

A hand holding a compass over a map of a desert landscape. The background is a blurred map of a desert with a winding path. The hand is holding a round compass with a white face and black markings. The text is overlaid on the image.

Bases for Values and Principles

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Bases for Values and Principles

What grounds these codes of ethics?

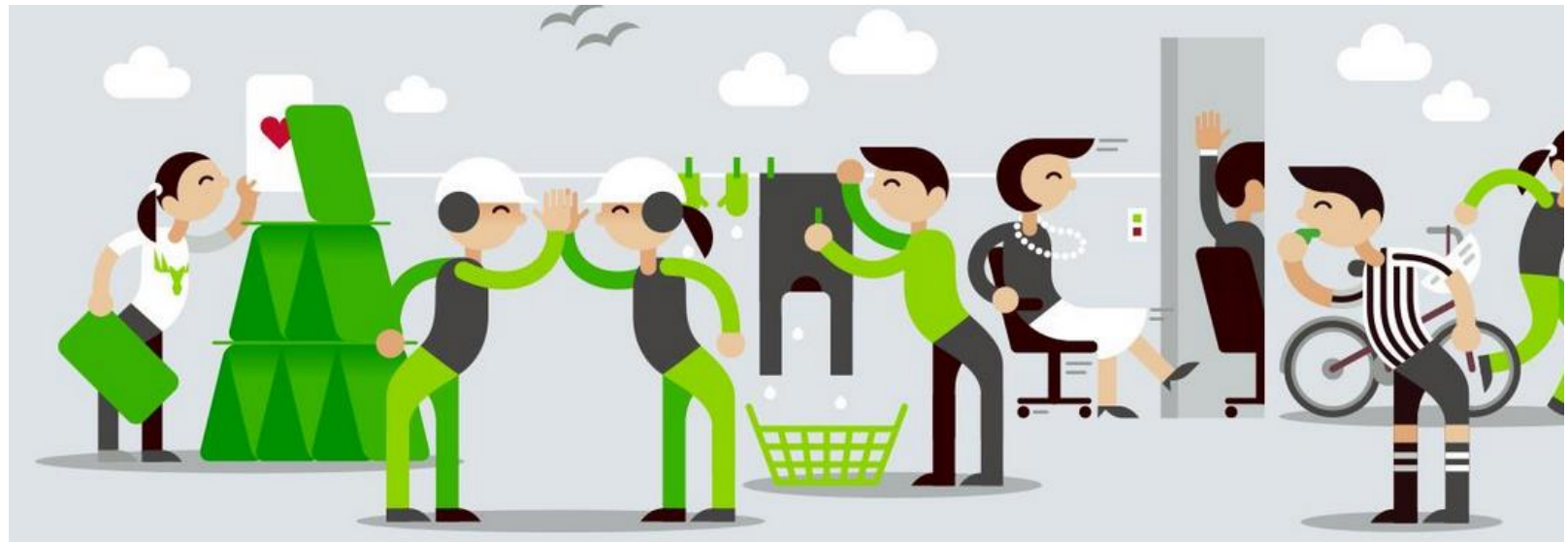
On what basis do their authors assert that this code of ethics, as opposed to some hypothetical alternative, is the code of ethics to follow?



Bases for Values and Principles

A typical explanation might be that “An individual’s professional obligations are derived from the profession and its code, tradition, society's expectations, contracts, laws, and rules of ordinary morality” (Weil, 2008), but a closer examination raises as many questions as it answers.

<https://www.metsagroup.com/en/about-us/code-of-conduct/Pages/default.aspx>



Universality



<https://universality.io/?lang=en>

Many codes simply assert that the principles embodied in the code are universal principles.

