‘The Ethical Student’: Enhancing the Teaching of Ethics in the Undergraduate Curriculum

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Executive summary

In an increasingly competitive education market, universities have progressively focused upon defining the distinctive characteristics of their graduates (Barrie 2004; 2006; 2007). Barrie (2004) has identified ‘Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding’ as one of five key graduate attributes that universities promote, meaning that graduates “will hold personal values and beliefs consistent with their role as responsible members of local, national, international and professional communities” (Barrie 2004: 270). The University of Chester’s current Learning and Teaching Strategy refers to the development of curricula that “encourage reflective engagement with community and society” (Learning and Teaching Institute 2008: 7). The way this strategic vision is applied leads to the distinctive character of the university and its graduates (University of Chester 2011).

The teaching of ethics in higher education is ‘patchy’ and lacks progression; this leaves graduates unprepared to deal with the ethical issues they face in the workplace and beyond. Preparing students to think through ethical issues develops critical thinking skills for dealing with the complex and uncertain worlds into which they graduate. Yet, we might question whether universities actually produce graduates who are prepared “for practical and ethical engagement with their scholarly, professional and personal worlds” (Boyd et al. 2008: 38). This project addressed this current shortfall in preparing students for the wider world. It investigates:

a) the current level of ethical understanding and development of students
b) evaluates the effectiveness of a specific pedagogic strategy in engaging and developing critical thinking about ethics
c) works with staff to reflect upon and plan for enhancing critical thinking skills within the student body to inform ethical behaviour.

This project focused on the Department of Geography and Development studies. There were four main elements to the research.

1) At the beginning of the academic year all students, in each undergraduate year group were requested to complete a questionnaire (n=198). The questionnaire explored students’ ethical understandings and assessed their level of ethical development by incorporating Clarkeburn et al.’s (2003) Meta-ethical Questionnaire (MEQ).
2) The second year Tutorials module was re-designed to include an ethical discussion strand. Over the course of the year students were introduced to progressive ethical problems based upon real life examples.
3) The impact of incorporating explicit ethical teaching into the tutorial programme was evaluated. A second round of the questionnaire was given to the students who participated in the tutorials (n=25), alongside a focus group (n=10) which discussed the effectiveness of the teaching strategy and student perceptions of teaching ethics through this method. Staff who led the tutorials also participated in a separate focus group (n=5).
4) In order to reflect upon and plan for enhancing the ethical development of students interviews were conducted with staff (n=7).

The analysis of the 198 students who completed the MEQ section of the questionnaire across all three year groups found no significant difference between levels of ethical understanding between year groups. When asked what the term ethics meant to them, overwhelmingly the majority of responses related ethics to morals. When asked to provide an example of ethics previously studied, despite the discipline background of the students, few identified geographical ethical issues. When asked to identify an ethical choice a large proportion of students did not
answer the question. Of those that did respond some had provided examples of a choice, without explanation as to why this was an ethical choice. Generally the findings from questionnaire suggested that there was a basic level of understanding, but that a high proportion of students did not grasp the complex, uncertain, contingent nature of ethical issues.

The intervention in the Tutorials module appeared to have had some impact upon the students’ ethical development. A comparison of the pre and post-intervention findings showed that there had been a statistically significant increase in the ethical scores of individuals and the qualitative comments suggest greater understanding. However, student and staff responses to the effectiveness and, particularly, relevance of the ethical strand were variable. This primarily related to the distinction between human and physical geography, with physical geographers believing that ethics was less relevant to their subdiscipline. This project has highlighted the need to make clearer the relevance of ethics to all areas of geography and highlight to students when they are learning about ethics during all of their modules.

This research suggests that more work is needed to support our students to meet the graduate attribute of ‘Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding’. In an increasingly complex world this attribute is likely to increase in significance. This research examined only one discipline, and the research evidence suggests that the nature of the ethical issues and ethical thinking required by graduates varies between disciplines (Lane & Schaupp 1989; Rooy & Pollard 2002). For example, the ethical issues pure scientists face when testing on human subjects or undertaking animal experiments are of a different nature from those dealt with by social scientists when interviewing or observing people, or those explored in literature when deciding whether a character made the appropriate ethical choice. However, many ethical issues are multidisciplinary in nature, for example assisted suicide may be studied from many different disciplinary perspectives, yet the ways in which students might approach and think about such topics may differ between disciplines. Hence there is a need for comparative studies which examine the ethical understanding and development of students in different disciplines and explore the range of effective strategies for teaching ethics in different disciplinary and institutional contexts.
Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the support of staff and students in the Department of Geography and Development Studies. The discussions between us have been both productive and illuminating. We would like to express our sincere appreciation for the time that students spent completing questionnaires. Those students who participated in focus group deserve further thanks for the additional insights they provided about the Tutorials module intervention. Thanks goes to the Department of Geography and Development Studies as a whole who provided the opportunity for us to conduct this research. We would particularly like to thank the interview participants for the time they gave up being interviewed about ethics. Special thanks also goes to the tutors who were involved in implementing the Tutorials module intervention itself and offering insights and constructive advice on how we could improve delivery in the future. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Professor Iain Hay who offered valuable critical support in the early formation of this project. In the later stages of completing this project we ran a session at the annual University of Chester Staff Conference, we would like to acknowledge our appreciation of those people who attended, your comments, thoughts and critiques helped us to clarify aspects in our own minds, which has enhanced this report immensely. Finally, we would like to thank the Learning and Teaching Institute for funding this project.
1.0 Rationale and description

“Going about our daily affairs ... we need moral knowledge and skills more often, and more poignantly, than either knowledge of the ‘laws of nature’ or technical skills.” (Bauman 1993: 16-17)

“Educators need to give greater attention to the teaching of ... ethics as part of our contribution to the education of responsible citizens.” (Hay & Foley 1998: 169)

In an increasingly competitive education market, universities have progressively focused upon defining the distinctive characteristics of their graduates (Barrie 2004; 2006; 2007). Barrie (2004) has identified ‘Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding’ as one of five key graduate attributes that universities promote, meaning that graduates “will hold personal values and beliefs consistent with their role as responsible members of local, national, international and professional communities” (Barrie 2004: 270). This attribute can be seen in the mission statement of the University of Chester which identifies six core values underpinning the educational experience at the institution:

- the pursuit of excellence and innovation, to secure the highest standards and quality in our learning and teaching, and in the creation and application of new knowledge
- offering a distinctive student experience, grounded in a high quality, caring and supportive learning environment
- playing a leading role in the intellectual, cultural, social, spiritual and economic life of the local, regional and wider community
- the principles of equality of opportunity and diversity, and our responsibility to promote freedom of enquiry and scholarly expression
- promoting a dynamic and cost-effective organisational culture that is able to respond positively to the challenges of a changing environment
- openness and inclusiveness

The emphasis upon developing ethically responsible graduates is particularly clear in the third, fourth, and sixth core values. Additionally, the University’s current Learning and Teaching Strategy refers to the development of curricula that “encourage reflective engagement with community and society” (Learning and Teaching Institute 2008: 7). The way this strategic vision is applied leads to the distinctive character of the university and its graduates (University of Chester 2011). Engaging students in thinking ethically contributes to developing graduates whose experiences illustrate all of these characteristics encouraging ethical behaviour in wider society.

