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| **Unit title:**  **What Matters? (determining ethical significance)** | **Term /date:** | **Duration:** (number of sessions / hours / weeks)  **100 minutes** |

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| **Big ideas:** (What is the main theme/s? What do you want the students to specifically cover? What misconceptions do you want to challenge?) | **Essential questions:** (What will inspire /extend / support inquiry / challenge thinking?) |
| * We can consider an act or decision from several different ethical perspectives (such as consequences, duties or rights) * Where these different ethical considerations contradict one another, we can determine whether one consideration is more or less ethically significant (has greater relative importance) than another. * To decide which ethical consideration has the greatest relative value, we need to establish and apply a set of criteria * We can use thinking/reasoning strategies to examine the relative ethical importance of competing considerations * Different perspectives or points-of-view might lead to subjective judgements on matters of relative ethical importance. * We can deliberately adopt a specific world-view (such as anthropocentric, biocentric, or ecocentric) for the purpose of investigating the relative importance of matters of ethical concern. | * How do we decide which ethical considerations are the most important? Are these objective or subjective judgements or both? * Are all ethical perspectives equally valid? * How can we test the reliability of any criteria we apply to judgements of ethical importance? * Why does relative ethical importance change over time, or between cultures? (that is to ask, why do some cultures place more ethical importance on some considerations than others? Or why might an ethical matter become more or less important within a culture over time?) |

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| **Learning - This sample program targets content description VCECU016 at Levels 7 and 8. This is located on a developmental continuum, as shown below.** | | |
| **Ethical Capability strand and levels** | **Dimension / Content descriptions** | **Achievement standards** |
| **Ethical Decision Making and Actions:**  Levels 5 and 6  **Levels 7 and 8**  Levels 9 and 10 | Examine how problems may contain more than one ethical issue  **Target content description:** Investigate criteria for determining the relative importance of matters of ethical concern [(VCECU016)](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCECU016)  Distinguish between the ethical and non-ethical dimensions of complex issues, including the distinction between ethical and legal issues. | By the end of Level 6, students… explain different ways to respond to ethical problems and identify issues related to these.  **By the end of Level 8, students… articulate how criteria can be applied to determine the importance of ethical concerns.**  By the end of Level 10, students… examine complex issues, and identify(ing) the ethical (and non-ethical) dimensions |

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| **Assessment Evidence / Activities** | | |
| **Pre-assessment:** | **Ongoing formative assessment/s:** | **Summative assessment/s:** |
|  | **Teacher observation during Shared and Independent Learning phases.** | **Of students’ work completed in the Independent phase:**  Rubric to come |

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| **Learning Sequence Overview** | |
| **Session** | **Major focus / intention** |
| Session 1 | Learning ways to compare the relative importance of ethical considerations , using the issue of fracking. |

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| **Further Resources** |
| **In Lesson:**  ‘Ethics in Fracking, a hypothetical’ handout  5min explanation of fracking video: <https://youtu.be/Uti2niW2BRA>  **Background / explanation resources:**  <http://www.explainthatstuff.com/fracking.html>  <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-14432401>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uti2niW2BRA>  Australian context:  <http://www.abc.net.au/site-archive/rural/coalseamgas/>  <http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/BriefingBook44p/GasDebate>  **Fracking and ethics:**  <http://www.newfreethinkers.org/fracking_an_ethical_dilemma>  Documentary: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/ethics-fracking/>  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-OuvzwkKW0&feature=youtu.be&a>  <http://www.ethicssage.com/2011/12/the-ethics-of-fracking.html>  **Perspectives:**  Trailer for ‘Gasland’, anti-fracking documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZe1AeH0Qz8>  Pro-fracking response: <http://naturalgasnow.org/fracking-ethics/>  Australian anti-fracking group: <http://www.lockthegate.org.au/about_coal_seam_gas>  Australian mining group: <https://www.australianmining.com.au/features/coal-seam-gas-the-explosive-debate/>  **Additional for teachers:**  <http://www.pitt.edu/~jcd60/WA3.pdf> |

