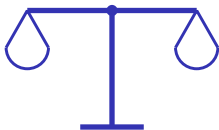


Ethics & Ownership

AS Computer Science ■ Topic 7

A-Level Computer Science



What we will cover

- 1 Professional ethics
- 2 Copyright & patents
- 3 Software licences
- 4 Artificial intelligence
- 5 Recap

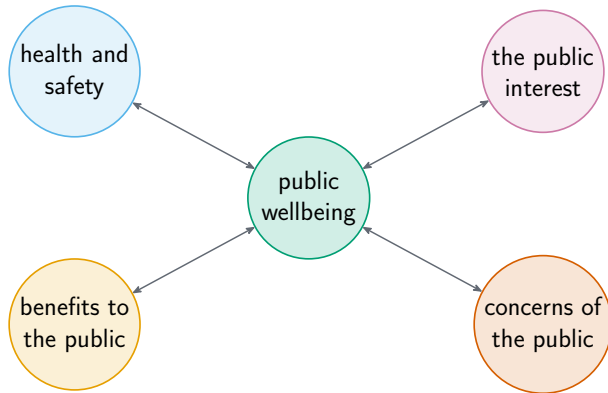




Why ethics matters

A **computing professional** builds software, systems, networks and data that affect people who **cannot judge the work themselves**. So the profession shares a code of **ethics** – BCS, ACM and IEEE each publish one:

- **trust** – users rely on professionals
- **impact** – software runs medical, banking, vehicles



Computing has an environmental cost



E-waste grows fastest of any waste stream: short replacement cycles, toxic metals, much of it exported. Data centres add the electricity on top.

Principles in practice

- **public interest** first – safety, health, the environment
- **honesty and competence**: be honest about your skills, never claim expertise you lack
- **confidentiality** – protect a client's or employer's private information
- avoid **conflicts of interest**
- respect **intellectual property** & **privacy**

Biased AI hiring tool

It sorts CVs fast but rejects more older applicants. **Hold it back** until the bias is fixed – fairness before convenience.

Acting ethically vs unethically

Acting **ethically** protects users, strengthens reputation, reduces legal risk, and builds trust. **On a borderline call:** name whose interests are affected → check the code of ethics *and* the law → weigh the consequences → ask a trusted senior → write down what you decided and why.

Acting **unethically** (skipping testing, hiding bugs, misusing data) can harm real users, lead to dismissal or legal action, damage reputation, and erode trust in technology generally.

Your call: ethical or not?

a serious bug is found just before release; the manager says “ship it anyway” – you stay silent

✗ public safety & interest come first

you reuse a well-tested open-source library, keep its licence and credit the authors

✓ intellectual property respected

a client's private data would make a great demo – you show it at a conference

✗ confidentiality broken

Discarded electronics (e-waste) are a growing environmental cost of computing

In an exam answer: **name the principle**, then apply it to the scenario.



Copyright and patents

- **copyright** : automatic, ~70 yr – covers code, images, text
- **patent** : must be filed, ~20 yr – covers inventions & algorithms
- without it anyone could copy software freely, the developer would not be paid, and plagiarism would be legal

copyright

automatic – no registration

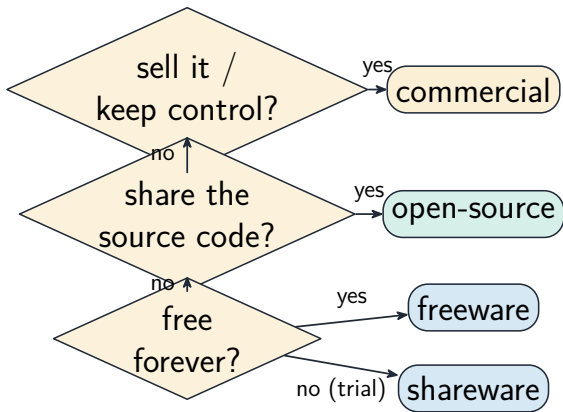
lasts ~70 years after the creator's death (code, images, documents)

patent

must be filed

~20 years (inventions, new algorithms)

Software licences



Type	Cost	Source	Modify
commercial	paid	no	no
open-source	free	yes	yes*
freeware	free	no	no
shareware	trial	no	no

software licence is a contract granting use on the owner's terms. **Commercial** software is sold per user, so the developer keeps revenue and control – Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop, most games. Open-source splits two ways: **permissive** (MIT, BSD) allows almost any use, **copyleft** (GPL) requires modified versions to carry the same licence.

