## March 2018

## Risk Assessment Form for Assessing Ethical and Research Risks

* Please see Guidance Notes at the end of this document.
* *Students*: Please make sure you have discussed this form with your supervisor!

Ashton Kingdon

**Researcher’s name:**

*In case of students:*

Dr David Millard

**Supervisor’s name:**

**Degree course:**

# COMP6217: The Science of Online Social Networks (2017-2018)

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| **Part 1 – Research activities** |
| What do you intend to do? (*Please provide a brief description of your study and details of your proposed methods*.)  Digital culture has progressively influenced the ways in which individuals journey through the grieving process, and, as a result, the Web should no longer be considered a supplementary space for rituals that traditionally manifest offline. In a similar vein, the advent of social media, and rise in platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have provided alternative outlets for people to display their grief. It is this emerging memorial culture that is beginning to challenge the conventional societal and cultural constraints that once encompassed the nature of mourning. Moreover, social media has transformed the connection people can have with those who are facing death, as communication with the dying was once restricted by geography, time, and familial connections. However, as society cements itself within the digital realm, the traditional hierarchies that once encompassed the grieving process are beginning to disintegrate, which has enabled a new level of intimacy and methods of saying goodbye.  Existing literature demonstrates that social media is becoming just as imperative a method for displaying grief as the funeral and erection of the memorial and should thus be given equal value. Therefore, we propose to build a social media application that will be both mobile and Web based, designed to unite people in grief, enabling them to continue the story of their loved ones in a specifically tailored and networked community. This application will be designed not only to coincide with advances in technology, but to correlate with the progression of societies relationship with grief, helping people to cope with loss day by day and find comfort by expressing themselves in a virtual community.  In order to test whether or not this idea is feasible before we begin building it we are planning to conduct market research in the format of open ended semi structured interviews with leading industry professionals. We can then use this information to tailor our app to focus on the market needs. |
| Will your research involve collection of information from other people? (*If yes, please provide a description of your proposed sample*.)  Semi Structured interviews will be conducted with 4 industry professionals that have their own businesses within Southampton. They have all worked within the industry for at least 10-20 years and some of them own their own companies so will thus we useful in detailing the ethical and legal issues that could arise when launching such an application. |
| If relevant, what locations are involved? (*Please specify which country/region/place you will be working in, and details of where data collection activities will take place (e.g. public or private space*).)  All interviews will be conducted within Southampton and the private premises of those who are being interviewed. I have personal relationships with all interviewees so believe conducting the interviews in private spaces will make both parties the most comfortable. |
| Will you be working alone or with others in the data collection process?  I will not be working alone at any point, I will be in a public shop during opening hours where there will be multiple members of staff and clients around. I will be using the arranging rooms to conduct the interviews, so we are not interrupted by any other members of staff or clients. Although I will be alone In the room with the people who are being interviewed, I do not consider this to be particularly risky, I have personal relationships with all the interviewees and will have signed in at the reception so my presence is recorded and key members of staff will be aware of the interviews taking place and their location. |
| **Part 2 – Potential risks to YOU as the researcher** |
| Please specify potential safety issues arising from your proposed research activity. (*Give consideration to aspects such as lone working, risky locations, risks associated with travel; please assess the likelihood and severity of risks.) If you have already completed a departmental H&S risk assessment, this may be attached to cover these aspects.*  There are small risks associated with holding private conversations with individuals (e.g. possible assault, possible untrue allegations against me). These are very small as all participants are already known to the me so I feel their will be no physical or psychological risks to me as a researcher. |
| What precautions will you take to minimise these risks?  Not Applicable. |
| Please specify potential distress or harm to YOU arising from your proposed research activity. (*Give consideration to the possibility that you may be adversely affected by something your participants share with you. This may include information of a distressing, sensitive or illegal nature*.)  The content we expect to be gathering is not assessed to pose any risk of distress or harm. |
| What precautions will you take to minimise these risks?  Not Applicanle |
| **Part 3 – Potential risks to YOUR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS** |
| Please consider potential safety risks to participants from taking part in your proposed research activity? (*Give consideration to aspects such as location of the research, risks associated with travel, strain from participation, and assess the likelihood and severity of risks.) If you have already completed a departmental H&S risk assessment, this may be attached to cover these aspects.*  There are no safety or psychological risks to any of the research participants. |
| What precautions will you take and/or suggest to your participants to minimise these risks?  Not Applicable |
| Please specify potential harm or distress that might affect your participants as a result of taking part in your research. (*Give consideration to aspects such as emotional distress, anxiety, unmet expectations, unintentional disclosure of participants’ identity, and assess the likelihood and severity of risks*.)  Not Applicable |
| What precautions will you take and/or suggest to your participants to minimise these risks?  Not Applicable. |
| **Part 4 – Potential wider risks** |
| Does your planned research pose any additional risks as a result of the sensitivity of the research and/or the nature of the population(s) or location(s) being studied? *(Give considerations to aspects such as impact on the reputation of your discipline or institution; impact on relations between researchers and participants, or between population sub-groups; social, religious, ethnic, political or other sensitivities; potential misuse of findings for illegal, discriminatory or harmful purposes; potential harm to the environment; impacts on culture or cultural heritage.)*  Not Applicable |
| What precautions will you take to minimise these risks?  Not Applicable. |