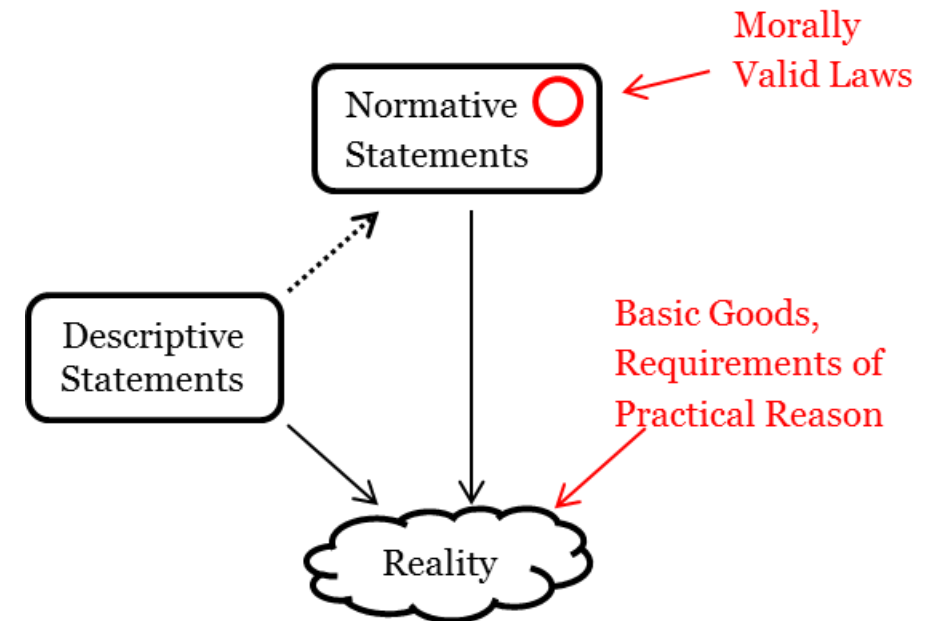
Universality may be seen as a justification for moral and ethical principles; if the principle is believed by everyone, then arguably it should be believed here.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_universalism

Fundamental Rights

- The High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence cites four ethical principles, “rooted in fundamental rights, which must be respected in order to ensure that AI systems are developed, deployed and used in a trustworthy manner” (AI HLEG, 2019)
- Nonetheless, it is not clear what these fundamental rights are.

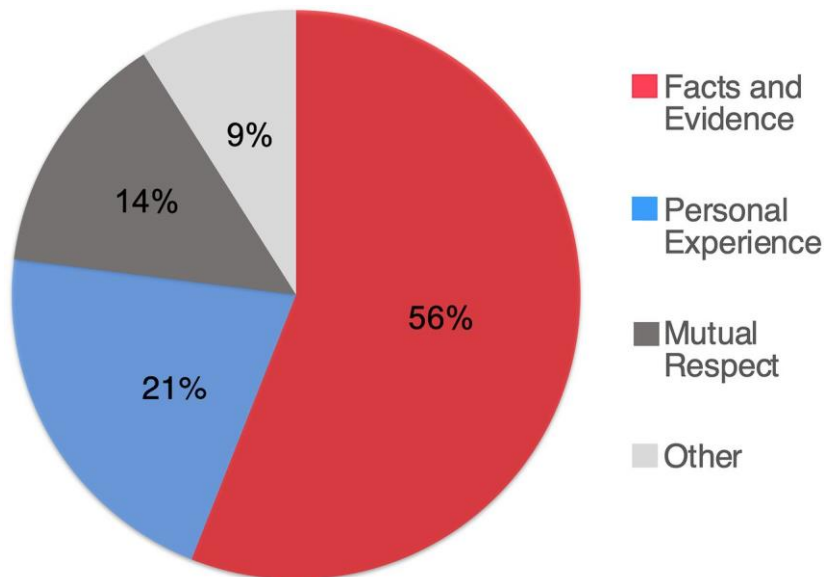
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory2/chapter/natural-rights/>



<https://hughmccarthylawsciencea.sc.wordpress.com/2015/01/03/a-summary-of-john-finniss-theory-of-natural-law/>

Fact

- Arguments drawing from statements of fact about the world are sometimes used to support ethical principles.
- Against such assertions of fact the “is-ought” problem may be raised.

