

DESC's Ethical Guidance Framework

Preamble

1. DESC is committed to excellence in all that it undertakes, and considers that matters of ethics, transparency and the support for diversity are central to achieving such a commitment. DESC encourages all Members, Associate Members, and partners to strive to do to others as they would have them do to themselves, whilst also recognising that others may have different ethical views to their own. To this end these guidance notes provide a framework for the consideration of ethics within DESC. These are not intended to be rules or policies, but rather to encourage all involved in DESC to think ethically.

Overarching principles

2. DESC Members should all adhere to their own organisation's relevant ethical and safeguarding policies. Where an individual does not belong to an organisation with such policies, they should declare this to the DESC Secretariat. In such circumstances, they will be asked in writing to agree to abide by the codes and practices of the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D's parent organisations Royal Holloway, University of London ([Ethics Policy and Guidance](#)) and/or UNESCO ([Ethics Office](#)).
3. Should Members of DESC, and its Secretariat in particular, become aware of any likely breach of an institution's ethical guidance, this should be discussed first with the individual(s) involved, and then with the organisation to which the individual(s) belong.
4. Should an individual be found by their employing organisation to have breached their ethical or safeguarding guidance or policies in ways that have affected, or could substantively affect, DESC's activities, its Members, or reputation, that individual's Membership will be terminated.

DESC's ethical guidance for Members and Associate Members

5. The ICT4D Collective, from which the UNESCO Chair in ICT4D was born, and which underlies its current activities, agreed a set of [Membership principles](#) in 2009. The following principles for DESC derive from these, and request Members and Associate Members to:
 - Aim to undertake the highest possible quality in research and practice relating to the Digital-Environment System
 - Adopt and support diverse multi-disciplinary approaches to the field, being tolerant of the views of others, rather than seeking to impose any one particular direction or approach on DESC's work and activities

- Place particular emphasis on ways in which digital technologies can empower poor people and marginalised communities, recognising that the use of many such technologies does not serve the interests of everyone equally
 - Work collaboratively and openly in support of each other and the communities with which we engage
 - Seek to engage in collaboration with like-minded individuals, organisations and networks
 - Participate in DESC's work both for what they can contribute to it, but also for what they can benefit from such participation (see DESC's partnership framework)
 - Treat other Members with mutual respect, and not knowingly engage in activities that might harm DESC.
 - Share details of any potential conflicts of interest with the Secretariat.
6. In addition, Members are expected to uphold the following generally accepted ethical principles and should aim to be:
- Honest and behave with integrity
 - Rigorous in all their activities
 - Transparent and retain confidentiality wherever possible
 - Caring and respectful of others, including Members of DESC and all those encountered in research and practice
 - Accountable
 - Professional
 - Fair in their treatment of others.
7. These principles are summarised in the diagram below~:

Engaging in the **DESC coalition** we aim for the highest standards in...

Caring for each other and the environment 	Maintaining Professional Integrity 	Fostering Effective Cooperation 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care and respect of others and ourselves • Fairness in the treatment of others and ourselves • Delivery of beneficial outcomes for people and the environment • Focus especially on the interests of the most marginalised 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty, integrity and confidentiality • Rigour and transparency in our activities • Professionalism and accountability to each other and our communities • High quality in research and practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and openness in support of each other and the communities with which we engage • Responsiveness and responsibility to each other • Encouragement of multi-disciplinarity and cross-sectoral approaches • Focus on working with others and not "on" or "for" them

8. Members should abide by the [UN System Code of Conduct](#) in convening conferences, workshops or events with or for DESC, to prevent harassment and

abuse of any kind. The above principles translate into practice during events as summarised in the diagram below:

Guidelines for all DESC Meetings and workshops*

Caring for each other and the environment 	Maintaining Professional Integrity 	Fostering Effective Cooperation 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the environmental impacts of events and activities• Avoid unnecessary travelling and excessive use of video• Use socially and ecologically sustainable materials• Be thoughtful about how others might react to what we say and do• Do to others as we would have them do to us	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take full responsibility for our own contributions and actions• Be punctual, rigorous and honest in our contributions• Give credit to others for their influence on our own thoughts• Never act in ways that might be interpreted as being abusive or harassing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be open to perspectives that are very different from our own• Be consensual in decision making• Recognise that we all give to as well benefit from DESC• Listen more than we speak• Do not act knowingly in ways that might harm DESC

* DESC events are held in accordance with the [UN System Code of Conduct](#)

Concluding reflections

9. At all times, Members of DESC should show respect for others, and seek to take responsibility for ensuring their well-being.
10. Remember that thinking about ethics is the first step in acting ethically.

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