Ethical Capability

Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0

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Level 7, 200 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002

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# Introduction

## Rationale

The Ethical Capability curriculum explores what it means for both an individual and a society to live well, supporting the development of informed citizenship at local, regional and global levels.

Students explore concepts such as right, wrong, fairness, equality and respect. They discuss the meaning of these concepts and use their understanding to help them reach a position on ethical significance in a range of contexts, that is, what matters ethically, why it matters and how strongly it matters. They explore what underpins ethical perspectives, building their capacity to understand different vantage points on ethical issues, and how and why people might agree or disagree on the ethical significance of situations. They examine how ethical concepts, ethical perspectives and ethical frameworks work together to help people make and justify decisions in response to ethical issues that could involve an individual, a group, animals or the wider environment.

Students learn how to analyse their own and different ethical perspectives and how to refer to ethical concepts and ethical frameworks to help them deliberate with others and be accountable as members of a democratic community. They are enabled to build a strong, open-minded and coherent personal, social and environmentally orientated ethical outlook. They develop knowledge and skills that foster confidence in managing different ethical contexts, disagreements and uncertainty, and an awareness of the strengths and limitations of their responses to ethical issues.

## Aims

The Ethical Capability curriculum aims to develop knowledge and skills that will enable students to:

* identify, analyse, evaluate and respond to ethical issues, recognising areas of contestability
* reflect on diverse ethical perspectives, including their own
* engage with the challenges of managing ethical decision-making and actions for individuals and groups
* cultivate open-mindedness and reasonableness.

## Structure

Ethical Capability is organised into 2 interrelated strands:

* Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives
* Decision-making and Actions.

These 2 strands focus on the following areas.

#### Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

Students explore:

* concepts concerned with ethical outcomes, such as good, bad, right, wrong, just and unjust
* other concepts that have ethical significance, such as tolerance, freedom and self-restraint
* a range of influences on ethical perspectives.

#### Decision-making and Actions

Students explore:

* how to identify and discuss ethical issues
* ethical frameworks and how they can guide decision-making.

### Achievement standards

Achievement standards describe what students are typically able to understand and do, and they are the basis for reporting student achievement.

In Ethical Capability, students progress along a learning continuum that provides the first achievement standard at Foundation, and then at Levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10.

The skills developed in Ethical Capability are described in the achievement standards. These skills can be developed by teaching the underpinning knowledge that is described in one or more content descriptions within or across strands, selecting different content descriptions as appropriate, taking into account student need and the learning context. It may be the case that a particular content description links to more than one part of an achievement standard, in that it describes knowledge that is relevant to more than one skill.

### Content descriptions

In Ethical Capability, content descriptions sequence and describe the knowledge and understanding that teachers need to teach and students are expected to learn.

### Elaborations

Elaborations are examples that provide guidance on how the curriculum may be transformed into a classroom activity or learning opportunity. They are provided as advisory material only.

## Learning in Ethical Capability

The Ethical Capability curriculum develops the conceptual and analytical skills necessary to enable students to identify and engage with different ethical perspectives and ethical issues. The first strand, Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives, is focused on developing students’ understanding of ethical concepts and perspectives. The second strand, Decision-making and Actions, is focused on applying this understanding to a consideration of ethical issues. It also includes content on ethical frameworks that are used to guide decision-making.

### Learning in the Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives strand

This strand develops students’ general understanding of ethical concepts and ethical perspectives and can be explicitly introduced and consolidated using short examples drawn from familiar learning area contexts. Once consolidated, student understanding can be applied to less familiar learning area contexts.

#### Ethical concepts

Ethical concepts are used to help identify and describe the ethical significance of something, that is, what matters ethically, why it matters and how strongly it matters. For example, a situation where a dog is kept exclusively in a suburban backyard and never walked might be interpreted by someone as ‘It matters because it considerably harms the dog, which is wrong’. Ethical concepts can be general, such as right, wrong, good or bad, or more specific, such as justice, freedom, equality and respect. Often a general concept such as ‘good’ is explained using one or more specific concepts, for example ‘This action is good because it is just’.

Students also learn criteria associated with some ethical concepts, which helps them to know what to look for when discussing a concept. This enables students to identify when something has ethical significance even if the concept is not directly referred to; for example, knowing that one of the criteria for justice or fairness might be ‘what is deserved’ enables students to identify that a disagreement about what someone deserves involves the concept of fairness or justice.

The Ethical Capability introduces and gradually extends a range of commonly encountered ethical concepts. Other ethical concepts can be introduced to students as relevant to learning area contexts. The distinction between ethical and legal is explicitly introduced at Levels 9 and 10; however, a student’s development of this understanding begins in Foundation to Level 2 through consideration of rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations, which are often expressed as rules.

