning.** In a number of studies, vignettes and case studies have been found to be effective in improving ethical decision making e.g. (Antes et al., 2009; Harkrider et al., 2012; Zuccherro, 2008). Antes et al. (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of ethical instruction styles and found case-based instruction to be one of the most effective teaching methods.
- **Use self reflection and group discussions.** Reflection on and discussion of the courses of action chosen by individuals can also help students to understand their own decision making processes. However, a supportive environment, rather than one that encourages a tradition of intellectual argument, is vital to encourage reflection and foster learning from class based instruction in ethics (Gottlieb et al., 2008).
- **Supervised practice.** Learning ethical competency is not confined to the classroom and should continue through the practice of conducting research. It is therefore the responsibility of supervisors to take an active role in checking and assessing how students are conducting research, analysing data and interacting with others.

5.3 Benchmarking

The presumption that ethical considerations will have been covered at undergraduate level may be justified in many instances but this may not be the case (for example, entry may not be limited to students coming from a purely psychological background, and coverage of ethics in overseas degrees may be different to UK courses). Therefore, some programmes may choose explicitly to assess the level of a student's ethical awareness and knowledge of the Society's guidelines as a prelude to the rest of the course and prior to students developing their own research. This could be achieved by an on-entry enquiry as to students' understanding of the application of ethical codes, their whereabouts and why they are important.

5.4 Assessment approaches

There are two options for assessment, whether by the use of vignettes or actual research:

- Summative assessment through explicit recognition of the significance of ethical issues, with mark schemes attached to various assignments to reward this.
- Formative assessment that encourages and embeds ethical considerations in every aspect of research activity.

Although student research projects, theses and dissertations might not be marked explicitly in relation to ethical considerations, all project proposals should have passed through an ethics review process before data collection starts. Hence an appreciation of what is required for the specific piece of research students propose within their studies should have been demonstrated.

Implications of, and responsibility for, actions should form part of a reflective process so that a clearly argued ethical decision-making journey can be described explicitly.

Programmes may include this formally within any thesis, dissertation or empirical work, but it could also be formatively assessed through poster presentations and peer review prior to application to a research ethics committee. In effect, process and cognition, as well as impact and behaviour, may need assessment.

In addition any assessment that seeks to examine process could reflect Rest's Four Component model in making ethical decisions. Furthermore, any assessment that seeks to examine cognition should reflect 'ethical acculturation' as based upon more general acculturation models (for example, Berry's model (1980, 2003); Berry & Sam (1997) as cited in Handelsman, Gottlieb & Knapp, 2005) where individuals identify and incorporate ethical thinking into their everyday behaviours.

6. Ethics education in practitioner training in psychology

6.1 Underlying principles

Postgraduate training for practitioner psychologists is delivered according to one of two training methods, dependent on the particular domain of practice in question. Some trainee psychologists will complete a master's programme followed by a further practitioner qualification, others will complete a profession doctorate that integrates the academic, research and supervised professional practice components of training. The aim is to provide a training to equip the psychologists to practice professionally. Many of these programmes are accredited by the Society, as well as approved by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for professional registration as a practitioner psychologist in the UK. At this level of study the whole *Code of Ethics and Conduct* is relevant to the students' practice. This means that they need to be aware of ethical concerns in relation both to academic and research work, as well as issues that can arise in professional practice.

The following sections (with the exception of 6.3) relate to Stage 1, Stage 2 and integrated postgraduate training.

6.2 Academic and research domains

At this stage of training students should already be familiar with the ethical principles that apply to working in academic and research domains, though it is important for courses not to assume that these will have been addressed as part of their undergraduate study. As such, while a curriculum needs to check students' knowledge of the pertinent principles in these domains (and if necessary address any shortfalls), its focus should be on their capacity to identify when and how these principles are activated and responded to in the context of a professional training. Academic and research activity carried out in professional contexts will raise specific ethical issues, and it is this perspective that a curriculum needs to address. For example, what principles apply when deciding whether and how to seek a client's consent to write up their therapy and/or other intervention in a report? How is the principle of confidentiality instantiated when deciding what to include in such a report? Similarly, in relation to research there may be ethical concerns over and above those encountered at undergraduate level, arising from the professional context of the research topic. Examples might include ensuring that participants with mental health problems have the capacity to consent, or considering how best to manage the ethical issues that arise if research is in areas that participants may find emotionally challenging.

