

ETHICAL REASONING ASSESSMENT

Subcommittee on Ethics

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Administered May 2015

BACKGROUND

During Fall 2014 and Spring 2015, the Ethical Reasoning Sub-Committee developed and refined conceptual and operational definitions, rubrics, and assessment procedures. The sub-committee consisted of Dov Fischer (Chair), Hershey Friedman, Holly Chui, Nadia Doych, and Susanne Scott. The Ethical Reasoning Plan was submitted to the faculty at large in fall 2014 (Appendix 1).

The ethical reasoning learning goal was conceptualized as having three components as follows:

Ethical Awareness

- Of ethical dimensions of business
- Of problems associated with ethical decision-making
- Of different moral perspectives

Ethical Sensitivity

- Empathy
- Resolve to act ethically
- Creative resolution of ethical problems

Managerial and Professional Ethical Competence

- Awareness of unique managerial & professional ethical challenges
- Translate ethics into action
- Integrate ethics into strategy

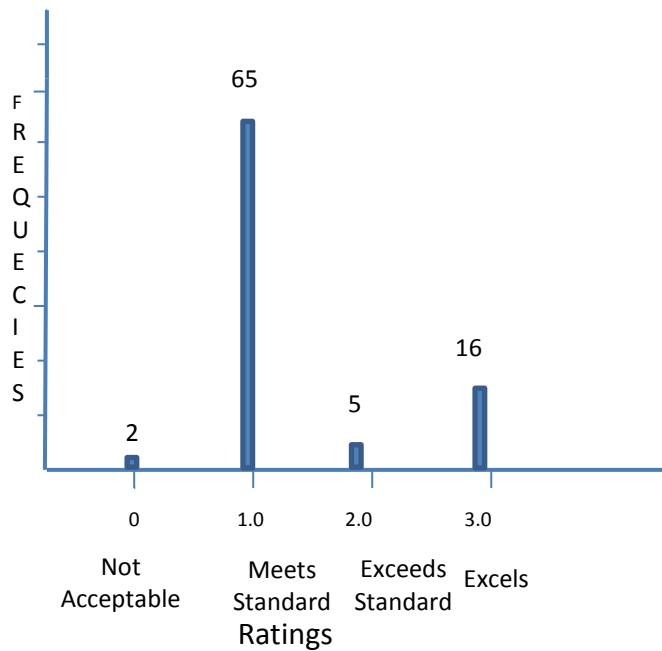
The subcommittee identified an instrument for assessing the goal and subgoals, the Martha McCaskey Harvard Business School Case. A decision was made to administer the case as an embedded assignment in four sections of the capstone strategy class in April 2015. Eighty-eight essays were returned to the course instructor for grading. Copies were made and submitted to the Chair of the Ethical Reasoning Subcommittee in May. Three assessors (two from the School of Business and one from the Philosophy Department) evaluated the students' work using a rubric in May and June 2015.

FINDINGS

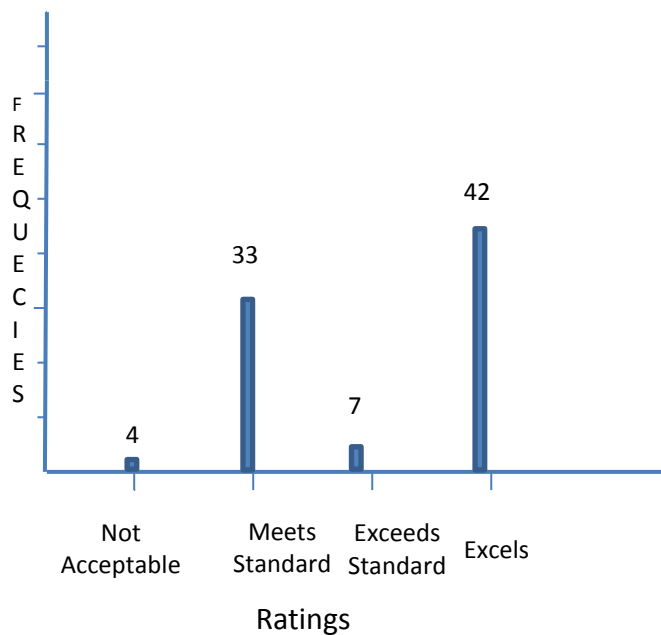
- 73.9 % of students met the standard, 18.1 % of students exceeded the standard, and 8.0 % of students did not meet the standard of the ethical awareness component of the ethical reasoning learning goal.

- 37.5 % of students met the standard, 48 % of students exceeded the standard, and 4.5 % of students did not meet the standard for the ethical sensitivity component of the ethical reasoning learning goal.
- 65.9 % of students met the standard, 25 % of students exceeded the standard, and 9.1 % of students did not meet the standard for the managerial and professional component of the ethical reasoning learning goal.