#### Ethical perspectives

In a general sense, people may interpret events, behaviours, actions, decisions and the world around them similarly or differently. Sometimes these interpretations involve a judgement of ethical significance, made because of an ethical perspective or vantage point from which we interpret the world. Ethical perspectives are informed by our values, worldviews, dispositions and a range of other factors that are introduced in the Ethical Capability curriculum. With regard to the earlier example about the dog, a claim such as ‘It is wrong: you would not cage or deny freedom to a person like that’ indicates an ethical perspective that includes the worldview that people and animals are at least in some circumstances equal.

Ethical perspectives are developed over time and can be challenged and changed. They can be individual and/or shared and are influenced by a range of factors. Content descriptions on these influencing factors are the second and third content descriptions in the strand. The first content description focuses on the influence of values, rights and responsibilities, worldviews and shared expectations. The second content description focuses on the influence of dispositions, experiences, conscience and context. Reasons for agreements and disagreements about ethical significance are often due to one or more influencing factors, such as differences in values, and so understanding influences on ethical perspectives helps students to identify and analyse diverse ethical perspectives, including their own.

The band descriptions describe how an understanding of ethical concepts and perspectives gradually develops and includes key questions that help students to gain an overview of the band.

### Learning in the Decision-making and Actions strand

The Decision-making and Actions strand focuses on identification of and deliberation on specific ethical issues and has 2 major aspects: first, developing students’ capacity to identify and discuss ethical issues and the ethical perspectives and concepts involved; second, introducing students to a range of ethical frameworks that further guide decision-making.

Using ethical concepts and perspectives is often not enough to guide a response to an ethical issue; for example, using a concept such as beneficence (‘do good’) might help to identify competing actions that all are beneficent but that cannot all be undertaken. Or potential actions might align with a range of held values that come into conflict with each other, creating an ethical dilemma; for example, facing a decision as to whether to keep a promise even if it places someone in danger brings the values of safety and promise-keeping into conflict.

In circumstances that are not straightforward, ethics commonly requires further guidance in the form of methods or theories, called ethical frameworks in this curriculum. Students are introduced to 3 major ethical frameworks: the consequences framework, which places an emphasis on consequences related to actions in specific circumstances; the duties framework, which places emphasis on obligations held independently of, or regardless of, the circumstances; and the virtues framework, which places emphasis on dispositions required to make decisions.

These frameworks are then used to help identify and justify a particular response to an issue. Sometimes different actions will be selected from a list of potential actions depending on the ethical framework applied. The following table shows how it is also possible that one action could be selected using any of the 3 frameworks but that it would be justified differently according to each.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Consequences framework | Duties framework | Virtues framework |
| **Action:** Helping someone is the right thing to do because |
| as a result, or consequence, it will increase the wellbeing of those involved overall to a greater degree than other actions. | it is consistent with a particular duty, such as protecting human rights. | it is consistent with the virtue of generosity. |

Students develop an understanding that sometimes more than one framework is used when deliberating, for example understanding that we often consider the virtues needed to carry out a particular duty. They are also provided with the opportunity to consider ethical frameworks beyond these major 3 frameworks, such as those from diverse cultures. Ethical frameworks can be explicitly introduced to students through examples drawn from familiar learning area contexts. Once consolidated, student understanding can be applied to less familiar learning area contexts.

### The relationship between the 2 strands

The general understanding developed through the Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives strand can be applied to learning area contexts that do not involve ethical issues, such as analysis of a character in a text, or it could be applied to specific ethical issues encountered through the Decision-making and Actions strand and learning area contexts. These ethical issues would be less familiar and more involved than the shorter examples used to build a general understanding of new content.

Together, the 2 strands allow students to develop a capacity to deliberate on an ethical issue and formulate a response. This process involves students drawing on both learning area knowledge and skills and Ethical Capability knowledge and skills.

In Ethical Capability, students gradually develop the ability to:

* use an understanding of ethical concepts and influences on ethical perspectives to identify ethical issues and ethical perspectives involved
* identify and discuss actions in response to an ethical issue and the consequences, with reference to ethical concepts
* explicitly demonstrate and reflect on their decision-making, with reference to ethical frameworks and ethical concepts forming a key part of their justification for decisions made
* discuss how a decision could be regarded by people who hold different ethical perspectives.

Each band description outlines how the skill to engage with ethical issues gradually develops. It also includes key questions that help to provide an overview of the band.

### Learning about worldviews

In Ethical Capability, students are introduced to the concept of a worldview and consider how non-religious, religious and spiritual worldviews influence ethical perspectives. The intention is for students to develop a general understanding, rather than be instructed in any particular worldview. This general understanding can help students to analyse ethical perspectives and understand why there might be agreements or disagreements about ethical issues and what should be done in response to them.

### Developing ethical capability in and through other curriculum areas

The Ethical Capability curriculum defines a set of discrete knowledge and skills that are explicitly delivered in and through learning areas.

Schools construct teaching and learning programs that draw on one or more learning areas and the Ethical Capability curriculum as appropriate. This involves selecting learning area contexts and integrating the Ethical Capability curriculum to deepen students’ understanding of the learning area while at the same time developing their ethical capability.

