



Ministry of Defence AI Ethics Advisory Panel

Terms of Reference

Background

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has identified the rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Autonomy as a major strategic issue for Defence, with the potential to alter everything the department does. However, the development, adoption and use of AI by Defence raises unique ethical challenges which the MOD must address to guide responsible innovation across Defence, demonstrate our values on the international stage, retain the trust of our industry partners, and reflect the values of our citizens. The MoD is committed to developing and using AI in a responsible and ethical way, and therefore to developing and maintaining frameworks, policies and processes which are appropriate for the prevailing technological, societal and political contexts, some of which will continue to evolve rapidly. In the first instance, this will involve:

- The development, maintenance and application of a set of ethical principles for AI in Defence, which will demonstrate the MOD's position and guide our approach to responsible AI across the department.
- A framework for implementing these principles and related policies / processes across Defence.
- Appropriate governance and decision-making processes to assure ethical outcomes in line with the department's principles and policies.

The Ethics Advisory Panel

To assist the MOD in this work, it will convene an Ethics Advisory Panel ("the Panel") to provide expert advice, scrutiny and challenge across the full span of principles, policies and frameworks relevant to the delivery of ethical AI outcomes within Defence. As an advisory body, it will not have decision-making authorities, nor be a formal board within the MOD's governance structures.

Membership

The Panel will be chaired by the Permanent Secretary, who will be responsible for convening

the Panel, facilitating discussion by Panel members and, ultimately, for advice to Ministers on AI ethics policy. It will consist of experts on Artificial Intelligence, military ethics, the tech industry, human rights and Defence. Membership will be by invitation only.

The following officials will serve as the Defence representatives on the Panel:

- Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)
- Director General for Security Policy (DG SecPol)
- Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Military Strategy and Operations) (DCDS(MSO))
- Director for Strategy (Dir Strategy)

The Defence AI & Autonomy Unit (DAU) will act as the Secretariat for the Panel, providing briefing and evidence for the Chair and members ahead of each session, and keeping Minutes.

Public disclosure and transparency

The membership of the Ethics Advisory Panel will be publicly disclosed. Minutes of the Panel's meetings will be recorded but not published, though they will be subject to Freedom of Information processes.

Panel members will be expected to disclose any conflicts of interest before participating in any meetings or Panel business. Members' conflicts of interest will be published alongside other information about the Panel. The Permanent Secretary will decide if any such conflicts of interests mean that an individual cannot be part of the Panel.

External Panel members are welcome to talk publicly about AI in Defence in general terms, but must not disclose details of Panel discussions beyond what the MOD puts into the public domain. External Panel members must not share materials provided to them by the MOD in connection with Panel business unless formally authorised to do so.

Ways of working

- The Panel is expected to meet formally not more than once a quarter, although meetings may be called on an *ad hoc* basis if need arises.
- Agendas and accompanying papers will be circulated at least 48 hours before formal meetings.
- Relevant outputs relating to the Panel's remit will be shared with Panel members before publication.

Expectations of Panel members

The members of the Panel will be expected to:

- Commit 2 hours of their time on average every quarter for Panel meetings.
- Take part in ad-hoc meetings and provide feedback (e.g. on draft documents) outside of regular panel meetings, where necessary.
- Share contacts and networks in their respective communities to enable the project team to draw on a wide range of stakeholders.