ETHICAL REASONING VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact value@aacu.org

The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can be shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

**Definition**

Ethical Reasoning involves thinking, talking, and writing about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students’ ethical self identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

**Framing Language**

This rubric is intended to help faculty evaluate work samples and collections of work that demonstrate student learning about ethics. Although the goal of a liberal education should be to help students turn what they've learned in the classroom into action, pragmatically it would be difficult, if not impossible, to judge whether or not students would act ethically when faced with real ethical situations. What can be evaluated using a rubric is whether students have the intellectual tools to make ethical choices.

The rubric focuses on five elements: Ethical Self Awareness, Ethical Issue Recognition, Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts, Application of Ethical Principles, and Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts. Students’ Ethical Self Identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues. Presumably, they will choose ethical actions when faced with ethical issues.

**Glossary**

The definitions that follow were developed to clarify terms and concepts used in this rubric only.

- **Core Beliefs:** Those fundamental principles that consciously or unconsciously influence one’s ethical conduct and ethical thinking. Even when unacknowledged, core beliefs shape one’s responses. Core beliefs can reflect one’s environment, religion, culture or training. A person may or may not choose to act on their core beliefs.
- **Ethical Perspectives/Concepts:** The different theoretical means through which ethical issues are analyzed, such as ethical theories (e.g., utilitarian, natural law, virtue) or ethical concepts (e.g., rights, justice, duty).
- **Complex, multi-layered (gray) context:** The sub-parts or situational conditions of a scenario that bring two or more ethical dilemmas (issues) into the mix/problem/context for student’s identification.
- **Cross-relationships among the issues:** Obvious or subtle connections between/among the sub-parts or situational conditions of the issues present in a scenario (e.g., relationship of production of corn as part of climate change issue).
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Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance. Evaluators may indicate “not applicable” when a performance descriptor is not relevant to the entire sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Descriptors</th>
<th>Levels of Competence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exceeds Expectation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Meets Expectation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethical Self-Awareness</td>
<td>Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student names, presents the gist, and explains multiple details of the concepts or theories used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Issue Recognition</td>
<td>Student recognizes the complexity of ethical issues identifying the , multilayered (gray) context AND discusses the cross-relationships among the issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student applies ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, extends them to creative new examples, and considers several implications of the application.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student states a position and states the objections to, assumptions behind, and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts; student’s defense against objections is effective and convincing.</td>
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*This rubric has been modified by faculty at The University of Tulsa for use in the institutional assessment project.*