The Ethical Capability curriculum defines knowledge and skills that enable students to:

* navigate ethical issues by engaging with a range of big questions such as ‘What does it mean for an individual and a society to live well?’
* articulate and reflect on their justification for a response to an issue
* examine their own ethical perspective and engage with the ethical perspectives of others.

Integration with learning areas nuances and further develops students’ understanding of each of these 3 key aspects of the Ethical Capability curriculum, as they reflect on what they have learnt in particular learning area contexts.

At the same time, by explicitly teaching and assessing students on content in the Ethical Capability curriculum, teachers can equip students to deepen their understanding of learning area content, for example by developing a capacity to identify and engage with diverse ethical issues found in learning area contexts.

The Victorian Curriculum F–10 Version 2.0 provides teachers and students with the opportunity to examine multiple ethical issues and examples from a wide range of sources within learning area contexts, such as narratives and other literary forms or broader texts, current affairs or issues related to past, present or future events or policies. Hypothetical ethical dilemmas can also be constructed specifically to facilitate discussion of specific problems regarding ethical decision-making, for example to demonstrate how values can come into conflict.

Students will draw on the learning set out in the Critical and Creative Thinking curriculum to further develop the skills and considerations for ethical decision-making and apply these to their exploration of ethical concepts, perspectives, issues and frameworks. Often ethical issues concern contested ideas, different points of view on the significance of an issue and different responses as to what could be done and what should be done. The curriculum supports students to analyse and evaluate the responses of others. It also supports them to formulate a well-defended reasonable response that could be one of many possible responses, meaning that a student might defend a response that is different to those of their peers. Integral to this are the knowledge and skills in Ethical Capability and Critical and Creative Thinking. Critical and creative thinking skills and dispositions are central to developing ethical capability. Dispositions such as attentiveness, open-mindedness and a habit of inquiry (for example a habit of thinking about the plausibility of assumptions or undertaking relevant research) should be exercised when thinking about ethical concepts and issues.

### Transfer of knowledge and skills

Students learn general ethical capability skills in the context of learning areas. Developing a general ethical capability skill involves repeated application of the knowledge underpinning that skill to a variety of learning area contexts, reflecting on and nuancing the underlying knowledge each time and then reapplying it to develop the skill further.

Ethical capability skills are general in the sense that they are used across different contexts. For example, the meaning of an ethical concept is consistent across a wide range of learning area contexts, although the significance or weighting given to the concept or its criteria is learning-area dependent. Students require scaffolding in order to transfer general skills from one context to another. This involves helping students to make links to contexts that may be similar or quite different, gradually building their capacity to recognise these links for themselves. This can be enabled through a whole-school approach to delivery of the capability, which provides a shared understanding of students’ background learning.

# Curriculum

## Foundation to Level 2

### Band description

From Foundation to Level 2, the curriculum focuses on beginning to develop the knowledge and skills students need to understand that ethics involves areas of agreement and disagreement and that there are reasons for this. Students learn about values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations and why they are important. They learn about how emotions and dispositions including honesty and kindness influence ethical perspectives. Key questions include:

* What are examples of behaviours that people think are right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse? What do people think is right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse about a particular behaviour?
* What are examples of school rules, rules agreed to within smaller groups such as those for games, or other shared expectations? How do these help us?
* What might someone who is kind/honest think of a particular situation compared to someone who is less so? How do feelings influence our thinking about whether a situation is right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse?

The curriculum supports students to begin to engage with ethical issues, that is, situations where there are disagreements about what is right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse. These situations could be in the past, present or future. Students are supported to make a decision about what action should be taken, or to consider actions that were taken. Key questions include:

* What are examples of situations where there are disagreements about right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse? Why are there disagreements?
* What actions do people (or did people) think could be undertaken in response to the situation? How do/did emotions, dispositions and consideration of consequences influence their thinking?
* What actions should be (or should have been) taken? Why?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 2, students describe ethical concepts and associated behaviours using an example. They use examples to show why values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations are considered important, and they identify the influence of emotions and dispositions on ethical perspectives.

Students identify examples of situations involving disagreements about right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse, including reasons for disagreements. They identify examples of actions in response to these situations. They select an action and provide reasons for their decision, with reference to emotions, dispositions or consequences.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| ethical concepts including right, wrong, better and worse, and behaviours associated with theseVC2CE2U01 | * using the terms ‘good’, ‘bad’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ to describe a choice and reflecting on behaviours associated with the choice
* comparing different behaviours in response to a problem or situation, classifying them as better or worse and discussing how these judgements were made
 |
| examples of values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations, and reasons they are importantVC2CE2U02 | * discussing why Acknowledgement of Country is a shared expectation at certain times and why it is important
* exploring how respect for each other is a value regardless of any differences between people
* discussing significant community events or celebrations and examples of actions taken that reflect particular values
 |
| how emotions and dispositions including honesty and kindness influence ethical perspectivesVC2CE2U03 | * considering the relationship between thinking a situation is wrong and a disposition such as kindness or honesty
* exploring how emotions associated with a situation might influence perspectives, for example whether a strong desire to win might influence perspectives on who should be included or excluded from a team or game
* exploring how dispositions and emotions might influence how people react to a situation, for example to influence a judgement about whether someone is being helpful enough
 |