6.3 Professional practice domains:

The Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* identifies a wide range of ethical principles pertinent to professional practice. Few programmes would have the space to consider each one in depth, especially because (in relation to training) these principles are embedded and embodied in everyday practice. As such, a more appropriate focus for a curriculum is on helping students to notice the relevance of specific principles to particular areas of practice, and encouraging generalisation by helping students to consider how to apply the

code in a manner that unpacks its underlying intent and purpose. For example, students usually know that they need to seek the client's valid and informed consent to an intervention, but might be unclear about what principles they need to hold in mind in achieving this, or they may not have considered why it is that consent is not a 'one-off' event, and cannot be assumed as an intervention proceeds. Or they may be aware that the code advises against taking financial advantage of clients but be uncertain about how to think about (and react to) a situation where a client offers them a small token of gratitude after a completed intervention.

An important factor to consider is that student learning about ethics also needs to take place in the context of the workplace, and through supervision of their practice. So, teaching within the HEI should also aim to promote a student's capacity to apply their ethical thinking to their placement roles and activities, and to create a framework that flags the need to discuss ethical issues explicitly in supervision. And, just as important, supervision guidelines and training need to encourage supervisors explicitly to cross-check the ways in which students implement ethical codes with their clients and with fellow professionals.

6.4 Learning approaches

At one time postgraduate psychology training included very little formal teaching on ethics, but in the current competency-focused culture the majority of programmes explicitly include ethics in their curricula (Bashe et al., 2007). It is also explicitly included in the Society's accreditation standards. However, practitioner training courses need to cover a wide breadth of topics, and fitting ethics into the timetable can be challenging. While it may be tempting therefore to do the minimum, exposing trainees to the relevant codes of ethics and assuming that the majority of ethics training will occur via osmosis in placements and supervision (Handelsman et al., 2005), this approach leaves too much to chance. How can programmes best facilitate students' ethical learning so that they meet relevant standards, such as those of the HCPC and the Society, at the end of the training, and enter their post-qualification careers as ethically competent professionals? The following recommendations are offered:

- **Think in terms of trainees becoming acculturated to the ethics of psychology, rather than merely memorising ethics and standards.** Knowledge about the *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (2009) is important, and helpful recommendations for teaching about ethical principles exist (e.g. McGovern, 1988). Familiarity with codes, however, is only one factor in developing the competencies suggested by Rest's (1982) typology.
- **Design the timing and content of ethical instruction around the developmental needs of trainees.** Dependent on their stage of training, trainees may not yet be in placement, and may also be feeling overwhelmed, making ethical input both decontextualised and difficult to absorb. Early ethical instruction may therefore be most usefully focused on the first component within the typology – Ethical Sensitivity. An exercise such as writing an 'ethics autobiography' (Bashe et al., 2007) helps trainees to consider their own background and personal morality in relation to the ethical culture of psychology. As trainees begin placements, androgogy activities may expand to include an emphasis on ethical reasoning, which may include working with ethical codes and applying models of decision-making to ethical dilemmas. Ethical

motivation and ethical implementation come to the fore as trainees approach qualification and more autonomous practice, and students may benefit from working through more complex and challenging ethical dilemmas, such as responding to the unethical behaviour of an employer, or negotiating a conflict between ethical and legal considerations (Knapp et al., 2007).

- **Aim for a good balance between the philosophical and practical.** An understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of ethical principles and behaviour helps to acculturate the trainee to psychology, develops the competence of ethical sensitivity, and proves useful in complex situations where existing guidelines offer little or conflicting direction. However, an overemphasis on the philosophical is as unsuited to the applied psychologies as it is to medicine (Cowley, 2009), and learning problem-solving approaches to ethical dilemmas is particularly important to the development of ethical reasoning, (Eberlein, 1987). Common experiential exercises that serve this purpose are problem-solving models applied to clinical vignettes (McCarron & Stewart, 2011) and the use of role-play and discussion (Rosnow, 1990). Androgogy activities that make trainees active participants in their own learning (e.g. ethics autobiographies, reflection papers, discussion exercises, and ethics-focused ‘strengths and weaknesses’ exercises (Bashe et al., 2007)) are likely to be particularly effective, as well as exercises that bridge the gap between classroom discussions and placements by using the trainees’ own (appropriately anonymised) case material.