Furthermore, the ethical element of the graduate attribute relates to the need to prepare students for ‘supercomplexity’, where “the very frameworks by which we orientate ourselves to the world are themselves contested” (Barnett 2000: 257). Learning to think through ethical issues develops critical thinking skills for dealing with supercomplexity, as the frameworks the students use to consider ethical issues are contested and likely to change. Graduates need these skills in an uncertain world to enable them to negotiate increasingly dynamic professional and social lives. Yet, we might question whether universities actually produce graduates who are prepared “for practical and ethical engagement with their scholarly, professional and personal worlds” (Boyd et al. 2008: 38).

This project addresses this current shortfall in preparing students for the wider world. It investigates the current level of ethical understanding and development of students, evaluates the effectiveness of a specific pedagogic strategy in engaging and developing critical thinking about ethics, and works with staff to reflect upon and plan for enhancing critical thinking skills within the student body to inform ethical behaviour.
1.1 Defining ethics and critical thinking about ethics

The type of ethics explored in this project concerns ethical ways of thinking, as opposed to higher levels of conceptual ethics or theorization (Boyd et al. 2008). The Collins English Dictionary (Hanks 1979: 502) states that to be ethical is to act “in accordance with the principles of conduct that are considered correct” (Hanks 1979: 502). However, these principles vary according to what a person values, may relate to social, religious, or civil beliefs and may be that of a particular group, profession, or individual. In order to think ethically it is necessary to understand what your ‘code of behaviour’ is based upon and to recognise and accept that other people’s beliefs, and hence their codes of behaviour, may be different.

Ethical thinking is often required when a problem has no straight-forward ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ response. Five different approaches to deciding on an appropriate course of action in such circumstances are quoted widely in the ethics literature (e.g. Markkula Center for Applied Ethics 2010). The approaches listed below provide useful frameworks for decision-making, but each still requires value judgements to be made about what is important and what is not:

- Utilitarian – what action results in the most good or least harm?
- Rights – what action most respects the rights of the stakeholders the problem affects?
- Justice – what action is considered to be the just or fair one?
- Common good – what action contributes to the maintenance of a common good(s)?
- Virtue – what action is consistent with the ideals that are important to you?

As the above approaches show in learning to think ethically students need to engage in critical thinking about the issues concerned rather than just following prescribed ethical codes. Critical thinking is a complex term, meaning different things to different people. Broadly speaking it may be considered as “the identification and evaluation of evidence to guide decision making. A critical thinker uses broad in-depth analysis of evidence to make decisions and communicate his/her beliefs clearly and accurately” (Critical Thinking Co. 2011: no page). Critical thinking covers a range of skills including analysis, interpretation, inference, explanation, and evaluation (Facione 2000). By employing these skills to address ethical issues, students consider problems in a variety of ways and take ownership of the decisions they make. Through using these skills students may monitor and, where appropriate, reassess their own reasoning, meaning that critical thinking is about “judging in a reflective way what to do or what to believe” (Facione 2000: 61). This is essential when responding to ethical issues where there are no clear right or wrong responses, and where an individual’s code of behaviour is based upon a range of factors personal to them. This research has therefore adopted a practical, active method of teaching and learning to address ethical issues which involves two main critical thinking elements: 1) reflection upon one’s own and other’s principles and how these underlie their codes of behaviour; and 2) critical analysis, interpretation, inference, explanation and evaluation of ethical issues whilst recognising that such processes are situated within the lens of the individual’s code of behaviour. We consider this to be critical thinking for ethics.

1.2 Ethics in Higher Education

Over the last decade public trust in business and more recently in politicians has eroded (Gao et al. 2008; Ruhe & Lee 2008; Carrell 2009). It is increasingly recognised that ethically and socially responsible behaviour plays a crucial role in good business practice (Nicholson et al. 2009), and that “moral meaning and agency are fundamental to the definition of professions” (Robinson 2005: 2). In the wake of policy led attempts to ‘professionalise’ aspects of academic practice (for example Higher Education Academy 2006) there has been a renewed interest in the values that define academic life (Macfarlane & Cheug 2008). Hargreaves (2008) argues that higher education
in the UK aims to develop the intelligence and critical skills of undergraduates. To achieve this aim a commitment to critical thinking about ethics is essential. Higher Education institutions should be leaders in the development of the cultures and the societies in which they are situated. Consequently they should be bastions of ethical behaviour (Utah Valley University 2010).

It is within the environment of universities where students may first learn about the realities of citizenship and test its moral boundaries (Bruhn 2008), exploring the nature of social responsibility (Vujakovic & Bullard 2001) and developing the skills which optimistically will contribute towards transforming society for the better (Wellens et al. 2006). The ability to think ethically is one of the most important “generic skills that future graduates should have” (Escámez et al. 2008: 50). In developing skills which allow them to handle the moral issues associated with the real world students are also better prepared for employment (Hay & Foley 1998).

However, Escámez et al. (2008: 43) found that current ethical teaching “often left students unarmed to cope with the frequent conflicts between ends, responsibilities, rights and duties that are bound to occur in their professional careers.” The experiences students are having in Higher Education do not always prepare them for the potential moral questions they need to respond to in their post-graduation employment. For many students their contact with ethics relates primarily to the ethics of undertaking research (Boyd et al. 2008). Going through ethical clearance procedures has in many cases become relatively mechanistic, after which students may give ethics little further consideration. However, in terms of a graduate attribute, ethics is more concerned with the broader skill of thinking ethically in all parts of their lives, not just in research and we would contend that universities have an important role in facilitating this.

1.3 Teaching Ethics in Higher Education

In many university undergraduate programmes, the focus of current practice is primarily upon ethics in relation to research projects rather than consolidating “a sense of responsibility toward common good expressed through civic ethics” (Escámez et al. 2008: 43). Teaching in this way suggests that once through the research ethical procedures, students may feel that they no longer have to think ethically (Kearns et al. 1998). This highlights the distinction between teaching about how to think through ethical issues and teaching about ethical process. In most universities teaching about ethical processes is necessary in order to enable students to progress with research projects such as their undergraduate dissertations. However, the aim in teaching ethics should not just be for students to comply with ethical procedures but more to meet “the far more creative challenge of teaching ethical engagement” (Howitt 2005: 320). Looking at the experiences of an international group of academics, Figure 1.1a illustrates how the current undergraduate ethical “content is, at best, patchy, and rarely approaches any sequential development of ethical skills throughout a course” (Boyd et al. 2008: 39). This project aims to address the notion of ethics more broadly within the university curriculum and embed ethical principles throughout the university course (see Figure 1.1b).

The debate as to whether it is possible to teach ethics without indoctrinating individuals into a particular way of thinking is long standing (Escámez et al. 2008). It is, therefore, important to engage with academic staff perceptions of ethics and teaching ethics in order to address such concerns and develop techniques which they are comfortable using in their own teaching (Escámez et al. 2008; Gao et al. 2008; Gundersen et al. 2008; Ketchum 2009). This does not involve teaching prescriptive ethics, rather it is a teaching for critical thinking about ethics (Hay & Foley 1998; Smith 1995). In fact, the literature on current ethical practice makes a convincing argument that prescriptive ethical procedures are “in fundamental opposition to moral thinking”
(Hay & Foley, 1998: 171). This means developing an ethics education which is not structured around a set of ‘rules’ for moral behaviour (Hay & Foley 1998), but which emphasises the significance of ethical consciousness in autonomous individuals (Hay 1998). This form of teaching will support individuals to become ethically accountable for their own choices and actions whilst situating them within a supportive ethical community.