#### Strand: Decision-making and Actions

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| situations where people disagree about what is right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse, and reasons for disagreementsVC2CE2D01 | * exploring a situation or scenario, such as how best to share, and identifying reasons for disagreements
* exploring situations in the school community or local community where people disagree on the right thing to do, and reasons for these disagreements, for example on whether to expand play equipment onto space currently being used for ball games
 |
| emotions and dispositions and their influence on the way people behave; how thinking about consequences of actions can guide decision-making when people disagree about right, wrong, good, bad, better or worseVC2CE2D02 | * constructing a list of actions that could be taken in response to a disagreement about sharing, identifying the consequences of each action and reaching a decision
* constructing a scenario that demonstrates how dispositions, such as kindness, are expressed in behaviour
 |

## Levels 3 and 4

### Band description

In Levels 3 and 4, the curriculum focuses on extending students’ knowledge and skills to understand ethical concepts and perspectives and to engage with ethical issues. Students learn about what an ethical perspective is, and how values, rights and responsibilities, and shared expectations influence ethical perspectives, as well as how they can be used to help identify and unpack an ethical perspective. They also learn about how personal experiences, self-interest and dispositions including generosity influence ethical perspectives.

Key questions include:

* How might some situations be interpreted differently by people as right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse, that is, how might different people hold different ethical perspectives?
* What does ethical significance mean? How do we use ethical concepts to identify, describe or explain what matters, why it matters and how strongly it matters?
* How do values, personal experience and self-interest help to explain how ethically significant something is? How does reference to these help us to explain our thinking to others?
* When thinking about whether something is right or wrong, how might this sometimes involve comparing situations or decisions to shared expectations, such as group rules?
* What are some examples of rights, and what responsibilities go with these rights? How does an awareness of rights and responsibilities influence our thinking about whether something is right or wrong?
* What kinds of decisions and situations is a generous person likely to judge as right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse? What other dispositions, for example kindness or honesty, might influence judgements of ethical significance?

The curriculum also supports students to identify and describe ethical issues, including dilemmas, and to consider both means and ends when responding to the issue. These issues could be in the past, present or future.

Key questions include:

* What do we look for when identifying an ethical issue, including ethical dilemmas?
* How do people use ethical concepts to describe the significance of an ethical issue?
* How do people refer to factors that influence their ethical perspective, such as their values, experiences or shared expectations, to help describe their perspective on the ethical significance of an issue or their perspective on a decision made in response to an issue?
* How is decision-making in response to an ethical issue influenced by consideration of intention, what the outcome might be and how it can be achieved? Do actions always turn out as expected?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 4, students describe ethical concepts using examples from a range of situations. They identify an ethical perspective and describe influences on the ethical perspective.

Students identify an ethical dilemma or issue and describe the ethical perspectives and concepts involved. They identify actions in response to an ethical issue and identify the consequences, with reference to ethical concepts. Students describe a selected action and reasons for the decision made, with reference to the ethical significance of an outcome and how it is achieved. They describe ethical perspectives on a decision made in response to an ethical issue or dilemma.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the meaning of ethical concepts including fairness, tolerance and harm and a range of behaviours associated with theseVC2CE4U01 | * discussing scenarios to refine proposed definitions of concepts; for example, refining a proposed definition of fairness as the same treatment of everyone by considering whether an older sibling should do more chores or a hungrier person have a larger share of a meal
* considering how words can be hurtful and rehearsing strategies for communicating with empathy
* using examples to explore the meaning of tolerance as not stopping an action even if you disagree with it, for example with regard to umpire decisions or decisions made by the leader of a group
 |
| what an ethical perspective is, and how values, shared expectations, and rights and responsibilities influence ethical perspectivesVC2CE4U02 | * exploring how different values lead to different views on ethical significance, and how recognition of human rights and responsibilities influences perception of right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse
* exploring how different people can interpret the ethical significance (a judgement of what matters, why it matters and how strongly it matters, made with reference to ethical concepts) of a given scenario differently and constructing questions based on values and/or rights and responsibilities to help identify why people disagree on ethical significance, that is, to help identify their ethical perspective; for example, exploring the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: The Children’s Version, including the statement ‘All adults should do what is best for children’, and discussing if there might be agreements and disagreements about what is best for children, and why, using simple examples such as how long the school day should be
* using a range of examples to discuss how shared expectations influence ethical perspectives; for example, if a group reaches agreement about a rule, creating a shared expectation, they will then judge behaviour where the rule is followed as ‘good’
 |
| how personal experiences, self-interest and dispositions including generosity influence ethical perspectivesVC2CE4U03 | * comparing how the ethical significance (a judgement of what matters, why it matters and how strongly it matters, made with reference to ethical concepts) of a situation or the outcome of a decision is interpreted before and after personal experience; for example, comparing how someone who has never been the subject of a prank and how someone who has been might judge the ethical significance of a proposed prank
* exploring a particular scenario involving different levels of self-interest and considering how this influences what is given ethical significance, for example treatment of a pet that belongs to you, your friend or a stranger
 |

