VCE Biology Student Ethical Issue Reflection Tool

Background – Teacher information

VCE Biology provides opportunities to identify, analyse and evaluate bioethical issues across Units 1–4. The purpose of this tool is to assist students to track their progress in the analysis and evaluation of a bioethical issue. Their analysis and evaluation integrates ethical understanding with scientific knowledge and skills as well as general critical and creative thinking.

The Student Ethical Issue Reflection tool begins by asking students to state their initial, intuitive (first reaction) response to the bioethical issue they are studying.

As they continue to engage with the bioethical issue, students will undertake teaching and learning activities, such as research that will inform development of their thinking and strengthen their analysis and evaluation. Guiding questions are provided to support student thinking. It is recommended that students are explicitly taught the ethical concepts and approaches to bioethics prior to their investigation.

How can this tool be used?

This tool can be used to help track the progressive refinement and development in student thinking on the bioethical issue. It could be used to develop evidence for formative or summative assessment or as a worksheet to support a teaching and learning activity. It has been written for individual student use, but could be adapted for use in small group work when undertaking the identifying and analysing aspects of the tool.

It can also be adapted prior to student use to target the selected bioethical teaching and learning context more specifically. In general, it can be used to support students to plan, analyse and develop a justified response to a bioethical issue for assessment across Units 1–4.

Ethical Issue Reflection Tool – VCE Biology

Name: Year level and Form group:

This tool is designed to assist you in analysing and evaluating a bioethical issue, using both your scientific knowledge and skills and your understanding of ethical concepts or bioethical approaches.

It is helpful to begin by clearly stating what your initial intuitive (first reaction) response is to the issue. This will help you to be more aware of where your potential biases are, or where there are gaps in your current understanding.

If you are not sure about your initial response that is fine at this stage. Instead, write down what you think is going to be important when you think about this issue and what you need to find out.

So:

What is your initial, intuitive response?

Use these questions to guide your thinking:

* What is the bioethical issue?
* How important is the issue? For whom?
* What do you think should be done about the issue? Why?
* What are the strengths and weaknesses of your position?
* What are you puzzled about?

Write your initial response here:

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Analysing and evaluating the issue – going deeper

As you engage with this issue further, use this tool to track how your response develops. Note that you may or may not change your mind on your initial thinking, but in any case your ability to analyse, explain and justify your point of view should improve or be expressed in more detail. Guiding questions have been provided to help your with your analysis and evaluation.

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| *Identifying and analysing an bioethical issue* **Guiding questions:*** What is the bioethical issue?
* Who are the stakeholders involved? Does it also involve non-humans?
* Why is this a bioethical issue? (Use relevant ethical concept/s or bioethical approach/es to help provide reasons – tip: think about what is being challenged and why this matters)
* What are the perspectives of stakeholders on this issue? Is there evidence of an ethical concept or bioethical approach that is informing their perspective (there could be more than one)? Are they relying on particular facts/assumptions?
* How important is this issue, and for whom? What is your own view? (Use relevant ethical concept/s or bioethical approach to help you discuss its importance – tip: consider what each stakeholder’s interests and values are).
* Are there other factors involved in this context that might influence thinking about this issue?
* Have you integrated your scientific knowledge into your analysis?
 | Explore your thinking here: |

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| *Selecting and justifying a response to the issue** Which ethical concept or bioethical approach will you use? Identify criteria that will help you analyse and evaluate a response (i.e. a ‘just’ response should meet as many of these criteria as possible…); and/or think about what an ideal action would be ‘(i.e. if an action were to be ideally ‘just’, then….)’
* What are some alternative actions that could be taken? (Use a selected ethical concept or bioethical approach to help you research and express some alternatives).
* When a comparison is made, what conclusion can be drawn about the best alternative? (Use the factors involved in the issue as well as the selected ethical concept and bioethical approach to help you make a comparison and be explicit about the advantages and disadvantages)
* How are stakeholders likely to react to the chosen alternative? (Consider the ethical concept or bioethical approach underpinning their perspective, which will influence how they react). Are compromises between opposing views possible?
* If the chosen alternative were to be implemented, how could its effectiveness be monitored and evaluated? (Use the selected ethical concept or bioethical approach to help decide and explain this)
* Have you integrated your scientific knowledge into your analysis and evaluation?

Additional consideration:Is there further research required that might support decision-making for these kind of bioethical issues in the future? |  |

Did I change my mind?

No, I still have the point of view for the *same reasons*, which are:

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No, I still have the same point of view, but for *different reason/s* which are

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**OR**

Yes, my initial view changed to some extent, for the following reasons:

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