***CONTINUED BELOW …***

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| **Part 5 – International Travel** |
| If your activity involves international travel you must meet the Faculty’s requirements for Business Travel which are intended to:   1. Inform managers/supervisors of the travel plans of staff and students and identify whether risk assessment is required. 2. Provide contact information to staff and students whilst travelling (insurance contact details, University contact in case of emergency etc.)   Full details are provided in the [Faculty H&S Handbook](https://groupsite.soton.ac.uk/Administration/FSHS-Health-and-Safety/Documents/FSHS%20Local%20Health%20and%20Safety%20Arrangements.pdf) in the **Business Travel** section. Selecting **Business Travel** from the Contents list will take you straight to the relevant section. |

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| **Departmental H&S risk assessment attached (for Part 2/3)** | **YES / NO** | **(Delete as applicable)** |
| **Business Travel and Risk Filter Form attached (Part 5)** | **YES / NO** | **(Delete as applicable)** |

**Guidance Notes for completing the Risk Assessment Form for Assessing Ethical and Research Risks**

***(please delete notes before submitting)***

*Students: Please email a copy of your final, approved form to your supervisor. You may be expected to bind a copy of this form into your final dissertation.*

The purpose of assessing ethical and research risks is to ensure no one comes to harm as the result of the research being undertaken. For this reason it is essential to undertake an assessment of the risks before the research begins. To carry out an assessment of ethical and research risks, ask yourself:

* How might the activity cause harm to me, my research participants, my institution or the wider world?
* Is it safe and ethically sound to carry out this activity without additional protection or support?
* If someone else is going to do the work, can they do it in a manner that is safe and ethically sound?

Please note that this form does not replace a Health & Safety form; depending on your research activity (e.g. laboratory work; fieldwork) you may have to fill in an additional Health & Safety form to satisfy the requirements of your discipline.

**Part 1: About the research**

* Give a brief outline of the research including the methods to be used and the people to be involved as participants or sources of data. Bear in mind that this might include people who are not knowingly participating in research (e.g. people posting information on the internet).
* Clarify where the data collection will take place.

**Part 2: Potential risks to the researcher**

*Please note*: Some departments have their own Health & Safety risk assessment forms for research activities. If you have already completed such a form, you may upload this with your ethics application, rather than reduplicate information. However, it is essential that you answer the question related to possible harm and distress to you, as this is not covered on standard Health & Safety risk assessment forms.

1. Safety issues

* Only list those hazards that you could reasonably expect to cause harm or injury.
* Remember to include yourself and any co-workers if relevant.
* Will the activity involve lone working or potential exposure to violence or threat? (For more guidance see the Social Research Association website on Staying Safe [http://the-sra.org.uk/sra\_resources/safety-code/ ]).
* Are there any significant hazards due to where and when the research is to be done?

1. Harm and distress

* Think about the possibility of being adversely affected by the information your participants might share, or by their reactions to your questions. Is there any likelihood of becoming party to information about illegal activity or safeguarding issues?

Precautions/Risk Reduction

* List the control measures already in place for each of the risks.
* Are the risks dealt with by an existing [generic risk assessment](https://groupsite.soton.ac.uk/Administration/FSHS-Health-and-Safety/Documents/Risk%20assessments%20and%20risk%20register/) or example template (for adaptation)?
* Appropriate training and improved supervision are control measures and could be listed.
* Certain risks can be minimised by not undertaking data collection alone or doing so in a public space, and by letting someone know about where you are going and when you will be back. Always carry a mobile phone.
* Are the risks as low as is reasonably practical?

**Part 3: Potential risks to your research participants**

* Many of the risks associated with the conduct of the research affect both the researcher and the research participants (e.g. risks arising from travel, or the locations involved).
* In addition, certain people may find participation particularly demanding or straining (e.g. people with medical conditions or disabilities; children; the very old).
* Depending on the nature of the research, participants may become distressed, anxious, uncomfortable or annoyed during the research.
* Certain lines of questioning may elicit information from participants that could render them liable to criminal proceedings (e.g. drug abuse) or could highlight safeguarding issues (e.g. where respondents are being ill-treated).
* You need to carefully consider the likelihood of these various risks to your participants and their potential severity.

Precautions/Risk Reduction

* You need to consider carefully how you will minimise the risks and potential harm to your respondents and how you will respond if they show signs of harm (e.g. plan in breaks; terminate the data collection; refer respondents to sources of counselling; involve safeguarding personnel; offer a relaxation or restoration activity at the end of data collection; prepare debriefing statements where appropriate).

**Part 4: Potential wider risks**

* Consider the possibility that the nature or focus of your research could adversely affect people’s perceptions of researchers, the University or other population groups (e.g. by re-enforcing stereotypes or prejudices).
* Please remember that in doing research outside of the University you are acting as a representative of the University, and therefore ensure that your conduct and communication are professional and courteous throughout.