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| **Reflections** | | |
| **Date** | **Comments** | **Teacher** |
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| **‘What Matters?’ (Ethical criteria. Stand-alone Lesson) 100 minutes** | | |
| **Learning intention** | **For students:** *“Today we are considering criteria to determine the relative importance of ethical matters.”* | |
| **Focus/ Inquiry question(s)** | **Possible general focus questions:**  (Select from this list according to the available time)   * When considering a complex ethical problem, how do we decide what are the most important considerations in our decision-making? * How do we make decisions where we are required to choose between different ethical principles? * Are some ethical principles more valuable, or worthy, than others? * Could we make (or does there already exist) a list of criteria by which ethical matters can be decided? * Is it reasonable to rank various ethical considerations from most- to least-significant? * Can we each make our own subjective judgements about the relative importance of ethical matters, or should there be a socially or culturally agreed relative scale? * Can something be ethically significant for me, but ethically insignificant for you? * How important are factors such as nationality/culture/religion/ethnicity/gender/sexuality etc in determining relative ethical importance. * Is there an objective morality which these criteria should guide us toward? * Should these criteria describe or prescribe the relative importance of our ethical considerations. * If we can establish some criteria for determining relative ethical importance, how could we test the efficacy of these criteria? * What consequences might arise from the relative importance we assign to ethical criteria? * How would the consequences change if we were to alter our ranking or re-assign relative importance? * Is ethical significance a static or fluid concept? * If ethical significance differs over time, or between groups, how can we account for these variations? * If ethical significance is consistent over time, or between groups, what would this reveal about the nature of ethical judgement?   **On Fracking specifically (environmental ethics):**   * Should we continue using fossil fuels, despite their proven detrimental impacts on the environment? * Are the benefits of fracking more important than the risks posed to water supplies? * Are the benefits of fracking more important than the risks of exposing people to dangerous chemicals, emissions and other hazards? * Does our environment have inherent worth, or should we be using the environment to benefit humans? * Should natural resources be used to improve quality of life for humans, or should they be preserved even at the expense of worsening quality of life? * Do humans have a duty to the protection of the environment? * Should the wishes of the land-owner be worth more than the wishes of the majority of people (or the government)? | |
| **Key Teaching Points** | Ethical problems will include several or many ethical considerations. For example: the debate over Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking) as a practice to produce Coal Seam Gas, generates several ethical considerations:   * Positive consequences (benefits) – (consider national energy independence, increased wealth and profits for individuals and companies, increased standard of living through supply of electricity, etc.) * Negative consequences (harms) – (consider potential environmental damage, loss of agricultural land, continued reliance on fossil fuels, etc.) * Duties – (consider the duties companies have to maximise profits for their shareholders, companies have to corporate transparency, employers have to the safety of their employees, governments have to supply power and services to their constituents, all humans (maybe) have as environmental custodians, etc.) * Rights – (consider the rights of property owners to the land, of common ownership over shared resources, to information and risk assessment, informed consent, native title over land…)   We can assess the relative importance of these considerations using reasoning strategies, such as ‘if…then’ reasoning, or ‘What matters most…’:   * ‘If (proposed criterion such as: maximising benefit, minimising harm, following a duty, granting specific rights) were to be the most important consideration, then the right decision/response to this issue would be…’ * ‘What matters most is (proposed criterion such as: maximising benefit, minimising harm, following a duty, granting specific rights), because…’   Our decisions might change according to different philosophical perspectives we can take on environmental ethics:   * Anthropocentrism is a view that human beings have the highest moral value and thus the most important consideration is the consequences/rights of/duties to humanity (not necessarily individual humans, but the species as a whole). * Biocentrism is a view that all living things have equal moral value, and thus it is just as important to consider the consequences/rights of/duties to all living things, as it is for humans. * Ecocentrism is a view that everything in the global environment (the natural world) is of equal moral value, so that we need to consider the consequences/rights of/duties to the whole planet, not just the living things which rely on it. In this view, humans are just one part of the natural world, and no more important than other parts.   Each of these views may (or may not) decide that fracking is unethical, but their reasoning will reveal the different relative importance they assign to different considerations.  For instance an Anthropocentrist might consider that the worst aspect of fracking is the harm done to the people working the wells, or the danger it presents to human life, or even to the harm done to water sources which humans rely on. In this view, the harm done to the water source is not inherently unethical, but is unethical in that humans rely on that water to survive.  A Biocentrist might consider the worst aspect of fracking the harm done by exposing animals and plants to dangerous chemicals, even if no humans are harmed, or even if that animal/plant harm comes coupled with significant human benefit.  An Ecocentrist might consider the worst aspect of fracking to be the harm done to the planet, in a hydro-geological sense, even if no living things are harmed, or perhaps that fracking is unethical on the grounds of failing a duty to care for or preserve (rather than exploit) the natural world.  These three variant views (not an exhaustive list of possible contestation) can be summarised as human-first, living- things-first, nature-first, respectively, and can be used with the reasoning tools above.  **Eg:**  ‘If we consider humans to be the most ethically significant, then…’ ‘If we consider all living things to be equally ethically significant, then…’  ‘What matters most is the consequences to humans, because…’ ‘What matters most is our duty to the environment, because…’  Note that in practice someone may hold a view that is a hybrid of these and students may raise this. For the purposes of teaching and learning, the views can be introduced separately, in a more simple way. | |