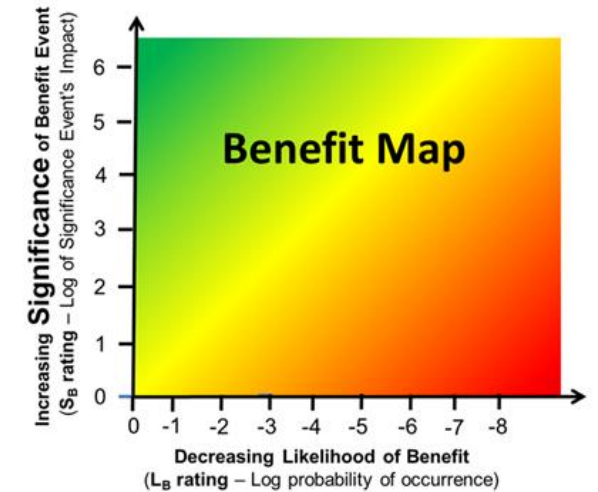
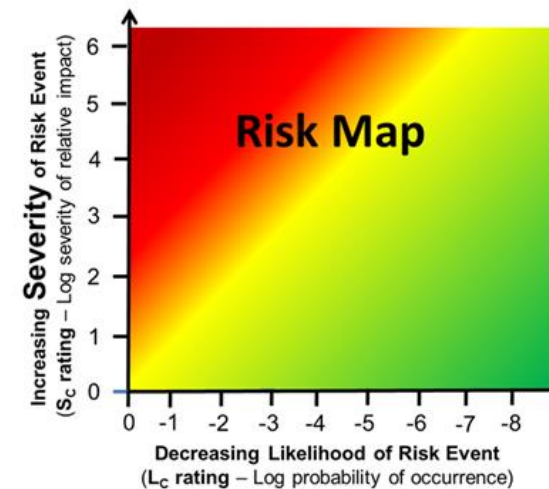


<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/commentary/moral-facts-and-common-core>

Personal experiences bridge moral and political divides better than facts <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/6/e2008389118>

Balancing Risks and Benefits

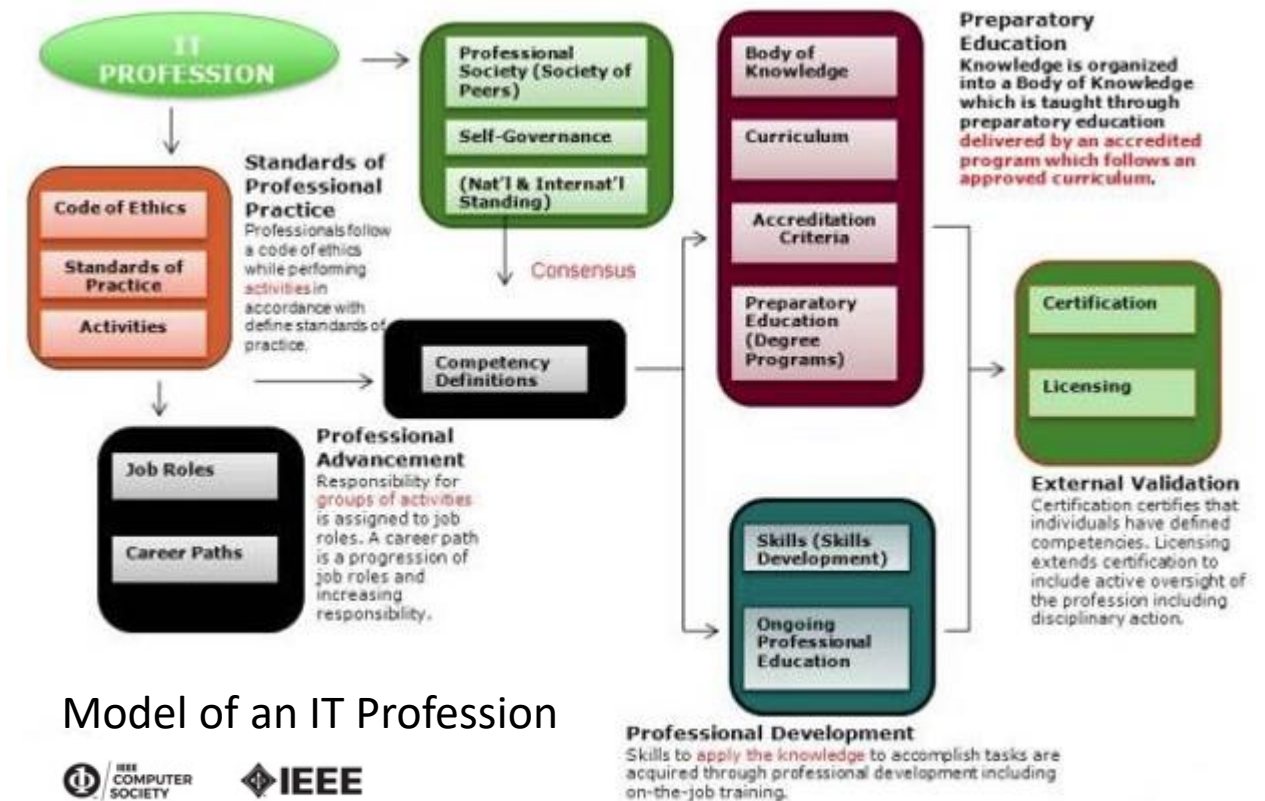
- The AI4People declaration states “An ethical framework for AI must be designed to maximise these opportunities and minimise the related risks” (Floridi, et.al., 2018:7).
- This results in a different calculation in each application.
- It also requires an understanding of what the consequences actually are.
- And perhaps ethics isn't really a case of balancing competing interests.