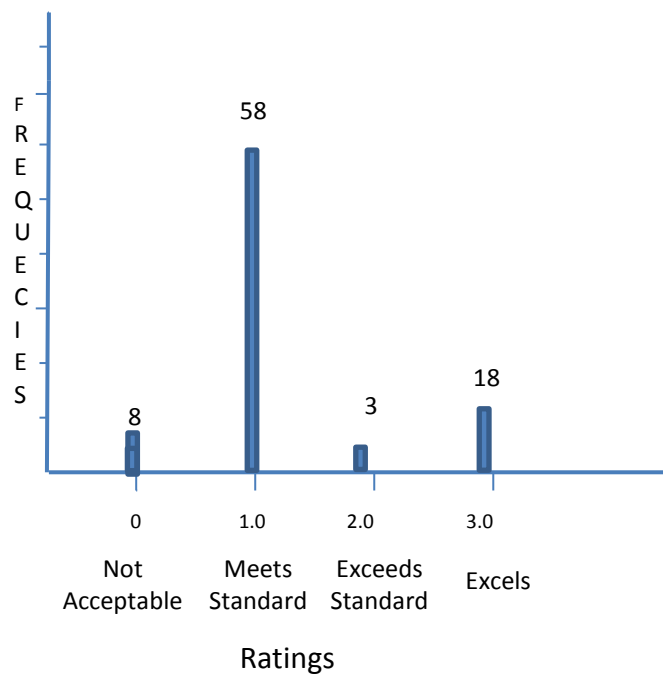
Awareness Component



Sensitivity Component



Managerial and Professional Competency



CAVEATS

Students did well on the ethical reasoning assessment. However, there were some concerns with the rubric and rating scale. The original rating scale consisted of 4 points. They were “Does not meet standard” (0); “Meets standard” (1); “Exceeds standard” (2); and (3) “Excels”.

Looking at the scores of the 3-reviewers, they were not significantly different and were resolved on discussion between two of the reviewers. However, all three of the reviewers commented on the lack of adequate differentiation offered on the left side of the scale. Students could only be judged as “not acceptable” or “meets standard”. But, the reviewers reported that many of the papers, while not meeting standard, showed some indication that the student was “on the right track”. Two of the reviewers felt that student should be given some credit, but, when forced to choose between meets standard or not acceptable, they chose meets standard. It is possible that scores were inflated by this error. Another assessment is scheduled for Fall 2015 that will use a more standard 5-point Likert scale.

Appendix 1

Ethics Assessment Program Brooklyn College, School of Business

Dov Fischer, Sub-Committee Chair

Susanne Scott, Associate Dean

Hershey Friedman, Sub-Committee Member

Nadia Doytch, Sub-Committee Member

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May 2015

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Abstract: This summary of the Brooklyn College School of Business, Ethics Assessment program contains the following components:

1. Ethics Learning Objective (adopted October 2014)
2. Learning Goals (adopted October 2014)
3. Assessment Tool (adopted December 2014)
4. Assessment Instrument (administered Spring 2015)
5. Assessment Rubric (implemented Summer 2015)

Ethics Assessment Program

Brooklyn College, School of Business

Ethics Learning Objective: “Students will be aware of and sensitive to ethical principles when making business decisions. They will understand that managers and other business professionals have an obligation to act ethically and to ensure that their organizations and clients do likewise. They will consider the effects of actions on all stakeholders including employees, customers, clients, shareholders, the local community, and society.”

Learning Goals:

<i>Ethical Awareness</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Of ethical dimensions of business• Of problems associated with ethical decision-making• Of different moral perspectives
<i>Ethical Sensitivity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy• Resolve to act ethically• Creative resolution of ethical problems
<i>Managerial and Professional Ethical Competence</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awareness of unique managerial & professional ethical challenges• Translate ethics into action• Integrate ethics into strategy

Assessment Plan

Students will read the Harvard Business School case of Martha McCaskey. They will then write a 200-word email to Martha to advise her on her predicament. This will be followed by a 200-word essay outlining possible alternative viewpoints, and a final 200-word essay explaining why the student chose the advice to Martha in the face of the alternatives.

Martha McCaskey is a rising star in a fast-paced technology consulting firm, and she finds herself in an ethical slippery slope. She has already misrepresented herself and her client to Devon – a paid source from which she hopes to obtain trade secrets. She fears that the slippery slope may soon lead to her violating the law. It doesn’t help that the consulting firm’s environment is aggressive and lacks proper controls and procedures to ensure compliance with laws and ethics. The firm’s leaders have failed to set a “tone at the top” of ethics and integrity. What, if anything, should Martha do? The instrument adapts elements from the Martha McCaskey teaching note.

Assessment Instrument

Instructions to Students

Estimated time to purchase, read, and write essays (5 hours, 15 minutes)

1. Please purchase the Martha McCaskey case from Harvard Business School (\$6.93). Go to <https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/register/3/HE+Individual/0/0> and register and log in. In the search box on the top of the screen, please type (or paste) Martha McCaskey. Select the Martha McCaskey case and add to your cart. Click “checkout” on the upper right of the screen. Purchase and read the case
2. Read the Harvard Business School case Martha McCaskey. Then please complete the following assignment.