**Figure 1.1: A conceptual model of the role of ethics and ethical matters in teaching and learning**

![Diagram of ethics teaching and learning]

Source: adapted from Boyd *et al.* (2008: 39-40)

Overall, this research builds upon previous research projects which have addressed the ethical development of undergraduate students (Clarkeburn *et al.* 2003) and staff views on the role of Higher Education in teaching ethics (Escámez *et al.* 2008; Gundersen *et al.* 2008). This project develops the research field by proposing a strategy for the sequential development of ethical teaching and thinking within an undergraduate programme.

**1.4 Case Study: Department of Geography and Development Studies**

The research took place within the Department of Geography and Development Studies. An advantage of choosing geography is that it crosses the pure and social sciences (and some of the arts). This enables exploration of teaching approaches which have potential for application in a wide range of different disciplines (Escámez *et al.* 2008). Smith (1995) argues that moral issues are often marginalised within contemporary education, and that the discipline of geography is particularly well positioned to address this deficiency. Geography deals with many “inherently controversial subjects, from population control to environmental change” (Vujakovic & Bullard 2001: 276), providing a significant range of contemporary topics in which to situate ethical discussion. For example, ‘sustainable development’, a contested concept which underpins many contemporary geographical debates, is replete with ethical questions. The geography benchmark statement claims that “Geography fosters a range of personal attributes relevant to the world
beyond HE, which will promote geographers’ ability to engage in lifelong learning, to consider ethics and values, and to contribute to the wider community” (QAA 2007: 3). The benchmark statement emphasises research and field based studies in relation to ethics, but also recognises “the moral and ethical issues involved in debates and enquiries” within the discipline (QAA 2007: 5).

In summary, this project aimed to develop (i) an approach which maximises the probability of students with ethical thinking skills graduating from the university, and (ii) a curriculum which better aligns with the ethical components of the University of Chester mission statement.

1.5 Objectives and deliverables
This project had five core objectives:
1. To examine the current ethical awareness and understanding of students.
2. To investigate the extent to which there is progression in the ethical development of students in different years across the academic programmes in the Department of Geography and Development Studies.
3. To explore the attitudes of tutors in the Department about the teaching of ethics.
4. To develop and assess a new strategy of ethical scenarios for teaching ethics in the Tutorials module at Level 5 (year 2) of the Single Honours Geography programme.
5. To develop a transferable model of curriculum design which focuses on the sequential development of critical thinking skills about ethics.

2.0 Ethical understanding within the GDS programmes: methodology and discussion

In order to move towards embedding ethical skills sequentially throughout a university programme firstly it is important to recognise what knowledge students already have on the topic. An awareness of students’ current understanding of what it means to be ethical enables the development of curriculum with an emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge, situating learning in what students already know rather than introducing abstract concepts (Lave & Wenger 1991). Secondly, it is necessary to understand the current level of ethical understanding and development in a student cohort. Without this it is not possible to design teaching to support their ethical progression (Clarkeburn et al. 2003). This section explores the first three objectives of the project, investigating the current ethical awareness of students, the extent to which there is progression in ethical understanding across different years, and the attitudes of tutors in the department. Two methods were used to address these objectives: a questionnaire with students, and interviews with staff. Ethical approval of all of the research tools used in this research project was gained via two submissions made to the Learning and Teaching Institute-Research Ethics Committee (LTI-REC) in August and November 2010. Feedback from the committee for the questionnaire indicated the need for some revisions to the questionnaire documentation before approval could be granted. These changes were made.

2.1 Questionnaire method and response rate
Towards the beginning of the academic year all students, at each level, studying in the Department of Geography and Development Studies were asked to complete a questionnaire. For first year students this was done in induction week (before they had commenced any formal studying in the department), second and third year students were asked to complete the questionnaires in teaching sessions in the first week of term (Appendix 1). Further copies of the
questionnaire were also made available in the department office for anyone outside of these teaching sessions to participate. This covered four programmes: Single Honours and Combined Honours Geography, Combined Honours Natural Hazard Management and Combined Honours International Development Studies. The questionnaire explored students’ ethical understandings through three qualitative questions addressing what ethics meant to them and also assessed their level of ethical development by incorporating Clarkeburn et al.’s (2003) Meta-ethical Questionnaire (MEQ). The MEQ section of this questionnaire was rigorously developed and tested with a cohort of 478 Life Studies students at the University of Glasgow and the findings published in Studies in Higher Education. From the Department of Geography and Development Studies 198 students completed the questionnaire across all three year groups. Table 2.1 provides a breakdown of the characteristics of the people who answered the questionnaire by age, level\(^1\), gender, programme of study, and geographical interest.

**Table 2.1: General characteristics of the questionnaire participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;21</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme of Study</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography SH</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography and IDS</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography and IDS</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDS and NHM</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography CH (exc IDS and NHM)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDS CH (exc Geog and NHM)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical Interest (Geog students only)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Human Geography</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly Physical Geography</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography as a Whole</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The ‘geographical interest’ question only related to Geography SH and CH participants, however 7 of these students did not respond to this question.

The majority of the participants were of a traditional university age with 93% of the students being between 18 and 21. Fewer students participated from Level 6 (22%) than from Levels 4 (39%) and 5 (39%). Although all three year groups are of a similar size, the lower proportion from level 6 reflected the absence of whole year teaching sessions in which to conduct the survey. In order to avoid disruption to several teaching sessions, the Dissertation and Independent Project modules (taught together at the beginning of the year), which were taken by the majority of students from

\(^1\) Levels 4, 5 & 6 are equivalent of undergraduate years 1, 2 & 3 in the UK.
the year group, were used to distribute the questionnaires. Although copies were available in the department office for others to participate, few people chose to participate this way. A slightly higher number of women (55%) participated in the study than men (45%). Single Honours geographers represented a substantially larger number of participants than any of the other programmes (41%). Forty-seven per cent of students who expressed a geographical interest identified 'mainly physical geography' as their preferred subdiscipline as opposed to human geography (23%) or geography as a whole (30%).

2.2 Questionnaire analysis and findings
The following discusses the findings from the questionnaire across all three years in the Department. It begins by looking at the findings from the MEQ before discussing the responses to the qualitative questions. The MEQ asked participants to select a position between two statements (see Appendix 1 for the full questionnaire including the MEQ). There were 5 options enabling students to position themselves in the middle between the two statements if neither represented their view. Students who indicated that their beliefs were closer to the statements on the right hand side of the questionnaire were demonstrating an understanding of the complex, uncertain, variable nature of ethical issues, and recognising that such issues are contingent and open to different perspectives. Furthermore the statements to the right suggest greater self-awareness and that the participant takes greater ownership of their decisions. The method for analysing the MEQ was taken from the work of Clarkburn et al. (2003) in which each response was given a numerical value between 1 and 5. The response to the left received a score of 1, moving in single increments to the response furthest to the right, which received a score of 5.

Table 2.2 ranks the average response for each of the different statements starting with the pair of statements which received the highest total. The highest average response was 4.1, with the lowest being 3.1. Appendix 2 illustrates the range of responses to each pair of statements. It is clear from these that the most common answer on all but one pair of statements was ‘More or less what I believe’ (scored as ‘4’). The only pair where this was not the case was ‘I do not doubt that my values are the right values to have’ – ‘I need to commit myself to a set of values even when I am uncertain whether they will always be the right values to have’. For this the most common response was ‘Neither statement represents my view’. This may be due to a lack of understanding as to the meaning of the statement.