#### Strand: Decision-making and Actions

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| what makes a situation an ethical dilemma or ethical issue; how ethical concepts such as fairness can be used to identify and describe an ethical issue or dilemma; how people hold ethical perspectives on ethical issues and dilemmas, their ethical significance and responses to themVC2CE4D01 | * using a range of scenarios to identify what is coming into conflict to create a dilemma, for example different values
* exploring a range of situations in which people hold different perspectives on what is right, wrong, good or bad and identifying which ethical concepts are being used to help support their claim
* using their understanding of a concept such as fairness to identify a situation where something is unfair
 |
| the influence of intention on behaviour, whether good intentions always lead to good outcomes, and the importance of considering the ethical significance of an outcome as well as how it is achieved when making decisions in response to an ethical issue or dilemmaVC2CE4D02 | * using scenarios to show how intentions and associated behaviours could lead to good or bad outcomes, or both; for example, sharing lunch, helping a friend with homework or providing welfare
* evaluating the consequences of behaviour and whether these were intended or foreseeable; for example, playing a prank on someone
* researching whether intentions were achieved, such as the aims of a development in the local community
* exploring an ethical dilemma and comparing responses that place more importance on how an outcome is achieved, such as behaving honestly regardless of the consequences, and responses that place more importance on the outcome, such as making someone happy even if it means behaving dishonestly, and reflecting on how both means and ends should be considered in decision-making
 |

## Levels 5 and 6

### Band description

In Levels 5 and 6, the curriculum focuses on further developing the knowledge and skills students need to understand ethical concepts and perspectives and to engage with ethical issues. Students learn about the meaning of a worldview and how worldviews influence ethical perspectives. They also extend their knowledge of what influences ethical perspectives to consider conscience, care, self-restraint and non-personal as well as personal experiences. Students explore simple connections between influences on ethical perspectives, as they begin to understand how factors that inform ethical perspectives can influence each other. Key questions include:

* In general, what is a worldview? How do worldviews influence our judgements of right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse, and how do they influence what we value?
* How are shared expectations a reflection of group values? How can shared expectations shape some of the values held by individuals?
* What are some examples that show the kinds of rights that are also laws? In what sense are laws shared expectations?
* What is a conscience? What kinds of situations typically activate a conscience, and how does a conscience influence our judgement?
* How can reflecting on our own experiences and engaging with other people’s experiences help to develop a moral imagination and a sense of care?
* How might a moral imagination or a sense of care influence our judgement of situations in which we are directly involved; where people, animals or other aspects of the environment we are familiar with are involved; and where nothing we are familiar with is involved?
* How does a capacity for self-restraint influence our perspective on particular decisions or situations?

The curriculum also supports students to describe ethical issues and explain the ethical perspectives involved. Students are introduced to ethical frameworks that support decision-making in response to ethical issues, building their capacity to discuss ethical decision-making and actions. Key questions include:

* How can we use ethical concepts to describe an ethical issue? How can what is meant by a general judgement such as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ be explained using other, more specific, ethical concepts such as ‘fair’?
* What do we look for when seeking to understand ethical perspectives on an ethical issue, or ethical perspectives on decisions made in response to an issue? How can ethical perspectives be sometimes directly indicated and sometimes indirectly indicated?
* How does responding to an ethical issue involve consideration of what could be done before deciding what should be done? How are these considerations described using ethical concepts?
* Is the right decision to make in response to an issue sometimes unclear? How can an ethical framework help in these situations?
* How do ethical frameworks help us to justify an action or a decision?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 6, students explain the meaning and ethical significance of a range of ethical concepts in different contexts. They explain influences on ethical perspectives and connections between various influences.

Students identify and describe an ethical issue and explain the ethical perspectives involved. They identify and describe a range of actions in response to an ethical issue and describe the consequences, with reference to ethical concepts. Students explain the decision-making used to select one or more actions, with reference to an ethical framework and ethical concepts. They explain ethical perspectives on decisions made.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the meaning of ethical concepts including respect and beneficence, and ethical concepts such as happiness or truth that can vary in importance or meaning in different contextsVC2CE6U01 | * using ethical dilemmas as a prompt for exploring whether it is ever desirable to lie, for example to protect a friend from getting into trouble or feeling hurt, or about an injury to get picked for a team
* asking a range of people for their views on the importance of happiness and what is necessary for happiness
* exploring the meaning of respect and the meaning of beneficence and discussing the importance of each concept in relation to people, animals and the wider environment
* investigating what happiness means in different contexts and how artificial intelligence might influence the achievement of happiness now and in the future, for example in the workplace
 |
| the meaning of a worldview, and how worldviews influence ethical perspectives, and simple connections between influences on ethical perspectives, such as between rights and responsibilities and shared expectations, or between worldviews and values VC2CE6U02  | * exploring the meaning of a worldview and examining how there are diverse worldviews, by considering issues such as the treatment of animals, and care for places or the environment, and using these issues to identify connections between worldviews and values
* exploring how respect for rights might lead to shared expectations and associated responsibilities
* exploring the connection between particular rights and particular responsibilities
 |
| how conscience, care, personal and non-personal experiences and dispositions including self-restraint influence ethical perspectives, and simple connections between these influences such as between care and experienceVC2CE6U03 | * defining conscience and self-restraint and discussing examples where conscience or self-restraint could influence perspectives on right, wrong, good or bad, for example with regards to paying or not paying for internet content or tampering or not tampering with evidence with little likelihood of getting caught
* discussing how reflecting on personal experiences and the experiences of others builds a moral imagination and empathy
 |