6.5 Assessment

As a general example of practitioner psychology training programmes, there are at least four approaches to assessment:

1. Through the supervision of practice-based learning and through the formal judgments of the supervisor as expressed in placement reports. Trainees will engage in placements where the supervisor will have the opportunity to work alongside them. Any unethical conduct will be noted and would be responded to appropriately. The strength of this approach is that it operates over a long time frame, and that experienced supervisors will be able to make informed judgments. However, it is possible that unethical practice can occur and not be noticed if it is not drawn to the attention of the supervisor by the trainee or others.
2. By evaluating written work submitted by students that includes their reflections on the ethical aspects of work that they have undertaken. An example would be a report of practice, which in addition to detailing the research and evidence base and the intervention approaches taken, will include some account of ethical issues and the actions taken in response to these issues.
3. Through a comprehensive appraisal system that receives reports from various sources on the behaviour of the trainee, including specific consideration of professional and ethical issues.
4. Through assessment questions that test the trainees’ understanding of ethics and ethical practice. Different assessment approaches could be taken – for example, setting out scenarios drawn from the HCPC or the Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and asking

for comment from an ethical perspective, or through questions on other topics where ethics is a component of the required answer. The strength is that questions can be framed which will allow the trainee to demonstrate knowledge of ethical issues. The weakness is that it may not discriminate well between those who understand how to think and behave ethically, and those who know how to answer assessment questions.

7. Professional Development (PD)

While experience may lead to wisdom, this is not always the case. Newly qualified practitioners may be closer to the evidence than those who trained some time ago, and taking the time to review and reflect is a professional responsibility. Furthermore, it may also be the case that the inevitable compromises that are made in years of professional practice may blunt some aspects of a practitioner's ethical style.

All psychologists (whether or not they are Society members) should have regard to the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. Furthermore, if registered with the HCPC they should have regard for the *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics, and Standards of Proficiency*, and to any specific codes or guidance established by an employer or other professional bodies to which they are affiliated.

The key standard in the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (Competence 2.3.ii) covers the need to recognise the limits to one's competence. This is achieved, at least partly, by engaging in PD. Kruger and Dunning (1999) highlight the importance of maintaining a sense of humility about one's competence and PD can provide the context in which beliefs and understandings can be challenged and developed.

The programmes that lead to professional qualifications (and the further training and experience that psychologists will have benefitted from) will have already covered many aspects of ethical practice; this implies that PD will mainly focus on maintenance and reminders of existing learning. However, as noted above, experience and competence are not necessarily synonymous. PD that includes ethics updates should be a process embedded in a psychologist's career progression and be part of a combination of self-management, supervision and appraisal.

The Society's Professional Development Centre includes a portal for members to record their PD activity, which can also be used for HCPC returns. Details can be found on the Society's website (www.bps.org.uk/careers-education-training/professional-development-centre/professional-development-centre) and includes ethics as one of the relevant activities (as well as practice, research and evaluation, communication, training and management).

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APPENDICES:

Mapping the ethical principles and the four components across levels of education

Appendix A




BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct

Ethical Principle 1: Respect

Statement of values – Psychologists value the dignity and worth of all persons, with sensitivity to the dynamics of perceived authority or influence over clients, and with particular regard to people’s rights including those of privacy and self determination.

Notes: These ratings concern the suggested importance of including the issue raised in the standard at different levels of psychology education. The term ‘professional practice’ refers to any activity which is undertaken as a psychologist; for example an undergraduate conducting research. Where the term ‘client’ is used, this is taken to mean anyone receiving input from a psychologist. So, for instance, a pre-tertiary level student doing a project should be mindful of confidentiality.

All principles, standards and components apply to professional doctorates and CPD.

	5 Stars = essential
	3 Stars = desirable
	1 Star = not needed or not applicable

P = pre-tertiary

Ug = undergraduate

MSc/PhD = postgraduate (research or practitioner) training

Please note: The star ratings are indicative and a rating of one star does not imply that the standard might not be essential under some circumstances.

1.1 Standard – General respect		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
iii) Avoid practices that are unfair or prejudiced	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Be willing to explain the bases for their ethical decision-making	A	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
1.2 Standard – Privacy and confidentiality		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Keep appropriate records	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Normally obtain the consent of clients who are considered legally competent or their duly authorised representatives, for disclosure of confidential information	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Restrict the scope of disclosure to that which is consistent with professional purposes, the specifics of the initiating request or event, and (so far as required by the law) the specifics of the client's authorisation	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Record, process, and store confidential information in a fashion designed to avoid inadvertent disclosure	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) Ensure from the first contact that clients are aware of the limitations of maintaining confidentiality, with specific reference to: (a) Potentially conflicting or supervening legal and ethical obligations; (b) The likelihood that consultation with colleagues may occur in order to enhance the effectiveness of service provision; and (c) The possibility that third parties such as translators or family members may assist in ensuring that the activity concerned is not compromised by a lack of communication	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