Table 2.2: The hierarchy of the average response to each pair of statements in the MEQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 1</th>
<th>Statement 2</th>
<th>Average response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is not my place to make moral choices, because right answers have been</td>
<td>When I have a moral problem I try to think the answer through myself.</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>found already by others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal moral values are the same forever.</td>
<td>Personal moral values need to be reconsidered from time to time.</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think discussing moral problems is beneficial for me unless a right</td>
<td>Discussing values with other people gives me a beneficial opportunity to</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answer can be found at the end.</td>
<td>reflect on my values, even when there is no agreement in the end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think teachers should assess my moral arguments if they do not know</td>
<td>It is important that teachers assessing moral arguments look for logical</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the right answers yet.</td>
<td>structure and good reasoning rather than a particular answer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t enjoy discussing moral problems unless the teacher can give the</td>
<td>I enjoy discussing my values in the class even when we cannot agree on one</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right answer in the end.</td>
<td>right answer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A good moral answer is short and simple, because you know the right answer.  
You cannot have a good moral answer without arguments to support it, because moral answers are never straightforward.  

I believe we can always make a judgement whether actions are right or wrong and these rules do not change.  
When we make moral decisions, the best we can do is to decide what is right as far as we can tell in different situations.  

People cannot choose their values because values are either right or wrong.  
I am committed to a set of values I have chosen myself.  

Moral questions have absolutely right answers.  
There are very few right answers in the world and moral questions are not one of them.  

I do not doubt that my values are the right values to have.  
I need to commit myself to a set of values even when I am uncertain whether they will always be the right values to have.  

3.9  
3.7  
3.5  
3.3  
3.1

There is an assumption in current teaching that students will be at different stages of ethical development at different points in their university studies, with the expectation that the further they go through the academic system the greater their ethical engagement. This research has tested this assumption by investigating students’ actual levels of ethical development at different points in the Department’s programmes. In order to calculate an individual’s total ethical score each of their responses were added together. If the participant answered all of the 10 questions on the MEQ then the minimum ethical score they could get was 10 (a score of 1 being the lowest each response could receive) and the maximum was 50 (a score of 5 being the highest each response could receive). The average ethical score between levels showed very little difference, with the average score being 38 for level 4 and 37 for levels 5 and 6. The lowest individual ethical score was 22 and the highest was 50. The ethical scores were then categorised in line with Clarkburn et al’s (2003) use of Perry’s (1999) scheme to categorise different students’ ethical development based on the following thresholds: Type A=0-23, Type B=24-37, Type C=38+ (Table 2.3; Appendix 3).

**Table 2.3: Summary of characteristics of different types of ethical development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type A</th>
<th>‘Safety in dualism’ – sees the world in dualistic terms with clear rights and wrongs, they view diversity as an unwarranted confusion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>‘Distress in relativism’ – accepted a world of multiplicity and relativism, because they believe that the tutors want them to accept such a world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>‘Comfort in commitment’ – makes commitments to moral values, taking responsibility for chosen values and how to fulfil them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Clarkburn et al. (2003: 445-447)

As Figure 2.1 demonstrates, none of the participant’s ethical scores came under the Type A category. This was not unexpected since many of the student’s had cited previous studies of ethics in their qualitative responses and therefore there was an assumed level of understanding of the complexities surrounding ethics. These findings suggest that the students’ ethical development does not increase as they progress through their university studies. In fact, these results appear to suggest that this particular Level 4 cohort of students have a greater appreciation for the complexity of ethics than those at Levels 5 and 6.
Figure 2.1: Participant ethical scores by different types of ethical development

Qualitative responses
In order to analyse the qualitative data from the questionnaires, the responses were systematically categorised: 1) all of the responses were read, 2) a series of categories were then identified in relation to the range of responses provided (Tables 2.4-2.6), 3) each response was placed in a category and the number of responses in each category counted (Figures 2.2-2.4). Where a response referred to more than one category, all of the relevant categories were used, therefore the graphs shown in Figures 2.2-2.4 reflect the number of times each category was mentioned.

Table 2.4: Question 1: What does the term ‘ethics’ mean to you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses referred to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morals</td>
<td>A person’s individual morals and how they relate to a wider societal sense of what is right and wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>Rights that people have in particular with regards to choice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour</td>
<td>Ways in which people behave and the impact that this can have on other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research ethics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Responses tended to be confused and referred to ethnicity rather than ethics. E.g. “Different races of people”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.5: Question 2: An example of an ethical issue you have previously studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses referred to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
<td>People’s rights such as abortion, euthanasia and fair trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal Rights</td>
<td>Rights associated with animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Specific political issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Previous studies of ethics which concerned different religions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Research ethics, both in terms of the participants conducting their own research for coursework or examples of other people’s research which has been deemed ‘unethical’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic study related (excluding research)</td>
<td>Situations that have occurred during their studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.6: Question 3: An example of an ethical choice you have made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Responses referred to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Ethical issues that the participants had faced in their own research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic study related (excluding research)</td>
<td>Situations that have occurred during their studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Situations that relate to their social lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Employment</td>
<td>Situations that related to employment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Participants’ own personal beliefs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenarios</td>
<td>The ethical scenarios in the L5 Tutorials module (only relevant to the post-intervention questionnaire).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following graphs represent in general terms all of the participants’ responses to the qualitative questions. Overall, 6 participants (3%) did not respond to the first qualitative question, 17 participants (8.6%) did not respond to the second qualitative question and 96 participants (48%) did not respond the third qualitative question.

Figure 2.2: What does the term ‘ethics’ mean to you?

The first qualitative question asked the participants to describe what the term ‘ethics’ meant to them. The vast majority of responses (150 people, 76%) included reference to ‘morals’ and a sense of ‘right and wrong’ (Figure 2.2). Examples of typical responses included: “Morals right or wrong. How you go about something”, “Links into morals and personal beliefs”. A few responses referred to ethics with research, for example “Ensuring that you think logically about how a research study might affect another human or the physical landscape which you are studying”. These types of responses tended to be from level 6 students who had recently been through an ethical review process as part of the preparation for their dissertations. Other responses linked ethics to behaviour, for example “It is how you behave in situations and environments and how people interface with their peers” and a few responses referred to ethics being human rights.

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2 These responses include the responses for the pre-intervention tutorial group participants. The intervention and its impact are discussed in Section 3.
Some of the participant’s answers which came under the miscellaneous category appeared to be confused about the term ‘ethics’; “Where the person is from/ nationality. What their beliefs/customs are”.

**Figure 2.3: An example of an ethical issue you have previously studied**

![Graph showing number of responses by category](image)

The second qualitative question asked the participants to describe their previous studies of ethics. For this question human rights was the most commonly cited category (97 responses, 49%) (Figure 2.3). These responses referred to issues such as abortion, euthanasia, China’s one child policy and fair trade. Other responses referred to ethics within research. Psychology was frequently cited within these responses and participants mentioned experiments by researchers such as Milgram and Zimbardo as examples of research that they have studied. Both of these are extreme examples of research in which the harm suffered by participants has been widely documented in the media, and both are often used in introductory psychology courses as examples of ‘unethical research’. Participants who cited these did not go into any depth about the context in which they studied their work, so it is possible that they were cited because of the ‘word association’ between these researchers and the term ethics rather than having a detailed understanding of the ethical issues involved. Other responses made reference to political issues, such as the way in which aid is distributed after a natural disaster, for example “Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. How the more attractive tourist based areas were regenerated as quick as possible whilst most poor residential areas were left in the state after the hurricane struck”. Religious issues and animal rights were also included in a few of the participant’s answers. In general, the participant’s answers related to topics in which they had clearly studied ethics, but very few participants went into any detail about the ethical dimensions of these issues.