***copyleft** (GPL): share modified versions alike.

Choosing a licence, and justifying the choice

proprietary

source withheld, use restricted – chosen for **revenue** and control

open-source

source published and modifiable – chosen when the developer wants it **widely used and improved by the community**

freeware

free to use, source withheld – chosen for reach, often to sell something else

shareware

free to try, then paid – chosen to let the product sell itself

how to justify

link the licence to the **developer's goal** (revenue, reach, community), the **user's needs** (cost, customising), and the **use case**

“Open-source is better” scores nothing. Name whose goal it serves and why that goal fits this scenario.



Artificial intelligence

AI does tasks once needing human intelligence. Most uses **machine learning** – learning patterns from data.

- understand: **speech** , **image recognition**
- decide: translation, recommendations, self-driving



reading a foreign label aloud

OCR → translate → speak

What modern AI is, and where it appears

machine learning

algorithms that improve at a task by **learning patterns from large amounts of data**, rather than following rules written by hand

neural networks

layered models loosely inspired by neurons; **deep learning** means many such layers

OCR

optical character recognition – reading printed or handwritten text

text-to-speech

and speech recognition in the other direction

autonomous vehicles

and robots, combining vision, planning and control

The shift is from **rules written by a programmer** to **patterns learned from data**. Every benefit and every concern below follows from that one change.

Everyday examples

AI tasks split into two kinds – **understanding input**, and **producing output or decisions**.

- **speech recognition** – spoken words to text (voice assistants).
- **image recognition** – finding objects, faces or text in images.
- **machine translation** – automatic translation between languages.
- **recommendation systems** – suggesting products, videos or music.

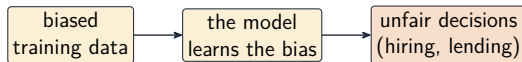
AI: benefits and concerns

Benefits:

- accessibility & productivity
- spots patterns in huge data

Concerns:

- **bias** , privacy, transparency
- accountability, misuse



biased data → biased model → unfair decisions

AI: the benefits and the concerns

speed and scale

processes far more data than people can, and does not tire

decision support

spots patterns in huge datasets – medical diagnosis, fraud detection

always available

and **personalised** to each user

job displacement

AI may replace some roles, and change many more

bias

a model trained on biased data reproduces that bias at scale

transparency and misuse

large models are “black boxes” hard to explain; and deepfakes, misinformation and surveillance are real uses

Answer in **pairs**: each benefit has a matching concern, and the exam marks the balance rather than the length of either list.

Exam tips

- Answer ethics questions against a **professional code of conduct** (public interest, competence, honesty), not personal opinion.
- Distinguish **copyright** (protects the expression) from a **patent** (protects an invention).
- Compare software licences: proprietary, open-source, freeware, shareware and FOSS.



Topic 7 – key takeaways

1

Ethics

public interest first; honesty;
confidentiality

2

Copyright

automatic; patents cover
inventions

3

Licences

commercial, open-source,
freeware, shareware

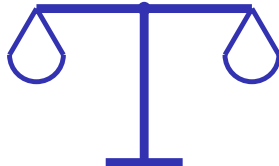
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AI

learns from data; beware bias &
accountability

Check yourself

- 1 Does copyright need registration?
- 2 Which licence shares its source code?
- 3 What is “copyleft” (GPL)?
- 4 How does bias get into an AI system?



Answers 1. no (automatic) 2. open-source 3. modified versions stay open 4. from biased training data