1.1 Standard – General respect <i>continued</i>		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
vi) Restrict breaches of confidentiality to those exceptional circumstances under which there appears sufficient evidence to raise serious concern about: (a) the safety of clients; (b) the safety of other persons who may be endangered by the client's behaviour; or (c) the health, welfare or safety of children or vulnerable adults	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
vii) Consult a professional colleague when contemplating a breach of confidentiality, unless the delay occasioned by seeking such consultation is rendered impractical by the immediacy of the need for disclosure	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
vii) Consult a professional colleague when contemplating a breach of confidentiality, unless the delay occasioned by seeking such consultation is rendered impractical by the immediacy of the need for disclosure	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
viii) Document any breach of confidentiality and the reasons compelling disclosure without consent in a contemporaneous note	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ix) Should when disclosing confidential information directly to clients, safeguard the confidentiality of information relating to others, and provide adequate assistance in understanding the nature and contents of the information being disclosed	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
x) Make audio, video or photographic recordings of clients only with the explicit permission of clients who are considered legally competent, or their duly authorised representatives	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
xi) Endeavour to ensure that colleagues, staff, trainees, and supervisees with whom psychologists work understand and respect the provisions of this code concerning the handling of confidential information	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

1.3 Standard of – Informed consent		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Ensure that clients, particularly children and vulnerable adults, are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose, and anticipated consequences of any professional services or research participation, so that they may give informed consent to the extent that their capabilities allow	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Seek to obtain the informed consent of all clients to whom professional services or research participation are offered	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Keep adequate records of when, how and from whom consent was obtained	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Remain alert to the possibility that those people for whom professional services or research participation are contemplated may lack legal capacity for informed consent	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) When informed consent cannot be obtained from clients, no duly authorised representative can be identified and a pressing need for the provision of professional services is indicated, consult when feasible a person well-placed to appreciate the potential reactions of clients (such as a family member, or current or recent provider of care or services), for assistance in determining what may be in their best interests	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
vi) When the specific nature of contemplated professional services precludes obtaining informed consent from clients or their duly authorised representatives, obtain specific approval from appropriate institutional ethics authorities before proceeding. Where no institutional ethics authority exists, peers and colleagues should be consulted	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

1.3 Standard – Informed consent		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
vii) When the specific nature of research precludes obtaining informed consent from clients or their duly authorised representatives, obtain specific approval from appropriate institutional ethics authorities before proceeding. Where no institutional ethics authority exists, peers and colleagues should be consulted	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
viii) Take particular care when seeking the informed consent of detained persons, in the light of the degree to which circumstances of detention may affect the ability of such clients to consent freely	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
x) Obtain supplemental informed consent as circumstances indicate, when professional services or research occur over an extended period of time, or when there is significant change in the nature or focus of such activities	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
xi) Withhold information from clients only in exceptional circumstances when necessary to preserve the integrity of research or the efficacy of professional services, or in the public interest and specifically consider any additional safeguards required for the preservation of client welfare	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
1.4 Standard – Privacy and confidentiality		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
iii) Comply with requests by clients who are withdrawing from research participation that any data by which they might be personally identified, including recordings, be destroyed	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

Appendix B




BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct

Ethical Principle 2: Competence

Statement of values – Psychologists value the continuing development and maintenance of high standards of competence in their professional work, and the importance of preserving their ability to function optimally within the recognised limits of their knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience.

Notes: These ratings concern the suggested importance of including the issue raised in the standard at different levels of psychology education. The term ‘professional practice’ refers to any activity which is undertaken as a psychologist; for example an undergraduate conducting research. Where the term ‘client’ is used, this is taken to mean anyone receiving input from a psychologist. So, for instance, a pre-tertiary level student doing a project should be mindful of confidentiality.

All principles, standards and components apply to professional doctorates and CPD.

	5 Stars = essential
	3 Stars = desirable
	1 Star = not needed or not applicable

P = pre-tertiary

Ug = undergraduate

MSc/PhD = postgraduate (research or practitioner) training

Please note: The star ratings are indicative and a rating of one star does not imply that the standard might not be essential under some circumstances.