| **Success criteria** | * I can rank the ethical considerations in an ethical issue (fracking) according to their relative ethical significance (from most – least) * I can explain why different groups or individuals might consider different ethical consideration to be more or less important than I do. * I can apply criteria for ethical significance, and alternative criteria, and evaluate how these difference may affect ethical decision-making | |
|  | **Activities** (considering different levels) | **Resources** (considering different levels) |
| **Introduction**  **(prior learning & context)** | This is a lesson about the concept of relative ethical significance.  You will have learnt by now about a range of different approaches to ethical decision-making (Students should have prior learning in some or all of the ethical principles this lesson considers: Duty/Obligation, Consequentialism, Rights/Responsibility).  Today we are going to investigate how we can rank these and other considerations when faced with a complex issue. We’ll use our ranking and alternative rankings, and consider how these different relative judgements might affect our decisions and actions.  We’re going to explore these ethical concepts through the issue of ‘fracking’ video) | Learning Intention  <https://youtu.be/Uti2niW2BRA>  (Fracking explained in 5 minutes. Difficult to find an unbiased account of fracking, but this one is relatively even-handed) |
| **Explicit teaching phase** | **Think-aloud:**  Using the hypothetical scenario in the resources section the teacher models these ethical identification questions   * What duty or rule should you follow? * What consequences will come from the decision (positive and negative, for you and for others)? * What rights and freedoms need to be considered? * What is the fair or just thing to do?   And answers them (see key teaching points). The purpose here is to give the students a list of ethical considerations. The lesson is not about identifying ethical considerations ([(VCECU006)](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCECU006), [(VCECU011)](http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Curriculum/ContentDescription/VCECU011) ). For the sake of getting into the lesson-focus (relative importance) we can give the students the foundational knowledge they need for this lesson.  Open up the think-aloud (see shared). Once there is a sufficient list of considerations explicitly teach the anthropocentric, biocentric and ecocentric concepts (see key teaching points), and demonstrate how these different ethical perspectives apply to one (or more) of the considerations identified in terms of the ‘if…then’ and/or ‘what matters most…’ thinking tools.  This will establish the knowledge students need to complete the independent task. | **Hypothetical / thought experiment handout**  Students take notes using the handout (provided) |
| **Shared practice phase** | Opening up from the think-aloud in the explicit teaching, the teacher invites students to add to the list of identified ethical consideration involved in this situation (and to identify them in terms of duties, consequences, rights/freedoms, fairness, virtue).  **NB** after this shared brainstorm you will need to return to explicit teaching of ‘-centrism’ perspectives and sentence starters before moving students into independent phase. | Students note-take on handout table |
| **Independent practice phase** | Each students selects or is assigned a philosophical point-of-view to apply (anthro-, bio-, or eco-centrism).  Each student should then:   * Rank the issues identified in the explicit/shared brainstorming from most important to least important according to their chosen or assigned –centrism using the ‘if…then’ or ‘matters most’ reasoning tools. * Justify / defend their relative ranking positions |  |
| **Reflection/ evaluation phase** | In triads (one from each of the three –isms), students compare their rankings. Each student has 2 minutes to explain the order of the ethical considerations according to their independent work. The other students listen without interrupting during this time. The group then has 4 minutes of open discussion about what they learnt and comparisons/contrasts drawn out by the three different perspectives.  Reflection what criteria might generally be for determining the relative importance of ethical matters, guided by the general focus questions above. |  |
| **Assessment and Feedback** | Students self-assess with the three success criteria above  Teacher provides individual feedback as appropriate throughout lesson and summative feedback in the evaluation phase based on the achievement of the success criteria (one criterion being satisfactory, two criteria, or all three, indicating greater success). | Success Criteria, using Bloom’s taxonomy to differentiate higher-order skill application (apply) from lower order (know/understand). |

**Ethics in Fracking, a hypothetical:**

Imagine you are a farmer and a company approaches you to set up a fracking well on your property. They tell you that it is safe and that there is a rich resource of gas beneath your property. You’ll be given financial compensation for the use of your land. The gas they hope to get from this well may enable them to close a coal-fired power plant.

But, you know another farmer who had a well installed and she had concerns about the effects on her property. She says that the well contaminated her water supply and that the power company denied any fault.

You need to decide whether you should allow the power company to establish the well on your property.

**Considering the ethics of this decision:**

When making this decision there are several ethical considerations. Today we’ll try and determine which of these are the most important.

Use this table to note-take ethical considerations based on your teacher’s think-aloud and the class discussion. Don’t worry about ranking or ordering them yet, we’ll do that later.