#### Strand: Decision-making and Actions

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| how ethical perspectives and ethical concepts are used to identify and describe ethical issues, including their ethical significance, and how they are also used to explain responses to them, including their ethical significanceVC2CE6D01 | * participating in a discussion about an ethical issue and identifying values, shared expectations or other influences on ethical perspectives expressed in the discussion that help to describe the ethical perspectives involved
* identifying issues involving a range of ethical concepts, such as aesthetics, harm, human rights or quality of life, for example with regard to product design or planning to improve the accessibility of places in the local community
 |
| the meaning of an ethical framework, and how the consequences framework, duties framework and virtues framework can each guide decision-making in response to an ethical issueVC2CE6D02 | * using an ethical dilemma to identify that sometimes the application of values is not enough to guide decision-making, and exploring how an ethical framework can be used to help decide between potential actions that are all consistent with values held
* exploring different ethical dilemmas and comparing how someone using only a consequences framework (where more importance is placed on the outcome rather than the means to achieve it), someone using only a duties framework (where more importance is placed on duties held regardless of the consequences) and someone using only a virtues framework (where more importance is placed on dispositions as a guide to knowing the right thing to do) would reach a decision on one or more actions
* exploring how a particular action could be judged as the right thing to do but justified using different ethical frameworks; for example, selecting an action that is consistent with environmental sustainability, justified as better for the environment overall compared to other actions (using the consequences framework), justified as the right thing to do as it is consistent with a duty we hold towards the natural world (using the duties framework), or justified as consistent with what a caring person would do (consistent with the virtues framework)
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## Levels 7 and 8

### Band description

In Levels 7 and 8, the curriculum focuses on developing the knowledge and skills students need to compare ethical perspectives and manage ethical issues involving competing perspectives and competing actions in response to an issue. Students learn about similarities and differences between ethical perspectives. They further extend their knowledge of what influences ethical perspectives to context and dispositions, including open-mindedness, while continuing to consider other dispositions, emotions, rights and responsibilities, worldviews, values and personal and non-personal experiences as relevant to different contexts. Key questions include:

* What kinds of groups might share some similarities or differences in ethical perspectives? Why? Can people within a group have differences in ethical perspectives? Why or why not?
* How can a sense of open-mindedness influence how we interpret situations as right, wrong, good or bad? What kinds of questions might an open-minded person ask before making a judgement about ethical significance?
* Does having similar dispositions, experiences, values or worldviews to someone else mean they will share a similar ethical perspective? Why or why not?
* How does considering context influence a judgement of right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse? How might it help to explain similarities or differences in ethical perspectives?

The curriculum also supports students to compare ethical perspectives involved in ethical issues, and to further develop their understanding of the strengths and limitations of decisions and actions. Students further their understanding of how ethical frameworks can help to navigate competing actions and are introduced to alternative frameworks, such as those from other cultures. Key questions include:

* How can we identify points of agreement and disagreement on the ethical significance of an ethical issue? How can ethical concepts and factors that influence ethical perspectives be used to make comparisons of ethical perspectives in a specific context; for example, are there any relevant past experiences influencing judgements?
* Why do possible actions in response to an ethical issue sometimes compete with each other? How does identifying the foreseeable consequences of each action, and referring to ethical concepts when discussing these consequences, help to guide decision-making?
* How can an ethical framework help us to navigate competing actions?
* How might a decision made about the right action to take be regarded by people who hold different ethical perspectives? Why? What is influencing these differences in a judgement of ethical significance; for example, are there different worldviews involved? How can reference to ethical concepts and factors that influence ethical perspectives help us to make comparisons?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 8, students identify the meaning of and criteria associated with a range of ethical concepts. They identify and explain reasons for similarities and differences in ethical perspectives.

