



Government of **Western Australia**
School Curriculum and Standards Authority



General Capabilities

Ethical understanding



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Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya.

The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

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Ethical understanding



Image adapted from: GlobalStock, 2010



What is Ethical understanding?

Ethical understanding encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to identify ethical concepts, understand different ethical perspectives and apply ethical thinking in response to issues.

Ethical understanding involves students building a strong personal and socially oriented ethical outlook that helps them to manage context, conflict and uncertainty. Students develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others. They explore ethical issues and interactions with others, discussing ideas and learning to be accountable as members of a democratic community.

Ethical understanding is developed through the investigation of a range of questions drawn from various contexts in the curriculum.

Students develop an awareness of the influence that their values and behaviour have on others.

Structure

The Ethical understanding learning continuum is organised into two elements, as shown in Figure 1:

- Understanding ethical concepts and perspectives
- Responding to ethical issues.

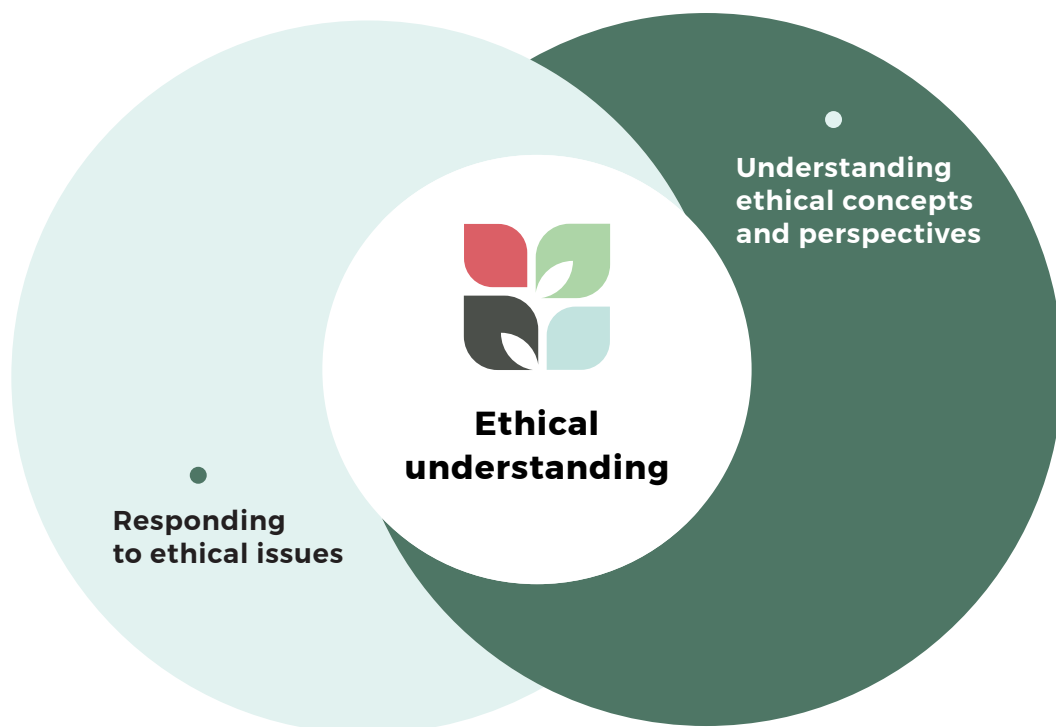


Figure 1:
Ethical understanding elements

Understanding ethical concepts and perspectives

This element is organised into three sub-elements:

- **Explore ethical concepts** – students identify and examine ethical concepts. They discuss and examine the dimensions of ethical concepts and how they relate to the actions we take in a range of situations.
- **Examine values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms** – students understand the role that values, rights and responsibilities, and norms have in ethical decisions. They consider how a range of values relate to established norms of ethical behaviour.
- **Recognise influences on ethical behaviour and perspectives** – students recognise the interrelationship of factors that impact their ethical behaviour and perspectives. They consider how factors such as reason, emotions, behavioural habits, character traits, obligations and duties impact ethically considered responses.

Responding to ethical issues

This element is organised into three sub-elements:

- **Explore ethical perspectives and frameworks** – students develop an understanding of different ethical frameworks and how these inform ethical perspectives and decision-making. Ethical frameworks include approaches that address the role of consequences of ethical actions; approaches that deal with issues of duty, justice and fairness; and approaches that focus on virtues in the ethical decision-making process.
- **Explore ethical issues** – students bring together their understanding of the first four sub-elements of the Ethical understanding learning continuum to investigate ethical issues. They apply their understanding of ethical concepts, values, rights and responsibilities, norms, ethical frameworks and perspectives to curriculum-related ethical contexts.
- **Make and reflect on ethical decisions** – students recognise the factors that impact on ethical decisions, determine alternative responses to an issue and consider how these may impact potential outcomes.