What was surprising considering the subject area was the relative absence of environmental issues identified as ethical by the respondents. Within a discipline which covers a range of topics with strong ethical elements, from sustainable development and global warming to social exclusion, the main examples which were identified came from students who identified development as an area of ethical concern. Although these issues are being discussed and explored at length it may be that tutors do not ‘label’ them as ethical concerns, and therefore students have not recognised them as such in this survey.
The third qualitative question asked participants to describe an ethical choice that they had made. As mentioned previously, 48% of the participants did not answer this question, suggesting that they found it very difficult to recognise a situation when they had faced an ethical dilemma or choice. The majority of responses referred to a choice that related to their own personal beliefs (37 responses, 19%) (Figure 2.4). Many examples referred to Fairtrade, for example “I buy Fairtrade chocolate and support the farmers” and other choices that the participant felt were ethical, for example “I chose not to do drugs”. Other frequently cited responses, which were placed in the ‘academic’ category referred to the choice of degree or university and more specifically the choice between human and physical geography, for example: “What to study at uni?”, “Which university to attend in relation to statistics and environment”, “Choosing between human and physical geography”. Although these are difficult choices, the ethical dimensions are less obvious and not explained. Other responses referred to social situations, often including the participant’s friends, and ethical issues that they have had to overcome in research for coursework. However, the majority of the answers to this question did not seem to directly reflect a dilemma or choice. Overall the third qualitative question demonstrated that there is much confusion surrounding ethics and that the participants found it difficult to identify ethical issues outside of their studies.

2.3 Interviews with staff
In order to contextualise the findings from the questionnaire we also conducted interviews with members of the academic staff in the department. These interviews focused on the staff members’ perceptions of ethics, including its relative importance, and how best to teach ethics to students at different stages in their development. Prior to conducting this section of the research several members of staff commented about their concerns that they should have an understanding of the philosophy of ethics prior to the interviews. Although this was not the case, in order to allay concerns and enhance the discussion in the meetings, it was decided to interview people in pairs. This enabled the participants to ‘bounce’ ideas off one another, and avoided the need for the researcher to prompt participants and consequently lead the interviewee in a particular direction. Broadly speaking the members of staff were divided into pairs related to their specialist research and teaching interests, predominantly along the lines of physical and human geography. In total four interviews were conducted with seven members of staff (one member of
staff was interviewed on their own). After the interviews were conducted summaries of the key points and ideas were written up. The findings from these interviews provide further context to the findings from the research with the students and are particularly important in considering the future development of ethics teaching in the department.

In general, all the members of staff who took part in the interviews felt, to some extent, that ethics are important within geography and that by the time they leave university, students should have some awareness of ethical issues. However, it was questioned by one member of staff exactly what role ethics have in a physical geography degree. The general consensus was that the teaching of ethics is already embedded in the curriculum, however it is not necessarily explicit and the term ‘ethics’ is not always used. For example, staff will often discuss ethical issues in terms of research when the students take samples or travel in order to conduct fieldwork, but they do not always refer to this as being ‘ethics’. This helps to explain the lack of clear geographical examples identified by students in the questionnaire.

The divide between physical and human geography became apparent particularly when staff were asked how relevant ethics were in a geography degree, with the majority agreeing that ethics were perhaps discussed more in relation to human geography rather than physical geography. However, one member of staff noted that in broader academic terms physical geographers have, in the past, been a bit dismissive of ethics but this is now changing and that this needs to be reflected in teaching.

There was a mixed response when members of staff were asked about personal ethics and whether or not they should be discussed as part of a geography degree. Two members of staff felt quite strongly that they there were already a part of teaching in that staff explicitly discuss issues such as plagiarism and they gave students the opportunity to peer assess each other. Whereas other issues such as ethics at work and professional awareness were discussed more implicitly, but still have an important role in student development. One member of staff commented that he did think it was important to discuss personal ethics with students but that members of staff also have to be careful that they did not impose their own personal values on students. Generally the consensus was that students should be well equipped to make their own choices.

A few suggestions were made with regards to how ethics could be more effectively embedded in the curriculum. Several members of staff suggested that ethics could be introduced earlier in the curriculum so that when students were planning their dissertations they could give ethical issues more consideration and hopefully this would help to shape their projects rather than have the students view ethics as a formality. Another suggestion was that a ‘root map’ would be useful to show what ethical issues are covered in each module which would help ensure continuation and progression as student progress through each level. Finally it was also suggested that ethics could be embedded and recognised as a key skill and hence monitored as part of a skills audit.

2.4 Summary
This section has explored the first three objectives of the project. The current ethical awareness of students has been shown to be variable between individual students, although not across different year groups. This is not to say that there is no ethical development as students go through their degrees, only that there was no significant difference between the three different cohorts who participated in this study. The quantitative element of the questionnaire enabled the classification of students into different groups. Although no students were categorised as Type A in Perry’s model, whereby they see the world in dualistic terms with clear rights and wrongs,
approximately half of the responses were classified as Type B. These students recognise that tutors want them to distinguish a world of multiplicity and relativism, but that they do not necessarily see these complexities themselves. The other half of the students who are classified as Type C are moving towards taking responsibility for their values and clearly recognising greater complexity. The qualitative responses however suggest a slightly different picture. When asked to put into words their understanding of ethics several students illustrated the discomfort with the notion through the content, clarity and length of their responses. The interviews with staff have contextualised some of the findings, particularly the lack of reference to geographical ethical examples. However, as approximately half of the students were classified as Type C in terms of their ethical development it would be expected that they should recognise ethical concerns, despite the direct reference to ethics in the teaching of these issues. This suggests that students may understand the complex nature of ethics but continue to have trouble identifying and articulating examples of ethics when it is not made explicit to them. Having analysed the general picture of ethical understanding and development in the department, we now move on to discuss the intervention and its impact.

3.0 Tutorial intervention: methodology and discussion

The previous section has outlined the current level of ethical awareness of students in the Department of Geography and Development Studies, the extent to which there is progression in ethical understanding across different years, and the attitudes of tutors in the department. This section addresses the fourth objective of the research in three ways: 1) it explains the establishment of a new strategy of ethical scenarios for teaching ethics in the Tutorials module at Level 5 of the Single Honours Geography programme; 2) it analyses the impact of this intervention on the ethical awareness of students; 3) it discusses the nature of the intervention itself and the effectiveness of this from the perspective of the students and staff involved.

3.1 The intervention

The Level 5 Tutorials module (GE5006) is now a well-established element of the Single Honours Geography programme, following on from an equivalent module at first year. Tutorial groups of 5-6 students are formed at the start of the year and they meet generally every two weeks. Each group is allocated the same tutor throughout the module and it is their role to facilitate reflection and focused inquiry (Hay & Foley 1998). There is a focus on debate and, at their most effective, exposure to a diversity of attitudes (Prager 1993). To encourage participation, students are provided with a tutorial brief containing questions and issues to think about roughly two weeks before each meeting. They are also provided with a copy of any readings when this is applicable; some tutorials require accessing information online instead. The module is taken exclusively by Single Honours Geography students (as opposed to being a cross-programme module), allowing for a strong geographical focus in its content. In general terms, the module is about the history and development of geography as an academic discipline, the defining features of the subject and its role in contemporary society, and the knowledge and skills that make geography and geographers distinctive. Each tutorial is assessed using detailed marking criteria provided to students and tutors at the start of the module. Students receive one-to-one feedback on their performance at a meeting with their tutor roughly halfway through the module and, again, at the end. For each student, the best five marks out of the seven tutorial meetings carry forward to contribute to the final module mark.