It is a Sunday afternoon.

*[4pm] You are getting ready to watch a movie on NetFlix before going out to an early dinner with friends. You’re winding down from the workweek and a busy Saturday when the phone rings. It’s a San Francisco number and you wonder who it could be. You pick up the phone, and it’s one of your old classmates from Brooklyn College who got a job with a prestigious consulting firm. It’s **Martha McCaskey**. It’s a pleasant surprise. Martha sat next to you in Principles of Accounting and you became good friends, but you have both been working long hours since graduating and you haven’t spoken to Martha for almost a year.*

You and Martha chitchat about the exciting developments at your jobs, and she shares with you some of the challenges she is facing at her job. After chatting for some time, you need to say goodbye to Martha in order to join some friends for dinner.

*[9pm] Throughout dinner, you could not stop thinking about Martha and her difficult situation at work. It sounds like Martha faced a dilemma, although she didn’t use that exact word. Martha’s situation with a particular client is causing you to be concerned about the choices she needs to make. As a friend, you decide to send Martha a short email of 200 words summarizing (1) your concerns and (2) your advice on what she should do. **[Please compose a 200-word email to Martha – it should be friendly and informal, but please use proper grammar.]***

[10pm] You feel better now that you have written Martha and shared your concerns and advice. You believe that you gave Martha good advice, but in a Brooklyn College philosophy course you learned that there are often several legitimate perspectives on a situation such as this one. Because you miss writing papers for Brooklyn College professors, you sit down to write a short 200-word essay on possible alternative viewpoints and advice compared to what you offered Martha in the 9pm email. You don't want to confuse Martha, so don't send her this essay describing alternative viewpoints! **[Please compose a 200-word essay describing alternative viewpoint(s) and advice to the one offered in the email to Martha.]**

[11pm] You reflect on the email and subsequent essay you wrote in the past two hours. Tomorrow is a busy day, but you are a perfectionist and a loyal friend. In your gut, you know that you gave Martha good advice, but you feel the need to explain to yourself why you gave the advice you did rather than the alternative viewpoints you described. Before going to bed, you decide to write another 200-word essay on why you feel comfortable with the advice you gave Martha in the email. This essay should not simply repeat the points you made in the email but should compare your advice with the alternative perspectives. Explain why you feel more comfortable with the advice you gave rather than the alternative perspective. **[Please compose a second 200-word essay describing why you feel comfortable with the original advice you gave Martha, as opposed to the alternative viewpoint(s).]**

Time Estimate

1. Read the Martha McCaskey case – 2 hours.
2. Compose the email to Martha – 1 hour
3. Describe alternative viewpoints – 1 hour
4. Explain why you rejected the alternative viewpoints – 1 hour

Submission of Work

<i>Please compose a 200-word email to Martha – it should be friendly and informal, but please use proper grammar.</i>
<i>Please compose a 200-word essay describing alternative viewpoint(s) and advice to the one offered in the email to Martha.</i>
<i>Please compose a second 200-word essay describing why you feel comfortable with the original advice you gave Martha, as opposed to the alternative viewpoint(s).</i>

Assessment Rubric

To the Assessor: For each of the three goals, assess the student as “does not meet” (0), meets (1), exceeds (2), and excels (3) based on the following rubric.

Learning Goal	Meets	Exceeds	Excels	Score (0-3)
Ethical <i>Awareness</i>	Aware of Ethical Dimensions of Business	Understands the problems associated with moral decision-making	Ability to appreciate different moral perspectives	
Ethical <i>Sensitivity</i>	Cares and empathizes about the impact of business decisions	Resolves to act ethically even when it is not comfortable and self-serving.	Moral imagination to transform situations for the better	
Integration with <i>Management & Professional Concepts</i>	Understands why organizational and professional morality is more challenging than personal morality	Able to translate ethical concerns into organizational and professional practice	Vision to turn morality into a strategic asset for the organization and professional practice	

Assessment Suggestion: We suggest that you mark up the paper with “A” whenever you see an example of awareness, “S” whenever you see an example of sensitivity, and “M&P” when the students integrates the ethical issue with a management or professional concept.

After marking up the paper in this manner, review each sub-goal (e.g. A for awareness) to determine the score from 0-4

References:

- “Martha McCaskey” HBS Case 9-403-114 (Boston: Harvard Business School). Original version by Bart J. Van Dissel, 1988. Revised by Joshua Margolis and Ayesha Kanji, 2004. 14 pages.
- “Martha McCaskey – Teaching Note”. HBS Case 5-404-110 (Boston: Harvard Business School. By Joshua Margolis, 2006, 32 pages.
- Rossouw, G.J. 2002. “Three approaches to teaching business ethics.” *Teaching Business Ethics*. 6: 411 -433.