<https://www.outsourcedpharma.com/doc/using-system-risk-structures-to-understand-and-balance-risk-benefit-trade-offs-0001>

Requirements of the Profession

- A requirement is a statement about what a person must believe, be or do in order to accomplish a certain objective or goal.
- Such principles may be expressed in two ways:
 - Derived from some other pre-existing ethical principle
 - Conditional, based on what is entailed by joining a profession.



Social Good or Social Order



- For example: the primary function of journalism, according to the statements, is to inform the public and to serve the truth, because “public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy” (SPJ, 2014).
- A basis in social order, however, invites relativism.
- ‘Social order’ can be construed to mean national interest.

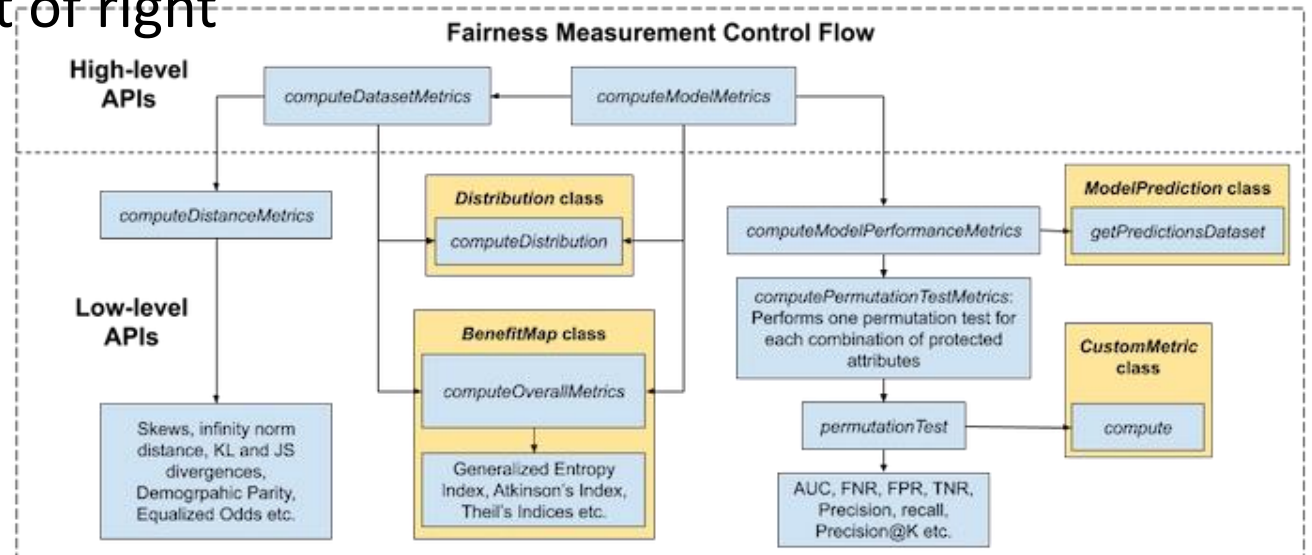
<https://www.hiig.de/en/social-order-in-the-digital-society/>