2.1 Standard – Awareness of professional ethics		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Develop and maintain a comprehensive awareness of professional ethics, including familiarity with this code	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Integrate ethical considerations into their professional practices as an element of continuing professional development	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
2.2 Standard – Ethical decision making		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Recognise that ethical dilemmas will inevitably arise in the course of professional practice	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Accept their responsibility to attempt to resolve such dilemmas with the appropriate combination of reflection, supervision, and consultation	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Be committed to the requirements of this code	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Engage in process of ethical decision making that includes: identifying relevant issues; • reflecting upon established principles, values, and standards; • seeking supervision or peer review; • using the <i>Code of Ethics and Conduct</i> to identify the principles involved; • developing alternative courses of action in the light of contextual factors; • analysing the advantages and disadvantages of various courses of action for those likely to be affected, allowing for different perspectives and cultures; • choosing a course of action; and • evaluating the outcomes to inform future ethical decision making	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) Be able to justify their actions on ethical grounds	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	Ug	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

2.1 Standard – Awareness of professional ethics <i>continued</i>		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
vi) Remain aware that the process of ethical decision making must be undertaken with sensitivity to any time constraints that may exist	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
vii) Given the existence of legal obligations that may occasionally appear to contradict certain provisions of this Code, analyse such contradictions with particular care, and adhere to the extent possible to these ethical principles while meeting the legal requirements of their professional roles	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
2.3 Standard – Recognising the limits of competence		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
ii) Engage in Continued Professional Development	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Remain abreast of scientific, ethical, and legal innovations germane to their professional activities, with further sensitivity to ongoing developments in the broader social, political and organisational contexts in which they work	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) Engage in additional areas of professional activity only after obtaining the knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience necessary for competent functioning	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
vi) Remain aware of and acknowledge the limits of their methods, as well as the limits of the conclusions that may be derived from such methods under different circumstances and for different purposes.	P	☆☆☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
vii) Strive to ensure that those working under their direct supervision also comply with each of the requirements of this standard and that they are not required to work beyond the limits of their competence	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

2.4 Standard – Recognising impairment		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Monitor their own personal and professional lifestyle in order to remain alert to signs of impairment	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Seek professional consultation or assistance when they become aware of health-related or other personal problems that may impair their own professional competence	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Refrain from practice when their professional competence is seriously impaired	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Encourage colleagues whose health-related or other personal problems may reflect impairment to seek professional consultation or assistance, and consider informing other potential sources of intervention, including, for example, the Health and Care Professions Council, when such colleagues appear unable to recognise that a problem exists. Psychologists must inform potential sources of intervention where necessary for the protection of the public	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	Ug	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆

Appendix C




BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct

Ethical Principle 3: Responsibility

Statement of values – Psychologists value their responsibilities to clients, to the general public, and to the profession and science of psychology, including the avoidance of harm and the prevention of misuse or abuse of their contributions to society.

Notes: These ratings concern the suggested importance of including the issue raised in the standard at different levels of psychology education. The term ‘professional practice’ refers to any activity which is undertaken as a psychologist; for example an undergraduate conducting research. Where the term ‘client’ is used, this is taken to mean anyone receiving input from a psychologist. So, for instance, a pre-tertiary level student doing a project should be mindful of confidentiality.

All principles, standards and components apply to professional doctorates and CPD.

	5 Stars = essential
	3 Stars = desirable
	1 Star = not needed or not applicable

P = pre-tertiary

Ug = undergraduate

MSc/PhD = postgraduate (research or practitioner) training

Please note: The star ratings are indicative and a rating of one star does not imply that the standard might not be essential under some circumstances.

3.1 Standard – General responsibility		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
ii) Psychologists should avoid personal and professional misconduct that might bring the Society or the reputation of the profession into disrepute, recognising that, in particular, convictions for criminal offences that reflect on suitability for practice may be regarded as misconduct by the Society	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Psychologists should seek to remain aware of the scientific and professional activities of others with whom they work, with particular attention to the ethical behaviour of employees, assistants, supervisees and students	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
3.2 Standard – termination and continuity of care		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Psychologists should make clear at the first contact, or at the earliest opportunity, the conditions under which the professional services may be terminated	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
ii) Psychologists should take advice where there appears to be ambiguity about continuing with professional services	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Psychologists should terminate professional services when clients do not appear to be deriving benefit and are unlikely to do so	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
iv) Psychologists should refer clients to alternative sources of assistance as appropriate, facilitating the transfer and continuity of care through reasonable collaboration with other professionals	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆	☆	☆	☆