Students identify and explain an ethical issue, comparing ethical perspectives involved. They identify and explain a range of actions in response to an ethical issue and explain the consequences, with reference to ethical concepts. Students explain and reflect on decision-making between competing actions in response to an ethical issue, with reference to an ethical framework and ethical concepts, and they compare ethical perspectives on decisions made.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the meaning of and criteria associated with ethical concepts including justice, freedom, equality and non-maleficence in different contextsVC2CE8U01 | * exploring one meaning of freedom as the absence of external factors that prevent you from achieving what you want to achieve, and another as the ability to control your own interests (self-determination), and understanding how these meanings are used in different contexts, such as restrictions on driving or alcohol consumption
* considering how the meaning of equality in ethics involves criteria such as treatment with the same concern and respect, and considering that how specific criteria are applied through actions can be context-dependent
* considering how there may be generally agreed criteria for some ethical concepts, for example ‘justice’ as broadly involving reciprocity, equality and what is deserved or due, and discussing how these criteria may work in combination, vary in importance depending on context or lead to more specific indicators that are context-dependent
 |
| how ethical perspectives may be individual or shared, and reasons for similarities and differences in ethical perspectives, such as similar or different values or worldviewsVC2CE8U02 | * exploring how some influences on ethical perspectives may be similar, such as shared values, or how people may have similar experiences of events but form different interpretations of their ethical significance due to different values
* explaining how the ethical responsibilities of a group, such as designers or artists, reflect a shared ethical perspective, and identifying how ethical responsibilities represent shared expectations
* exploring how aspects of ethical perspectives may be shared between individuals or groups, such as shared values held by particular consumer or lobby groups
 |
| how dispositions including open-mindedness, personal and non-personal experiences and context influence ethical perspectives and can help to explain similarities and differences in ethical perspectivesVC2CE8U03 | * exploring how context may influence perspectives on the right actions associated with values, for example how generosity is enacted with regard to family, friends or strangers
* exploring how different degrees of open-mindedness may help to explain some differences in ethical perspectives, for example regarding how important it is to include the voices of young people in a response to an ethical issue such as one associated with a proposed constitutional referendum
* exploring how differences in experiences or differences in knowledge of the experiences of others may influence ethical perspectives, such as those on events depicted in the media, and help to explain similarities and differences in perspectives
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#### Strand: Decision-making and Actions

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| how ethical perspectives and criteria associated with ethical concepts are used to identify and explain ethical issues, including their ethical significance, and to explain responses to ethical issues, including their ethical significanceVC2CE8D01 | * investigating a debate, such as lowering the age of criminal responsibility, and applying criteria associated with freedom to explain how areas of disagreement partly concern capacity for self-determination
* investigating views on a debate, such as lowering the age of criminal responsibility, and identifying and comparing ethical perspectives underpinning these views, using knowledge of influences on these ethical perspectives, such as values or personal experiences, as a basis for discussion
* exploring the concept of advantage and disadvantage, or cost and benefit, in an ethical context and how criteria are often associated with each and can be used to explain an ethical issue
 |
| strengths and limitations of the consequences framework, duties framework and virtues framework, and how these and alternative frameworks can guide decision-making in response to an ethical issueVC2CE8D02 | * engaging with hypothetical ethical dilemmas to illustrate the weaknesses of different frameworks, such as the trolley problem for the consequences framework, Kohlberg’s Heinz Dilemma for both the duties framework and virtues framework, and applying knowledge of these weaknesses to help reflect on decision-making with regard to an ethical issue
* using an ethical framework to help explain why some potential actions and their consequences were identified as better or worse than others in response to an ethical issue, such as referring to a duties framework to help explain why actions associated with a particular duty were evaluated as better than other actions, for example because they protected a human right more strongly
* identifying how shared ethical responsibilities are used to help make decisions between right and wrong actions
* identifying actions consistent with held values and then using an ethical framework to navigate these competing actions, to support selecting and justifying a response, reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the decision, for example with regard to potential uses of a resource that are consistent with environmental and social sustainability
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## Levels 9 and 10

### Band description

In Levels 9 and 10, the curriculum develops the knowledge and skills students need to engage with more complex contexts with regard to ethical perspectives and ethical issues. Students learn about how and why ethical perspectives can be challenged and change, and how at times ethical perspectives are negotiated. They explore distinctions and connections between ethical concepts and learn that at times there are tensions between ethical concepts, such as between freedom and responsibility when thinking about how something we might want to do might harm others. They explore how factors that inform ethical perspectives influence each other. Key questions include:

* How can individual ethical perspectives be challenged? What kinds of dispositions might influence whether an ethical perspective changes?
* How can new experiences challenge an ethical perspective? How do emotions, dispositions and context influence how we experience something and how we reflect on the experience and its ethical significance? How can engagement with other people’s experiences challenge an ethical perspective?
* How can shared ethical perspectives be challenged and change? What kinds of groups or institutions might need to negotiate an ethical perspective? How can knowing what influences the ethical perspectives within the group help negotiation?

The curriculum also supports students to analyse ethical issues and further develops their capacity to reflect on decision-making and to justify a response. Key questions include:

* How does looking for connections and tensions between ethical concepts help us to analyse an ethical issue, including its ethical significance?
* How can discussion of consequences be supported through consideration of connections, distinctions and tensions between ethical concepts?
* How can thinking about alternative frameworks and ethical perspectives help us to reflect on decisions made about the right action(s) to take?
* Why might there be agreements and disagreements with decisions made? What factors are influencing these perspectives on ethical significance?