Performance in this module has generally been good, a reflection of the value of providing students with the opportunity to articulate their views in a small, supportive, group context.
Typically, marks tend to gradually improve as the module progresses as group members become more comfortable with each other and their tutor. End of module feedback has historically been generally positive too, although the nature of the content is often not considered to be as interesting as other level 5 modules. This may relate to the fact that this module overlaps human and physical geography content at a time when students have just chosen to specialise in one or other subdiscipline. It is also clear that students find the topics and readings challenging, especially in comparison to the equivalent Tutorials module at first year.

The ‘ethical student’ intervention was added to the module and context described above, with the consideration of ethical issues fitting in logically to the overall purpose of the module. However, in an attempt to facilitate a more extended engagement with critical thinking about ethics, a modified approach was taken to this topic compared to the others. Although, as with the other issues under consideration, discussions were ultimately focused in a single tutorial session (in this case the final meeting of the year – see Appendix 4 for the brief), the preparations were stretched over a much longer period. Specifically, students were provided with an ethical scenario every two weeks, usually at the end of a tutorial meeting, to consider and decide on the course of action that they would take in the circumstances described.

The process of devising the scenarios posed some interesting challenges. The primary goal was to encourage reflection on ethical issues but, in the process, there is the danger of choosing topics that might make some students uncomfortable, in turn undermining engagement. Ethical scenarios were constructed which, as far as the tutors knew, did not represent any direct experiences of students taking the module. However, there are clearly limits to the knowledge of the tutors in this respect. At worst, a student might be concerned that a scenario is actually ‘based on them’, despite reassurances offered to the contrary. The intention to make the scenarios appear realistic is not as straightforward as it might first seem. Although firmly situated within a student world and often associated with academic study in some way, the scenarios may not appear realistic if they do not resonate in some way with a student’s specific past or current experience or those of their peer group. Furthermore, in endeavouring to construct scenarios of growing complexity, perceived realism might be undermined as one difficulty is layered upon another and events ‘conspire against’ the student. Additionally, in terms of progression, what might appear a difficult ethical problem from a tutor’s point of view may be straight-forward to some students, and vice versa. In other words, overall there is a danger of imposing tutor perspectives about realism and difficulty, filtered through their own values and life experiences, on to the students.

With these challenges in mind a total of eight scenarios were devised and provided to the students (see Appendix 5 for each of the scenarios). Students were encouraged to use a standard reflection sheet (Appendix 6) to record their thoughts in relation to each scenario focusing, in particular, on their final decision, the rationale for it, and the degree of challenge that the scenario offered to them. It was intended that these notes would form the basis of the discussions in the final tutorial. Each scenario was fictitious but intended to present the students with circumstances that they might realistically encounter. Six of the scenarios provided options for the students to select from; two were open-ended. It was decided at an early stage that if a broad understanding of the importance of ethical decision-making was to be achieved, then the scenarios would need to embrace not only academic problems, but those that might be experienced in the social and professional lives of students too. Figure 3.1 plots the scenarios on to these three dimensions of student life, showing that often the scenarios deliberately encouraged consideration of the possible tensions between these different ‘worlds’. Furthermore, it was intended that the
scenarios would display two other features: chronology and progression. The first scenario was situated close to the start of the first year at university moving forward in time to a residential field course towards the end of year 1 in scenario 5. The three remaining scenarios were in year 2, finishing with a work placement-based dilemma towards the end of this year. Additionally, it was intended that the scenarios would gradually display a greater degree of challenge in terms of, for example, the range of issues that might have to be considered. As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the last scenario is the only one that overtly overlaps the academic, social and professional dimensions and, as such, it was designed to be the most challenging.

**Figure 3.1: The eight scenarios and the three student ‘worlds’**

As this was essentially the introduction of a new topic and the approach taken was different to the rest of the module (and the student experiences of first year tutorials), further support and clarification was provided in two full-group sessions which all students were required to attend. This happened initially in week 1 after the general module introduction. At this session, the rationale for the ethical student strand was provided and the first scenario was distributed as an example. As an early attempt to encourage debate, this scenario was considered by each student and then discussed within each tutorial group during the session, with students encouraged to compare their decisions and reasoning. Additionally, all the students were asked to complete a personal values-based exercise – mission, (role) models and mirror – which, it was hoped, would act as a useful reference point (‘baseline’) for them as they progressed through the module and reflected on their ethical choices. A further full-group session was held just before the Christmas vacation. The purpose then was to ‘take stock’ on progress, discuss scenario 5 and introduce five approaches to ethical decision-making: utilitarian, rights, justice, common good, and virtue (outlined in the section 1.1). These approaches are reiterated in the tutorial brief.
By the time of the second of these full group sessions, some ‘mixed messages’ were beginning to emerge about student reaction to this new strand of activity. On the one hand, discussions of the ethical scenarios at both sessions appeared lively, sometimes showing careful consideration of the factors involved and the consequences of particular courses of action. By contrast, the November Staff-Student Liaison Meeting revealed some reservations about the relevance of ethics to geographers and the module, which led the module leader to reinforce the rationale for this strand of activity in the December full group session. However, the poorer attendance at this second session might also have been an indicator of uneven, possibly growing polarisation of interest in the topic. These issues are addressed further in section 3.5.

The final tutorial (Appendix 4) was intended to bring all of this activity together. As well as facilitating discussion about the final scenario, students were encouraged to think about the scenarios as a whole, including consideration of which posed the greatest challenges and why, the approaches taken to solve ethical problems and the consistency of their decision-making.

3.2 Method of assessing the impact of intervention
The impact of the intervention was assessed in three ways. 1) The students participating in the Tutorials module were asked to complete the questionnaire at the beginning of the year alongside the students in the rest of their year group. When completing the questionnaire, the students taking the Tutorials module were provided with an envelope containing a unique PIN. The students were asked to enter this PIN in a space at the top of the questionnaire. They then sealed the envelope and put their name on the front of the envelope. At the end of the tutorials module the students repeated the questionnaire. The sealed envelopes were returned to the students so that they could put their unique PIN on the second questionnaire, so that their responses could be tracked anonymously. These PIN numbers were then destroyed. 2) A focus group was conducted with a group of 10 students who participated in the module. This reflected upon the ethical strand of activity, what the students got out of it and whether they thought it was an effective way of supporting them to learn about ethics. 3) A focus group was conducted with all the members of staff involved with the Tutorials module. This discussed the effectiveness of the teaching strategy and their perceptions of teaching ethics through this method. These members of staff did not participate in the interviews with staff, given that they had an opportunity to express their view points through the focus group.

3.3 Impact of the Tutorials module intervention: quantitative analysis of questionnaires
A total of 25 students out of the 30 who took the Tutorials module completed both the pre- and post-intervention questionnaire. Here the focus is on the MEQ scores. Note that when assessing for significant difference, only nonparametric tests have been used because the MEQ scale is an ordinal one.

The mean ethical score across all the levels at the start of the year was 37.21 and, as recognised earlier, these scores varied only to a small extent between levels. Variation between programmes was also minimal. For example, a Mann Whitney U test comparing the scores of the 25 Single Honours Geography students against a random sample of 25 Level 5 students from other programmes showed no difference at the 0.05 significance level (calculated value of 264.5 > critical value of 211).