Fairness

- A principle of ‘fairness’ is frequently cited with no additional support or justification. But what is fairness?
 - Objectivity – e.g. “it is essential that we preserve a professional detachment, free of any whiff of bias” (NYT, 2018).
 - Non-arbitrary – the same principle (or law, or rule) is applied to all
 - Free from abuse or infringement of right
 - Equitable and non-discriminatory

<https://amplitude.com/blog/increasing-fairness-machine-learning>

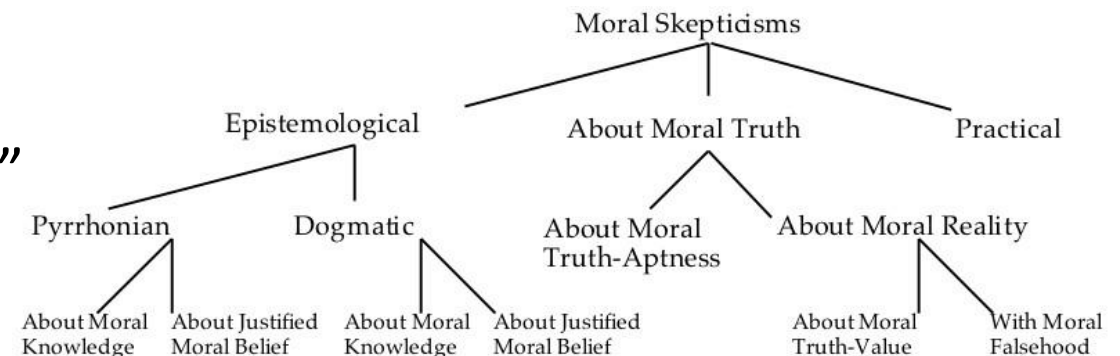
<https://sdtimes.com/ai/the-linkedin-fairness-toolkit-launched-to-measure-fairness-in-large-scale-ai-apps/>