### Achievement standard

By the end of Level 10, students analyse distinctions, connections and tensions between ethical concepts in different situations or contexts. They analyse how ethical perspectives develop and can be challenged and change, and how an ethical perspective can be negotiated.

Students identify and analyse an ethical issue, comparing ethical perspectives involved. They identify and analyse a range of actions and their consequences in response to an ethical issue, with reference to ethical concepts. Students explain and reflect on decision-making between competing actions, with reference to a range of ethical frameworks and ethical concepts, and they analyse and compare ethical perspectives on decisions made.

### Content descriptions and elaborations

#### Strand: Understanding Ethical Concepts and Perspectives

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| the distinction between ethical and legal, and the distinction, connection and/or tension between ethical concepts such as trust and integrity, or individual happiness and the common good, in different contextsVC2CE10U01 | * discussing whether something not being illegal makes it acceptable to do and discussing whether something that is legal is necessarily ethical, for example with regard to debt collection or other consumer law, or a rule in sport
* discussing individual happiness and whether in communities there should be some trade-off with self-interest in order to negotiate and achieve the common good
* exploring the distinction between the ethical and legal in the context of artificial intelligence tools and ownership of material
* exploring the connection between trust and integrity in the context of artificial intelligence tools and submission of schoolwork
* exploring the distinction between human rights as a value and as law
* discussing the connection between indicators of wellbeing or living standards in different contexts
* exploring tensions between ethical concepts in a particular context, such as between freedom and justice and the context of punishment of offenders, or between doing good and avoiding harm in the context of experimentation or research
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| how and why ethical perspectives can be challenged and changed, such as increasing cultural diversity challenging a conception of shared expectations, and factors that support negotiating a shared ethical perspective such as respect for human rightsVC2CE10U02 | * considering how an influence on an ethical perspective can develop over time and lead to changing ethical perspectives; for example, improved scientific knowledge providing greater understanding of the nature of particular harms, leading to a change in shared expectations or worldview
* exploring a scenario where an ethical perspective is collective and requires negotiation, such as for a charity concerned with the welfare of animals where there are differences among the individual ethical perspectives of charity members; or regarding employee health and safety conditions
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| interconnections between dispositions, experiences, emotions and/or context and how these influence and can challenge and change ethical perspectivesVC2CE10U03 | * exploring the interconnection between values and emotions, for example loyalty with regard to family, friends or strangers in different contexts
* exploring how engaging with the experiences of others, for example through film or other media, can challenge ethical perspectives and lead to change
* analysing how people with different dispositions might interpret the ethical significance of an experience differently, and how they could influence each other’s perspectives through discussion; for example, being left alone for a period of time in a social situation being interpreted differently as right, wrong, good, bad, better or worse
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#### Strand: Decision-making and Actions

| Content descriptions*Students learn about:* | Elaborations*This may involve students:* |
| --- | --- |
| how connections, distinctions and tensions between ethical concepts and between ethical perspectives are used to identify and analyse ethical issues, including their ethical significance, and how they are used to analyse responses to ethical issues, including their ethical significanceVC2CE10D01 | * investigating an issue, identifying relevant ethical concepts, and analysing tensions between them, for example between the common good (globally) and individual prosperity (nationally) in the context of food security
* investigating similarities and differences in stakeholder perspectives on a response to an ethical issue, including their views on the ethical significance of economic, environmental and social impacts, and considering connections between these impacts
 |
| how more than one of the consequences framework, duties framework or virtues framework can be used to guide decision-making in response to an ethical issue, and similarities and differences between these and alternative ethical frameworksVC2CE10D02 | * using scenarios from a range of contexts to explore how actions and their consequences might be identified and analysed drawing on ethical concepts, for example proposed actions to spend on particular equipment or materials being analysed with respect to safety of users, and justified using different ethical frameworks
* considering how virtues and a sense of duty might be connected, that is, considering what dispositions might be required to carry out a duty, and applying this understanding to a context, such as considering whether a perceived duty to give to charity or forgo current pleasures to leave resources for future generations would require particular dispositions to carry out, or whether a researcher or farmer in an isolated environment with particular costly legal obligations to the welfare of animals would require particular dispositions to pay the high costs given a low likelihood of being caught if they failed to do so; or whether the virtue of courage might at times be needed to carry out a duty such as telling the truth
* exploring how people who use different ethical frameworks might respond to an ethical issue and justify their actions, for example land-management strategies that are influenced by ethical frameworks based in different cultures
* considering an ethical issue, identifying competing actions in response to the issue consistent with held values, and exploring how a duty-based framework might initially be used to narrow down possible actions and then a consequences framework used to select the action with the most increase in benefits overall, for example in considering whether elderly people should pay for more of their own care, or whether particular tackles should be allowed in a movement context
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