The results from the post-tutorials questionnaire showed an overall increase in the ethical score of Single Honours Geography students, with the mean rising from 35.16 to 37.40. This is an
encouraging trend, which merits further analysis. Figure 3.2 displays the pre and post scores for each student, showing an increase for 17 of these students, with the score falling for only 6. The greatest increase for any individual student was 10 points. Whilst the highest score (44) remained the same across both surveys, the lowest score increased from 25 to 33.

Figure 3.2: The pre- and post-tutorial ethical scores of students who participated in Tutorials module

A Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Test was calculated to compare the two sets of scores, which showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the MEQ results before and after the tutorials module (calculated value of 61.5 < critical value of 73 at 0.05). Based on the MEQ scores at least it appears that the ethical scenarios activity did have a positive impact.

3.4 Impact of the Tutorial module intervention: qualitative analysis of questionnaires

Overall, the qualitative questions had a much better response rate for the post-intervention questionnaire compared to the initial, pre-tutorials, survey. In the pre-intervention questionnaire 4 out of 30 participants did not respond to the question about their previous studies of ethics and 15 out of 30 did not respond to the question which asked them to describe an ethical dilemma or choice which they had faced. In contrast, in the post-intervention questionnaire, the equivalent figures were only 2 and 3 participants respectively. This may suggest an increased level of understanding of ethics, or alternatively an increased understanding of what the tutors wanted them to say. As with the questionnaire across all three year groups, the responses were collated into relevant categories.

The first qualitative question asked the participants to describe what the term ‘ethics’ meant to them (Figure 3.3). In common with the questionnaire across all three years, in the pre-intervention questionnaire the most frequently cited response referred to ‘morals’ and ethics being the difference between right and wrong, with 18 (72%) of the responses falling into this category. For example “Morals. Whether something is right/wrong. Conflicts of interest”, “Whether something is considered to be morally right or wrong morally”. These responses showed a rigid view of ethics and did not allow for the complexities that are associated with the term. Other responses linked the term ‘ethics’ to behaviour; “How to act professionally in a given
situation/place”, and research “Looking after peoples well-being during a research experiment”. Once again, these responses tended to suggest that, when it comes to ethics, there is a clear distinction between what is right and what is wrong. Human rights were also mentioned by some of the participants; “Peoples rights” but little explanation was given as to why this was an ethical issue.

**Figure 3.3: What does the term ‘ethics’ mean to you?**

In the post-intervention questionnaire, the ‘morals’ category was still the most common (19 responses, 76%). However, the answers given tended to be more in-depth and demonstrated greater appreciation for complexity. For example, “What is morally right - your own beliefs and the best choice for others involved”. None of the post-intervention responses for the first question came under the miscellaneous category, thus demonstrating less confusion about the term ‘ethics’.

The second qualitative question asked the participants to describe their previous studies of ethics (Figure 3.4). Specific subjects that were cited included geography, psychology, philosophy and religious education. Topics which related to human rights, for example abortion and euthanasia, were the most commonly cited, with 17 participants (68%) making reference to this category in the pre-intervention questionnaire. Other responses included reference to research ethics, for example “During psychology AS level ethical issues such as consent, deception and protection from harm had to be considered”, and religious issues. A small number of participants made reference to political issues and animal rights.

The main difference between the pre and post-intervention questionnaires was the way in which responses were more spread out across the different categories. This could be evidence of a broadening of the participant’s understanding of ethics as they are able to recognise that ethics can relate to other topics. Five of the responses made a direct reference to the Tutorials module, for example “Scenarios 1-8 on the tutorial module”. Whilst this may suggest that the ethical intervention in the Tutorials module has had an impact on the these participants’ understanding of ethics, it could also be the case that these participants still have a limited awareness of ethics because they are unable to think of examples aside from the module that they have just finished.
In the pre-intervention questionnaire, there seemed to be much confusion with regards to the third qualitative question which asked participants to describe an ethical choice as many of the answers did not refer to a choice and, as mentioned previously, half the participants did not respond. The majority of the responses from those who did respond referred to a situation relating to their personal beliefs; “Buying non-fair trade products”, “How I travel to university. What is the right ethical choice to make. Environmental impact of different modes”. Other responses referred to academic situations; “Single honours physical or single honours human”, “Someone needed help with work but they started copying mine - had to choose whether to let them copy or not”. Some participants referred to specific research ethics, for example “When interviewing people during an assignment” but did not describe why these were a dilemma. Social situations were also included in some of the responses: “Friend being bullied”.

In general, the responses were much more detailed for the third question in the post-intervention questionnaire. Furthermore, the most common category cited changed from ‘personal’ to ‘academic’. None of these responses referred to the choice between physical and human geography as being an ethical choice and instead responses explained why the issues that they had faced where ethical decisions. Whilst only one participant referred directly to the Tutorials module, many of the responses included a dilemma similar to those featured in the Tutorials module, for example “If a group member didn’t go on a trip yet in your group and whether you share the raw data”, “Whether to cut my hours at work and have less money to spend time on my uni work”.

![Figure 3.4: An example of an ethical issue you have previously studied](image-url)
3.5 Impact of the Tutorial module intervention: focus groups

In the planning of the focus groups three central discussion themes were decided upon; the impact of the intervention on student understanding of ethics, opinions about the relevance of ethics and perspectives on the process of teaching used. Questions and topics for both focus groups were devised to ensure that similar themes would be covered and the data obtained from the focus groups would be comparable. Table 3.1 shows the themes that were covered in both the staff and student focus groups.

Table 3.1: Focus group themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Student Focus Group</th>
<th>Staff Focus Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has your understanding of ‘ethics’ changed as a result of the ethical scenarios and final tutorial? (If yes)How/in what way has your understanding of ethics changed? (If no) Why do you think this is?</td>
<td>Do you feel that the students understanding of ‘ethics’ has improved since they took part in the ethical tutorials?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have the ethical tutorials helped you to become more confident in discussing ethics? Why is this?</td>
<td>Have the students become more confident in discussing ethics since they took part in the tutorials? Why do you think this is?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have you thought about the ethical scenarios outside of the tutorial sessions?</td>
<td>Do you think the students thought about the ethical scenarios outside of the tutorial sessions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Did you relate to the ethical scenarios?</td>
<td>Do you think the students related to the ethical scenarios?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>How relevant do you think ‘ethics’ are in geography?</td>
<td>How relevant do you think ‘ethics’ are for students studying for a degree in geography?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How relevant do you think ‘ethics’ are in university?</td>
<td>Do you think staff should be involved in discussions with students about issues which may relate to the student’s personal lives?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How relevant do you think ‘ethics’ are in work?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How relevant do you think ‘ethics’ are in your personal life?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you feel about the way in which the ethical scenarios were</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduced?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you feel uncomfortable about discussing any of the scenarios?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you have a preference for the scenarios that had fixed options or</td>
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<tr>
<td>those that were open ended? Were the options too restrictive?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was there a particular scenario that stood out for you? Why was this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was the final session useful? Did the final tutorial help to bring</td>
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<tr>
<td>everything together?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you think about the ethical tutorials overall?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the way in which they were spread out help them to stay in the</td>
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<tr>
<td>back of your mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel that you needed more/less support in the two full group</td>
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<tr>
<td>sessions that the ethical strand was discussed?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think the scenarios were realistic?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you engage with the reading?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How do you feel about the way in which the ethical scenarios were</td>
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<tr>
<td>introduced?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you feel that the students needed more/less support in the ethical</td>
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<tr>
<td>sessions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What did you think about the scenarios?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was there a particular scenario that stood out for you? Why was this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the students appear to feel uncomfortable about discussing some of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>the scenarios? If yes, which ones? Why do you think this is?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was the final session useful for yourself and the students?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did you think the way in which the ethical tutorials were spread out</td>
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<tr>
<td>helped them to stay in the back of the student’s mind?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think the way in which the ethical tutorials were spread out</td>
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<tr>
<td>helped them to stay in the back of the student’s mind?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about the ethical tutorials overall?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Understanding**

