VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui

HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE
Application for Approval of Research Projects *

Nature of Proposed Research:-

(a) Staff Research ***Yes***

(b) Student Research ***Yes*** Degree ***Bsc, BSc(Hons), DipAppSc, McompSc, MSc, PhD***
Course Code ***comp389, comp453***

Project Title: - .***Software Usability Testing***..............................

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Investigators: -
(a) Principal Investigator

Name .***Robert Biddle, Ewan Tempero, Judy Brown***....

School/Dept/Group .***SMCS Computer Science***..................

Any Professional Code of Ethics to be followed

(Name) ....

(b) Other Researchers Name Position

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(c) Supervisor (in the case of student research projects)

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Proposed Starting Date ....

Proposed Date of Completion ....

Proposed Source of Funding ....

* **Please write legibly or type if possible. A copy of this document can be printed from the WWW at http://www.vuw.ac.nz/administrative/hec**

Briefly Outline:

(a) The Objectives of the Project

To assist in exploring and determining the usability of software.

"Usability is a fairly broad concept that basically refers to how easy it is for users to learn a system, how efficiently they can use it once they have learned, and how pleasant it is to use." (Nielsen and Mack, Usability Inspection Methods, Wiley, 1994.)

Usability testing is becoming widely recognised in modern Software Engineering and Human-Computer Interaction practices to be an indispensable part of the software development process. It allows the developers to assess how well software works with real people, and the complexities of human usage means this is impossible to predict. Other design and evaluation techniques can assist in early detection of problems and improving usability, but usability testing is increasingly regarded as essential.

(b) Method of Data Collection

Observation of users interacting with the software, and responding to queries.
These observations will be recorded with one or more of the following methods:

- ***by handwritten or typed notes***
- ***by automatic logging by the software***
- ***by audio tape***
- ***by video tape***

(c) The Benefits and Scientific Value of the Project

This ongoing project allow us to evaluate the usability of software designs, and so help us learn how to design more usable software, that is, software that is easier to use. Despite advances in computer hardware, software, and theory, the usability of computer systems remains a serious challenge in applying computer technology in real situations. Usability testing will help address this challenge.

(d) Characteristics of the Participants

Participants will resemble the kind of people who would actually be expected to use the software.

(e) Method of Recruitment

We will invite participants from the university or from industry as appropriate to the particular software. The invitations will be brief announcements, suggesting that prospective participants contact us for more details, whereupon we will forward the usability testing information sheet described below.

(f) Payments that are to be made/expenses to be reimbursed to participants

Participants will not be paid to test users. Any requests for reimbursement must be applied for and approved before the testing procedure.

(g) Other assistance (e.g. meals, transport) that is to be given to participants

None unless specifically requested and approved beforehand.

(h) Special hazards and/or inconvenience (including deception) that participants will encounter

The usability testing will involve ordinary interaction with an ordinary desktop or laptop computer system, albeit under observation. No special hazards or inconvenience will be involved beyond those inherent in using a computer and in being under observation. No deception will be involved.

(i) How informed consent is to be obtained (Include a copy of the consent form and information sheet that is to be used.) **(See paragraphs 4.3.1(g), 5.2, 5.5 and 5.6.1 of the guidelines)**. If written consent is not to be obtained, please explain why

We will supply prospective participants with an information sheet, shown separately. The sheet presents the nature of the usability testing sufficient for informed consent. Participants will be required to sign indicating that they have understood the information sheet, and agree to participant on the terms described.

(j) State whether the consent is for the collection of data, attribution of opinions or information, release of data to others, or use for particular purposes

The consent is for the collection of data, including the participants behaviour and comments during the usability testing. This data will be analysed, and the data and analysis may be presented in publications.

(k) Whether the research will be conducted on an anonymous basis. If not, state how issues of confidentiality of participants are to be ensured if this is intended. **(See paragraph 4.3.1(e) of the guidelines)** (e.g. who will listen to tapes, see questionnaires or have access to data)

The usability testing will be conducted on an anonymous basis. The individual identity of test users is not relevant to the usability testing. Only the researchers will have access to the original notes or recordings that allow participants to be individually identified. In any publication, individuals will be identified by number, code, or pseudonym. Original notes will be kept in secure storage at the university, or destroyed.

(l) Procedure for the storage of, access to and disposal of data, both during and at the conclusion of the research. **(See section 7 of the guidelines)**

Any original notes or recordings will be accessible only to the researchers, and otherwise kept in a locked cabinet at university, under control of the usability testing supervisor. These notes or recordings will be destroyed by shredding (notes), re-cording (audio or video tapes) or deletion (computer files).

(m) Feedback Procedures **(See section 8 of the guidelines)**

The information sheet will allow participants to specify that they have access to a copy of any report or publication based on their participation.

(n) Reporting and Publication of Results

The results will be used for analysis involved in relating software design and usability. This may be part of coursework, software development, or research. In some cases, this will be explicitly reported or published. In other cases it will form part of a series of work leading to a report or publication. In other cases still, it will not be explicitly involved in any publication, but will lead to better software design as part of other work.

Signature of Investigators as listed on page 1 (including Supervisors)

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Date: ……………………………………………

Please send this completed application form to the Secretary, Human Ethics Committee, Hunter Building or, in the case of applications from Schools or Departments with an approved ethics sub-committee, to the Convener of that sub-committee.

APPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL

CHECKLIST

9 Have you read the Human Ethics Committee Guidelines?
9 Is ethical approval required for your project?
9 Have you established whether informed consent needs to be obtained for your project?
9 In the case of student projects, have you consulted your supervisor about any human ethics implications of your research?

9 Have you included an information sheet for participants which explains the nature and purpose of your research, the proposed use of the material collected, who will have access to it, whether the data will be kept confidential to you, how anonymity or confidentiality is to be guaranteed?

9 Have you included a written consent form?
9 If not, have you explained on the application form why you do not need to get written consent?
9 Are you asking participants to give you consent to

- collect data from them
- attribute information to them
- release that information to others
- use the data for particular purposes

9 Have you indicated clearly to participants on the information sheet or consent form how they will be able to get feedback on the research from you (e.g. they may tick a box on the consent form indicating that they would like to be sent a summary), and how the data will be stored or disposed of at the conclusion of the research?

9 Have you included a copy of any questionnaire you propose using?

9 Has your application been seen by the head of your school or department (or the person given responsibility to consider applications on behalf of the head (see Guidelines 5.3.2)).