Research Ethics and Academic Integrity in Analytical Wargaming

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Disclaimer

This presentation provides personal views and does not necessarily reflect an institutional position. It draws on King's College London policies for research integrity and ethics.

Developing Wargaming as an Academic Discipline

Analytical Wargaming

- Advance the development of wargaming as a social science through fundamental and applied research
- Demonstrate academic excellence in accordance with established research integrity and research ethics standards

Educational Wargaming

- Advance the purposeful design and application of wargaming for learning and teaching with due care and respect for individuals

Education and Training on Wargaming for Research and Education

Significance of the Emerging Discipline

Growing Use of Wargames

Governments, thinktanks and universities are increasingly interested in using wargames for research and educational purposes.

Driver of New Theoretical & Empirical Research

Significant potential of wargames to generate new data to describe and explain phenomena on which real-world data is scarce.

Policy Impact

Governments are using wargames to inform policy, strategy, doctrine in peacetime, and potentially decisions in crisis and war.

Individuals (researchers and module conveners), their institutions and funders have a responsibility for ensuring the highest quality wargaming process and insights, with care and respect for all individuals involved.

Research Integrity in Analytical Wargaming

What Is an Analytical Wargame?

An analytical wargame is a wargame that is designed and used for research purposes.

- Analytical wargames aim to contribute new theoretical or empirical knowledge to an existing body of knowledge or literature.

- Analytical wargames are a class of methods for data collection (as opposed to data analysis). They are data generation processes.

- Researchers use wargames to elicit, structure and record judgement from human subjects on human decisions in a given context. Some games can also collect human judgement on the outcomes of these decisions.

To ensure research excellence, analytical wargames should follow established research integrity and research ethics principles.
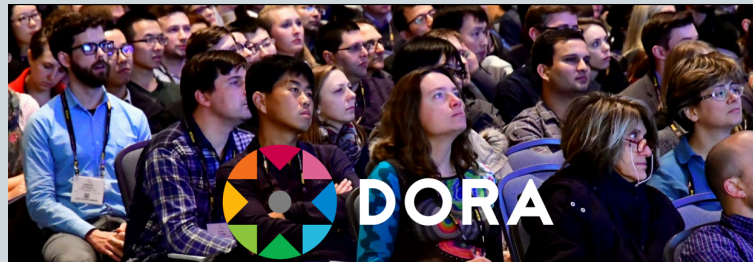
King's Research Integrity Framework

THE CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH
Promoting good practice and preventing misconduct
September 2009

DORA
Declaration On Research Assessment
Improving how research is assessed

For more information: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-integrity

How Do Academic Standards Apply to Wargaming?

Researchers are responsible for:

- understanding the expected standards of rigour and integrity relevant to their research
- maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in their work at all times

THE CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY

https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/the-concordat-to-support-research-integrity.pdf

King's Principles of Research Integrity

Honesty in:

all aspects of research, including in the:

- presentation of research goals;
- reporting of research methodology;
- gathering of data;
- appropriate acknowledgement of others; and
- communication of sound interpretations of research findings

Rigour in:

- following disciplinary standard and norms;
- using appropriate research methods;
- adhering to agreed protocols;
- drawing interpretations from results; and
- communicating results

hhttps://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-integrity

King's Principles of Research Integrity

Transparency and open communication in relation to the:

- declaration of competing interests;
- reporting data collection methods;
- analysis and interpretation of data;
- availability of research findings (to include the publication or sharing of negative or null results); and
- the presentation of work to other researchers and the public.

Care and respect for:

- all participants, subjects, users and beneficiaries of research; and
- the integrity of the research record.

Responsibility

- of all those engaged in the research process to collectively create an empowering and enabling research environment, and
- to take action when behaviour falls short of accepted standards of good practice in research.

hhttps://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-integrity

Individual Responsibilities for Ensuring Academic Integrity

Demonstrating Honesty and Rigour

Requires presenting and reporting all aspects of process and findings

- What are your research goals and how does your wargame method address them?
- How are you eliciting and collecting data form human subjects? Why does it constitute evidence?
- Can you justify that your participant selection meets the research aims?
- How are you analysing collected data?
- Have you acknowledged all staff that have supported the research?
- Can you demonstrate that your work has followed ethical and legal standards?

Pursuing Opportunities for Transparency

Requires dedicating time and effort to open communication

- Do you intending to publish your methodology and findings?
- Have you sought peer-review?
- Is your methodology clear and reproducible?
- Are you making your datasets publicly available?

