Ethical Reasoning: Defining, Teaching, Assessing

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James Madison University

Parts adapted from Hawk & Fulcher’s 2016 AALHE webinar: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5Uvrp_dk0
Thanks to My Friends
Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will cite a definition of ethical reasoning (the Eight Key Question Framework)

1. Participants will explain why teaching, learning, and assessment should be integrated
Overview

• Guiding Questions
• About Ethical Reasoning [ER] & SLOs of focus
• Assessments
• Teaching Strategies
• Q & A
ER at Your Institution

• Is there a coordinated effort at your institution, and at what level (course, program, university)?

• How is ER defined?

• What strategies are used to teach ER?
STOP!
...focusing myopically on assessment
START!

...thinking about

learning systems
Teaching for Improved Ethical Reasoning Functions

Spectator Evaluate Actions

Agent Generate Action
Ethical Reasoning in Action

Ethical Considerations
Rich legacies of moral theories, considerations, and practical reasoning

Decision Science Findings
Practical reasoning strategies from current decision sciences e.g. social psychology, behavioral economics and brain research.
Decision-Affecting, Action Guiding, Reflective Questions

Interrogate intuitions – slow down decision-making

Multiple ethical considerations

Open-ended questions [not confirmatory]

Group / team process is best
Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

SLO 1  Memorization
SLO 2  Identification Simple
SLO 3  Identification Complex
SLO 4  Application Generic
SLO 5  Application Personal
SLO 6  Importance
SLO 7  Confidence
SLO 5

To their own ethical situation or dilemma, students will evaluate courses of action by applying (weighing and, if necessary, balancing) the considerations raised by the 8KQ.
The Eight Key Questions (8KQ)

Ethical Issue

Outcomes

Rights

Character

Liberty

Authority

Empathy

Responsibility

Fairness
Which Apply?

Outcomes?

Rights?

Character?

Liberty?

Responsibility?

Authority?

Empathy?

Ethical Issue
Which Apply?

Ethical Issue

- Outcomes
- Rights
- Character
- Liberty
- Authority
- Empathy
- Responsibility
- Fairness
Conduct Analyses

Ethical Issue

- Fairness
- Outcomes
- Character
- Empathy
Weigh and Decide
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insufficient 0</th>
<th>Marginal 1</th>
<th>Good 2</th>
<th>Excellent 3</th>
<th>Extraordinary 4</th>
<th>Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Ethical Situation: Identifying ethical issue in its context</td>
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<td>B. Key Question Reference: Mentioning the 8 KQs or equivalent terms</td>
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<td>C. Key Question Applicability: Describing which of the 8 KQs are applicable or not applicable to the situation and why</td>
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<td>D. Ethical Reasoning: Analyzing individual KQs</td>
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<td>E. Ethical Reasoning: Weighing the relevant factors and deciding</td>
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## University Assessment Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO 1: Memorization</th>
<th>SLOs 2 &amp; 3: Identification (Simple &amp; Complex)</th>
<th>SLO 4: Application Generic</th>
<th>SLO 5: Application Personal</th>
<th>SLOs 6 &amp; 7: Attitudinal</th>
<th>Data Collection:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yearly; random sample of 200 incoming freshmen in Orientation, after exposure to topic.</td>
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<td>Ethical Reasoning Identification Test</td>
<td>500 – 1000 randomly selected students as beginning freshmen &amp; again as sophomores/juniors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical Reasoning Essay</td>
<td>100 – 200 randomly selected students as beginning freshmen &amp; again as sophomores/juniors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey of Ethical Reasoning</td>
<td>500 – 1000 randomly selected students as beginning freshmen &amp; again as sophomores/juniors.</td>
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</table>
Great – We have a robust assessment process!
Will students’ ethical reasoning skills improve now?
What’s Missing?
## Student Learning Interventions

### Direct Interventions
- **Orientation Freshman Course**
- **Residence Life Scenarios**
- **Gen Ed Course**
- **Course in Major**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLO 1</th>
<th>Memorization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLO 2</td>
<td>Identification Simple</td>
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<td>SLO 7</td>
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### Indirect Interventions
- **Welcome Book**

### Required Professional Development for Implementers
- **Training Module**
- **Advanced Training Module**

### SLO Success Rates
- **SLO 1:** Memorization
  - 99% of students affected during career, by 2020
- **SLO 2:** Identification Simple
  - 99% of freshmen
- **SLO 3:** Identification Complex
  - 99.9% of freshmen
- **SLO 4:** Application Generic
  - ~50% of freshmen & sophomores
  - Approx. 76% of students
- **SLO 5:** Application Personal
  - Approx. 20% of students
JMU’s Orientation

Hurricane Sharon

Watch the Hurricane Sharon video

Involves 4300+ incoming first-year students led by 150+ volunteer faculty and staff facilitators
Ethical Reasoning Results:

Where do we want to be?
Where did we start?
Where are we now?
# James Madison University’s Ethical Reasoning Rubric

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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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## A. Ethical Situation: Identifying ethical issue in its context

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - Contains reference to decision options AND/OR the context gives regard to decision.
- **Target, 2020**
  - Explicit but unorganized reference to decision options and context.
  - Meets criteria for Excellent AND...

## B. Reference to key questions

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - Mentioning the 8 KQs or equivalent terms
- **Target, 2020**
  - References all eight key questions.

## C. Key Question Applicability: Describing which of the 8 KQs are applicable or not applicable to the situation and why

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - No rationale provided for the applicability or inapplicability of any KQs to the ethical situation.
- **Target, 2020**
  - Provides a rationale for the applicability or inapplicability of six key questions to the ethical situation.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If author identifies fewer than the eight KQs or the criteria D and E can be scored no higher than (1) “Marginal”

## D. Ethical Reasoning: Analyzing individual KQs

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - Analysis attempted using two or more key questions. Typically correct description of key questions to the ethical situation. Account is unclear, disorganized, or inaccurate.
- **Target, 2020**
  - Analysis attempted using three or more key questions. Precisely accurate description of key questions to the ethical situation. Account is clear and organized.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If Criterion D is scored a 0 or 1 then Criterion E can be scored no higher than (1) “Marginal”

## E. Ethical Reasoning: Weighing the relevant factors and deciding

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - No judgment is presented or judgment presented with no rationale.
- **Target, 2020**
  - Uses products of the analysis and provides some weighing to make a decision. Account is unclear, disorganized, or inaccurate.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If Criteria D or E is scored a 0 or 1 then Criteria F can be scored no higher than (1) “Marginal”

- **Baseline, 2013**
  - Conveys weighing approach using analysis products. Provides an intelligible basis for judgment.
- **Target, 2020**
  - Meets criteria for Good AND....
  - Logically terminates in decision that will be reached.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** If Criteria D or E is scored a 0 or 1 then Criteria F can be scored no higher than (1) “Marginal”

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- **Baseline, 2013**
  - Meets criteria for Excellent AND...
- **Target, 2020**
  - Products of analysis weighed to make judgment compelling.
Closing

• Summary

• Remember: Let’s start focusing on LEARNING SYSTEMS!
Q & A
Resources

Ethical Reasoning at JMU:
https://www.jmu.edu/mc/

Hawk & Fulcher’s 2016 AALHE webinar:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-J5Uvrp_dk0

Assessment at JMU:
https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/

Assessment and Learning Improvement at JMU:
https://www.jmu.edu/assessment/Visitor/Student-Learning.shtml