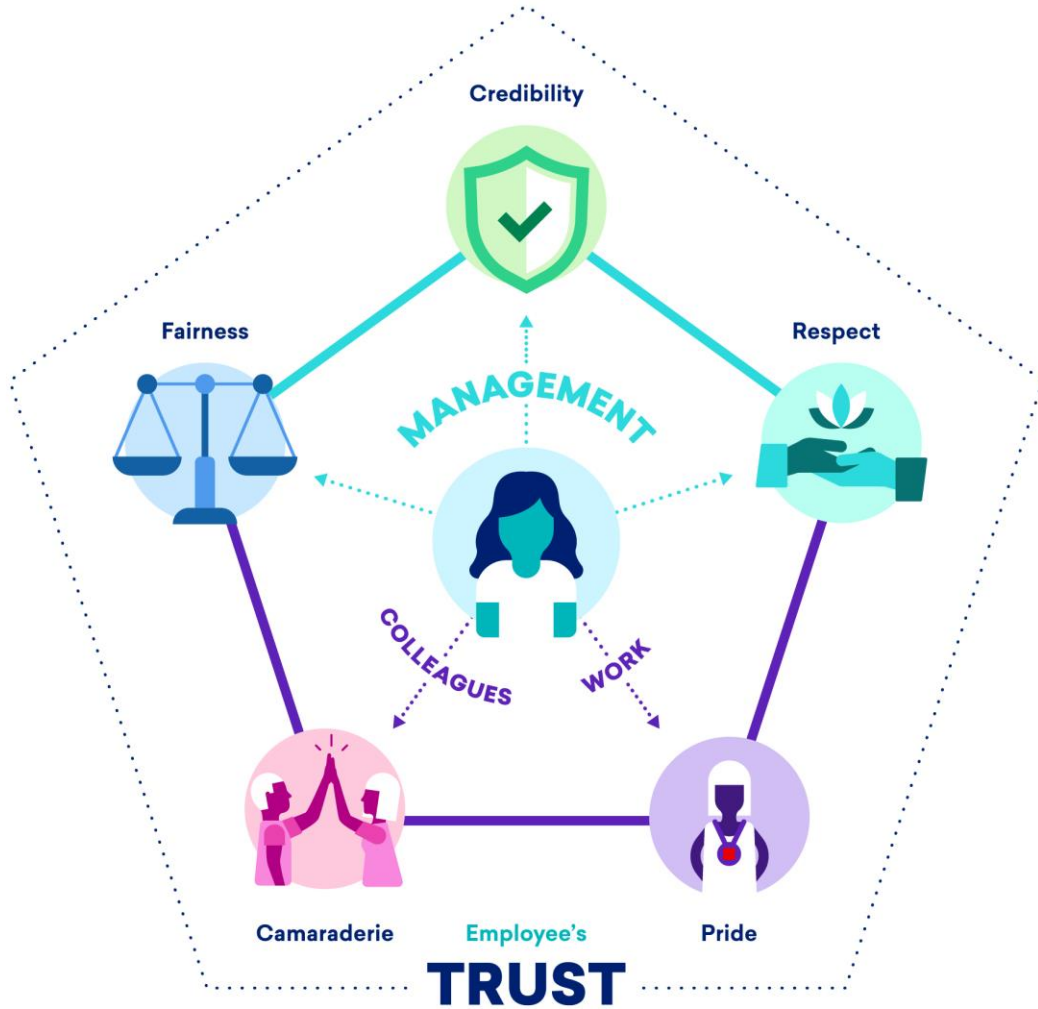
Epistemology

- The advancement of knowledge and learning is often considered to be in and of itself a moral good.
 - A value is therefore adduced if it supports knowledge and truth-seeking
 - Or a decision is (more) ethical if it is informed by knowledge and evidence
- Alternatively, one may simply deny that knowledge and learning are moral goods
 - Seneca, for example, argued “This desire to know more than is sufficient is a sort of intemperance” (Letter 88:36).
 - “curiosity killed the cat”
 - “some things are not meant to be known”

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/skepticism-moral/>



Trust



In order to do any number of things, you need trust, or some of the components of trust. As a result, the elements of trust in themselves can be cited as justification for moral principles.

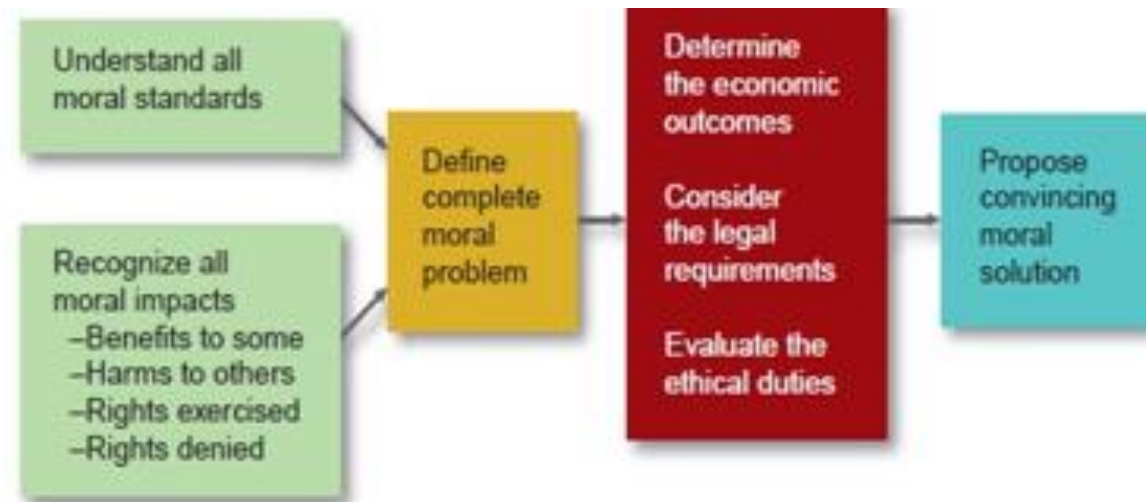
But:

- it could be argued that trust is too fragile a foundation for moral principles
- it may be argued that trustless systems are in fact morally superior

Defensibility

Another way to define an ethical principle' is to say that it is descriptive of 'conduct that you (or your organization) would be willing to defend'.

- May involve reference to the work of predecessors
- May involve reference to a cost, burden or onus



Moral Reasoning Generally



- The distinction between checklists and process
- And between conforming to a standard and creating one
- The distinction between consideration and rationalization
- The question of standards of evidence and forms of argument

<https://uksa.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/the-authority-board/committees/national-statisticians-advisory-committees-and-panels/national-statisticians-data-ethics-advisory-committee/ethics-self-assessment-tool/>