Collective Responsibilities for Ensuring Academic Integrity

Advancing Fundamental Research to Ensure Rigour

Requires advancing knowledge on wargaming ontology, epistemology and methodology

- What can we know though wargaming? How can we know?
- What are the disciplinary standards and norms?
- What analytical wargaming methods are appropriate for different research purposes?
- What are rigorous analytical wargaming protocols?
- How do researchers analyse data to draw valid interpretations?

Growing Opportunities for Transparency

Requires creating opportunities for all to present research and publish wargaming research.

- Where can researchers publish research findings?
- How can they share negative or null results?
- How do we provide peer-review within a small community of wargaming scholars?
- How can researchers best present work to other researchers and the public? Does this require demonstration of games?

Research Ethics in Analytical Wargaming

Core Research Ethics Principles

- The rights and dignity of individuals and groups should be respected
- Wherever possible, participation should be voluntary and appropriately informed
- Research should be conducted with integrity and transparency
- Lines of responsibility and accountability should be clearly defined
- Independence of research should be maintained and where conflicts of interest cannot be avoided they should be made explicit.

Research should aim to maximise benefit for individuals and society, and minimise risk and harm

See: Do I require ethical clearance? KCL internal pages.

Implementing Ethical Principles in Analytical Wargames

Analytical wargames require research ethics clearance from an appropriate body

Analytical wargames involve primary data collection from human subjects.

Further analysis of wargaming data for a different purpose is subject to a separate review, if:

- The data are not in the public domain
- The data could be used to identify individuals

Testing wargames does not require formal ethics review

- Testing a wargame with users aims to identify problems with the game design or content in order to improve it. It is classified as service evaluation or audit – not research.
- Collected testing data should be deleted and cannot be used for research purposes.
- Collected personal data is still subject to legal requirements (e.g. UK GDPR).

See: Do I require ethical clearance? KCL internal pages.

Legal Compliance Is Part of Research Ethics Requirements

Analytical wargames that collect personal data for research or testing need to comply with relevant laws for data privacy and data protection.

Different laws apply based on where the research organisation (data controller and/or processor) is located and where the data subjects are.

In the UK, the governing body is the Information Commissioner's Office, and the legal framework is the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

Personal Data

Personal data only includes information relating to natural persons who:

- can be identified or who are identifiable, directly from the information in question; or
- who can be indirectly identified from that information in combination with other information.

Pseudonymised data are still personal data.

https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/what-is-personal-data/can-we-identify-an-individual-indirectly/

Addressing Ethical Risks in Analytical Wargames

Major Ethical Risks in an Academic Environment

- Risks to preserving anonymity of participants in group settings
- Risks to ensuring data confidentiality, integrity and availability in large teams necessary to support the execution of wargames
- New information security risks in conducting analytical wargames remotely in a digital environment
- Risk of harm to individuals from immersion and roleplay in an adversarial environment

Mitigating Risks in Practice

- Communicate clearly research aims and process to participants
- Obtain informed consent from participants on how their data will be collected and used
- Understand information security risks and develop mitigation strategies
- Minimise collection of directly or indirectly identifiable personal data
- Anonymise or pseudo-anonymise gameplay data
- Ask participants to sign confidentiality agreements to mitigate risk of disclosures in group activities
- Secure and limit access to data, separate datasets, enforce retention policies during data storage

Research Excellence in Wargaming in Academia

Research Excellence in Analytical Wargaming

Developing wargaming as an academic discipline is about ensuring research excellence. Researchers, their institutions and funders are individually and collectively responsible for ensuring research integrity and ethics in wargaming.

This requires:

- Developing a more thorough understanding of how established academic integrity and research ethics principles apply to analytical wargaming and where behaviours fall short

- Fostering an empowering and enabling environment that promotes these principles.

- Advancing fundamental and applied research that develops wargaming as a pluralistic social science

- Providing wargaming education and training on the rigorous and ethical application of analytical wargaming methods accessible to all

- Creating more opportunities for open communication through presentations and publications

- Identifying research misconduct and questionable research practices, and responding to problems when they arise

Contact Information & Resources

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King's College London Resources:

- **Wargaming Network, School of Security Studies,** wargaming@kcl.ac.uk
  https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/wargaming-network

- **Research Integrity,** research-integrity@kcl.ac.uk
  https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-integrity

- **Research Ethics,** rec@kcl.ac.uk
  https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/rgei/research-ethics