Learning analytics: ethical issues and policy changes
Introduction

- HEIs are making increasing use of student data to support retention and student learning
- Data privacy and protection policies in place
- Gaps around policy for use of learning analytics

→ a need to address issues around:
  - moral purpose
  - purpose and boundaries
  - informed consent
  - collection, analyses, access to and storage of data
  - students as active agents
  - labelling and stereotyping
Developing new policy

Drawing upon existing practice, existing literature

No comparable policy within HE sector
Drafting basic principles

8 principles created, covering a broad range of practical and ethical considerations
Stakeholder consultation

Extensive stakeholder consultation, including:
student support staff, faculties, tutors, analysts, strategy office, PVCs, formal committees and most importantly.... students
Draft policy formed

- Principles refined and (almost) agreed
- Communication plan for staff and students designed
- Guidelines established for staff using student data
- Policy undergoing final formal approvals
New OU policy for the ethical use of learning analytics

**Principle 1:** Learning analytics is a moral practice, which should align with core organisational principles.

**Principle 2:** The OU has a responsibility to all stakeholders to use and extract meaning from student data for the benefit of students where feasible.
Principle 3: Students are not wholly defined by their visible data or our interpretation of that data.

Principle 4: The purpose and the boundaries regarding the use of learning analytics should be well defined and visible.
**Principle 5:** The OU should aim to be transparent regarding data collection, and provide students with the opportunity to update their own data and consent agreements at regular intervals.

**Principle 6:** Students should be engaged as active agents in the implementation of learning analytics (e.g. informed consent, personalised learning paths, interventions).
Principle 7: Modelling and interventions based on analysis of data should be sound and free from bias.

Principle 8: Adoption of learning analytics within the OU requires broad acceptance of the values and benefits (organisational culture) and the development of appropriate skills across the organisation.