Transparency for Responsible Research

Creative Informatics

(University of Edinburgh in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University, Codebase and Creative Edinburgh)

Organisations often hesitate to openly share internal processes and management plans related to integrity, data, and ethics. This lack of transparency and the gatekeeping of documentation can create significant barriers for other organisations, particularly young and small businesses, preventing them from learning from their peers and partners. As a result, these barriers hinder the development of responsible processes and ultimately impede the achievement of high-integrity research across various industries.

Recognising these issues, Creative Informatics is an R&D partnership dedicated to transparency as a core principle. By doing so, the program offers a framework for organisations in the creative industry to follow.

What is Creative Informatics?

Creative Informatics is a Creative Cluster funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). It unites the city's world-class creative industries and tech sectors, providing funding and development opportunities that enable creative individuals and organisations to explore how data can drive innovative new products, businesses, and experiences. Creative Informatics has supported over 130 R&D projects, trained nearly 700 people, and engaged a wider community of 5,000 individuals.

How does Creative Informatics champion transparency?

Creative Informatics' commitment to openness and transparency extends beyond their research projects. They have adopted a transparent approach to their processes by making all their policies, procedures, and management frameworks publicly available on Zenodo*. This includes:

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Statement

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Action Plan

Ethics Statement - including guidance and ethics checklist

Data Management Plan - outlining how data associated with the project is managed and stored

Research Ethics Overview - detailing specific ethics documentation for research associated with Creative Informatics

By sharing these documents openly, Creative Informatics sets a standard for transparency and provides valuable resources for other organisations to build and improve their own responsible processes.

*Zenodo is an open-source database platform for researchers to share, curate, and publish data and software. [Zenodo.org. (2013). Zenodo - Research. Shared. [online] Available at: https://about.zenodo.org/.]

"Working in such a fast-paced R&D environment, and supporting such a huge range of activities, means that establishing useful, efficient - and ethical - processes is really necessary to keep on top of things. This is the work, though, that people external to the project rarely see. Our commitment in Creative Informatics has always been to make our processes as transparent as possible, and it's a core ethos of the project.
This has led our funded projects to also think about their own approaches, transparency, and documentation - which is particularly important when working with data, so our own act of transparency supports the community in prioritising ethical data practices." -
Professor Melissa Terras, Co-Director, Creative Informatics

The policies and procedures developed under Creative Informatics have gained significant readership, with the 'Ethics Guidance' for industry being downloaded over 800 times. Notably, organisations such as the Science Museum Group have adopted these guidelines, using the Self-Assessment Ethics Review process (outlined in the Ethics Statement) to address ethical issues and grant data ethics approval for advanced digital projects involving their collections.

By making such materials publicly available, Creative Informatics demonstrates a commitment to responsible research practices and fosters an environment of transparency, diversity, and inclusion. This dedication was recognised in 2022 when Creative Informatics received the Edinburgh Research Office 'Responsible Research Award.'

Creative Informatics aims to serve as a model for other organisations, showcasing the value of openness, transparency, and responsible research practices through their positive impact on both organisations and the broader creative industry.