3.3 Standard – Protection of research participants		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
iii) Psychologists should ask research participants from the first contact about individual factors that might reasonably lead to risk of harm, and inform research participants of any action they should take to minimise such risks	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) Psychologists should obtain the considered and non-subjective approval of independent advisors whenever concluding that harm, unusual discomfort, or other negative consequences may follow from research, and obtain supplemental informed consent from research participants specific to such issues	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
viii) Psychologists should inform research participants when evidence is obtained of a psychological or physical problem of which they are apparently unaware, if it appears that failure to do so may endanger their present or future well-being	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ix) Psychologists should exercise particular caution when responding to requests for advice from research participants concerning psychological or other issues, and offer to make a referral for assistance if the inquiry appears to involve issues sufficiently serious to warrant professional services	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

Appendix D




BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct

Ethical Principle 4: Integrity

Statement of values – Psychologists value honesty, accuracy, clarity, and fairness in their interactions with all persons, and seek to promote integrity in all facets of their scientific and professional endeavours.

Notes: These ratings concern the suggested importance of including the issue raised in the standard at different levels of psychology education. The term ‘professional practice’ refers to any activity which is undertaken as a psychologist; for example an undergraduate conducting research. Where the term ‘client’ is used, this is taken to mean anyone receiving input from a psychologist. So, for instance, a pre-tertiary level student doing a project should be mindful of confidentiality.

All principles, standards and components apply to professional doctorates and CPD.

	5 Stars = essential
	3 Stars = desirable
	1 Star = not needed or not applicable

P = pre-tertiary

Ug = undergraduate

MSc/PhD = postgraduate (research or practitioner) training

Please note: The star ratings are indicative and a rating of one star does not imply that the standard might not be essential under some circumstances.

4.1 Standard – Honesty and accuracy		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Psychologists should be honest and accurate in representing their professional affiliations and qualifications, including such matters as knowledge, skill, training, education, and experience	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Psychologists should take reasonable steps to ensure that their qualifications and competences are not misrepresented by others, and to correct any misrepresentations identified	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iv) Psychologists should be honest and accurate in representing the financial and other parameters and obligations of supervisory, training, employment, and other contractual relationships	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
v) Psychologists should ensure that clients are aware from the first contact of costs and methods of payment for the provision of professional services	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
vi) Psychologists should be honest and accurate in advertising their professional services and products, in order to avoid encouraging unrealistic expectations or otherwise misleading the public	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
vii) Psychologists should claim only appropriate ownership or credit for their research, published writings, or other scientific and professional contributions, and provide due acknowledgement of the contributions of others to a collaborative work	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
4.2 Standard – avoiding exploitation and conflicts of interest		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Psychologists should remain aware of the problems that may result from dual or multiple relationships, for example, supervising trainees to whom they are married, teaching students with whom they already have a familial relationship, or providing psychological therapy to a friend	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

4.2 Standard – avoiding exploitation and conflicts of interest <i>continued</i>		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
ii) Psychologists should avoid forming relationships that may impair professional objectivity or otherwise lead to exploitation of or conflicts of interest with a client	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
iii) Psychologists should clarify for clients and other relevant parties the professional roles currently assumed and conflicts of interest that might potentially arise	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
v) Psychologists should recognise that conflicts of interests and inequity of power may still reside after professional relationships are formally terminated, such that professional responsibilities may still apply	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
4.3 Standard – Maintaining personal boundaries		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
iv) Psychologists should recognise that harassment may consist of a single serious act or multiple persistent or pervasive acts, and that it further includes behaviour that ridicules, disparages, or abuses a person	P	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆	☆
v) Psychologists should make clear to students, supervisees, trainees and employees, as part of their induction, that agreed procedures addressing harassment exist within both the workplace and the Society	P	☆	☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆	☆	☆	☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
vi) Psychologists should cultivate an awareness of power structures and tensions within groups or teams	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	UG	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

4.4 Standard – Addressing ethical misconduct		Ethical Sensitivity	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Motivation	Ethical Implementation
i) Psychologists should challenge colleagues who appear to have engaged in ethical misconduct, and/or consider bringing allegations of such misconduct to the attention of those charged with the responsibility to investigate them, particularly when members of the public appear to have been, or may be, affected by the behaviour in question	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
ii) Psychologists should when bringing allegations of misconduct by a colleague, do so without malice and with no breaches of confidentiality other than those necessary to the proper investigatory processes	P	☆☆☆	☆☆☆	☆	☆
	UG	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
	MSc/PhD	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

The British Psychological Society

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK

Tel: 0116 254 9568 Fax 0116 247 0787 E-mail: mail@bps.org.uk Website: www.bps.org.uk