The Ethical understanding learning continuum is set out in Tables 1–2.

learning continuum

Table 1

Understanding ethical concepts and perspectives			
Student levels	Sub-elements		
	Explore ethical concepts	Examine values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms	Recognise influences on ethical behaviour and perspectives
L1	Identify examples of ethical concepts such as right and wrong	Identify examples of values and rights and responsibilities	Identify examples of values and rights and responsibilities
L2	Identify ethical concepts such as honesty and fairness, and describe actions and behaviours associated with these	Identify values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations, and explain why they are important	Identify how emotions and behaviour interact, and share examples of when they match and when they do not
L3	Identify ethical concepts such as respect and tolerance, and describe how a situation or context affects actions and behaviour	Describe how values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations influence responses and decision-making	Explain how emotions can affect behaviour and decision-making in different situations
L4	Identify and describe ethical concepts such as truth and justice, and explain how perspectives may vary according to the situation or context	Describe how the relationships between values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms influence responses and decisions related to ethical issues	Explain how habits and behaviour shape character and examine how they inform ethical perspectives
L5	Analyse the similarities and differences between ethical concepts such as integrity, loyalty and equality, in a range of situations and contexts	Describe the relationship between the role of individual and community values, rights and responsibilities, and ethical norms when responding to ethical issues	Explain how different traits such as honesty, trust, courage and selfishness interact with responsibilities or duties to determine ethically appropriate responses
L6	Evaluate the consistency in meaning of ethical concepts such as trust, freedom and rights and responsibilities, in a range of situations and contexts	Describe the importance of values and rights and responsibilities when reaching a position on an ethical issue, and evaluate their role in challenging and defending ethical norms	Explore and analyse examples of the tensions between conflicting positions on issues of personal, social and global importance

Table 2

Responding to ethical issues			
Student levels	Sub-elements		
	Explore ethical perspectives and frameworks	Explore ethical issues	Make and reflect on ethical decisions
L1	Identify examples of different consequences and explain how these might affect the way people behave or act	Identify different ethical problems or issues from examples such as stories	Identify the links between people's wants and needs and their choices and actions
L2	Identify the similarities and differences between values such as caring, compassion and empathy	Identify different perspectives and approaches when discussing ethical issues from a given example	Identify examples of how perspectives and values influence decision-making
L3	Describe the differences and connections between rights and responsibilities, and care and respect, and how these affect decision-making	Use examples to describe how people may have different values and perspectives that they apply to an ethical issue	Describe decision-making processes with reference to ethical perspectives and values
L4	Describe how ethical frameworks that use consequences, virtues and duties guide ethical decision-making	Describe how ethical perspectives or approaches to ethical issues may vary in different situations	Consider alternative ethical responses to an issue when making and reflecting on ethical decisions
L5	Explain how different ethical frameworks support developing ethical perspectives and inform ethical decision-making	Analyse the relationships between values, ethical perspectives and ethical frameworks when responding to ethical issues	Consider how values and beliefs influence approaches to ethical issues, and analyse how these affect outcomes
L6	Analyse and utilise different ethical frameworks when responding to ethical issues and making ethical decisions	Apply knowledge of ethical concepts, values, perspectives and ethical frameworks when responding to ethical issues	Analyse biases when applying ethical concepts, values and ethical frameworks, in order to explore and evaluate ethical decisions

Glossary

B

bias

Presentation of one perspective or favouring one side in an argument or discussion, often accompanied by a refusal to consider possible merits of alternative perspectives.

E

ethical concepts

Principles, values and beliefs such as right, wrong, honesty, integrity, justice, equality, freedom, respect, truth, fairness, tolerance and loyalty.

ethical decisions

Choices made through the act of evaluating and selecting a course of action or making choices consistent with ethical principles.

ethical frameworks

Agreed theories, methods or processes used for ethical decision-making.

ethical issue

A situation, activity or scenario that creates conflict with agreed values or principles.

ethical norms

A set of beliefs and behaviours related to a person's culture or society, concerned with issues such as right and wrong.

ethical perspectives

Different ways that a contested issue or situation may be viewed or considered.

R

rights and responsibilities

Entitlements and obligations that are associated with citizenship.

V

values

Shared ideas and beliefs specific to individuals and groups.

Acknowledgements

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