In the staff focus group, there was a general consensus that the students engaged with the scenarios but the staff were unsure as to the impact the intervention had had on the students’ ethical awareness or understanding. The members of staff who had led the wider group sessions felt that the students’ understanding of ethics had changed in that they were able to apply different approaches to ethical decision making. However this does not necessarily mean that the way in which students approach an ethical decision has changed. The staff who were not involved in the group sessions felt that the students did enjoy discussing the different case studies that they were presented with, but did not engage with the wider reading, with one member of staff commenting that “I got the impression that they enjoyed the case studies, but they didn’t engage at all with the broader picture”.

The students who took part in the student focus group were split with regards to whether or not the tutorials had helped enhance their ethical awareness. Some said they felt that as they worked their way through the different scenarios and engaged with the wider literature their understanding and decision making process changed. However, other students felt that the scenarios had not had any impact at all on their ethical decision making process and that their understanding of ethics had not changed/improved; “I don’t think the way I think about ethics has changed at all”. When asked why this was the case the students replied that they did not see what the scenarios had to do with ethics. This suggests a continued lack of understanding as to what ethics is. Yet as the discussion evolved the students were able to recognise aspects of their personal lives that they were able to relate to ethics, with the most common example being their balance between work and studies. With regards to the students’ confidence in discussing ethics, some of the students who felt that their understanding had changed said that they had become less confident, because the scenarios had made them a bit unsure about how they would approach these situations in reality. This may in fact be an encouraging factor as it suggests
recognition of the challenging and contingent nature of ethical decision making. Others felt that they would be more confident because they were more capable of recognising an ethical issue. Those who felt the tutorials had had no impact on their understanding did not feel either more or less confident. One member of staff summed up their impression of the impact that the scenarios had had by stating “I think what has probably happened is the group is more polarised than at the start, so some have [an improved understanding of ethics] and some haven’t”.

Whether the students had discussed the scenarios with other people seemed to depend upon which tutorial group they had been in. One member of staff stated that

“a lot of them had actually spoken to other people about it outside of geography, they had made a conscious decision not to talk to one another in my group at least because they knew they had the opportunity to discuss them [scenarios] in the tutorial so they didn’t want to have the same view because they were concerned about being influenced by one another, which I thought was interesting in itself in terms of making ethical decisions”.

However other members of staff had very different observations:

“only two out of five of mine [students] talked to other people about them; one was their mum and one was a friend”, “my group did them all on their own apart from the last one but that was the one they had the most trouble with anyway”.

When the students were asked about this some of them said they had spoken to parents and friends, but the majority of the students who attended the focus group admitted to leaving the work for the tutorials to the last minute and therefore they had no time for discussion. One of the students pointed out that they had discussed it with other tutorials students outside of his group because the member of staff leading his group seemed unsure and he wanted to be clear that he was doing the right thing.

The staff believed that the students did seem to relate to the scenarios, although they pointed out the scenarios tended to be more about the ethics of being a student rather than the ethics of being a geographer. One member of staff stated that

“they could generally relate to most of the eight because obviously they are all students, they have these dilemmas that they have come across people they know have come across so rather than coming up with completely obscure scenarios I think having the experience did work quite well”.

Scenario 8 concerning discovering illegal pollutants entering the water course from a farmer’s land received a mixed response (Appendix 5). Some students felt quite strongly that because there were no direct consequences for them then it was hard for them to relate to the situation and make a decision. One student in particular said she found it impossible to relate to this situation because it was too farfetched “it was like, what else could possibly go wrong here?” Other students still found it hard to come up with a response but could relate quite strongly to the situation. One member of staff observed that some students ‘filled in the blanks’, by adding their own detail to the scenario, and that they used this additional information on which to base their decisions. Other students commented that they would need more information in order to make a decision for example, in Scenario 8 was the farmer polluting the water on purpose or by accident:
“In my group they always wanted to do something that would benefit other people and I think one of the reasons why they found the last scenario so difficult was because they couldn’t benefit everybody they were quite sort of self-sacrificing, it was fine if it hurt them but if it hurt anybody else they didn’t like it”.

The staff observed no discomfort from the students when discussing the scenarios and this was confirmed by the students who took part in the focus group. However, the students did admit that in their responses they were perhaps not entirely truthful when it came to deciding upon their action for the academic related ones: “the exam paper one, yeah I said I would hand it in, but in reality I would probably have a little peep”. Again, the staff focus group confirmed this with three of the five tutors confirming that the students had admitted to them that they had wrote what they thought was the right answer which was not necessarily what they would do in real life.

“Some of mine tried to relate them [the scenarios] to the models but one of them suggested, I don’t know if it falls under the banner of the five models, but a lot of them said they made their decisions based on what they thought was the right thing to do but if it came down to it in real life they probably wouldn’t have done that. So they were talking about this concept of like a realism approach”.

Although it was emphasised to the students that they would not be marked on the decisions they made, this did not stop students deciding to give the response they thought their tutor would want. The scenarios that the students had the most problems with were the ones that limited the possible decisions they could make with regards to the scenarios, “what I would have done wasn’t an option”. This perhaps demonstrates that the complexity of ‘ethics’ was appreciated by some students as they were able to identify that in many cases there are no straightforward decisions.

Relevance
One of the main issues that emerged in both the staff and student focus group was whether or not ethics should be part of a geography degree. The majority of the students in the focus group classed themselves as being physical geographers and felt quite strongly that ethics was not relevant in physical geography. They said they did not understand why they had to take part in these tutorials. One more confident student who felt that the tutorials were relevant asked these students why they thought this and cited several examples of when they thought ethics were relevant in physical geography. One of the students replied “well in physical geography ethics are things you just do, you don’t think about it you just know what the right thing to do is”. This suggests that this particular student has not recognised the complexities of ethics and ethical decision making, as they do not realise that different people have different values and that the ‘right thing to do’ is contingent upon the situation. In the staff focus group there was an interesting split of human and physical geographers. The members of staff who identified themselves as being physical geographers did feel that the study of ethics was more relevant to those studying human geography, however they did believe that ethics had some relevancy within physical geography:

“I would expect some of the physical geographers to have a grasp or an awareness of ethics such as when it came to trespassing when doing field work, taking samples from protected reserves and that kind of thing and maybe to do with data and missing data, but not necessarily a deep thought of ethics”.

Process
In terms of the practical issues that were discussed in the focus groups, the students felt that the different groups had been led in different ways and that their grasp of what the final tutorial was
about depended on which member of staff was leading them. Some students said they had not received the same level of guidance. The majority of the students said they had not done any of the wider reading and they could not understand why they had been given certain readings. This again was confirmed by the staff who said the students did not appear to have engaged with a lot of the reading beyond the scenarios.

3.6 Summary
This section has addressed the fourth objective of the research by implementing a new teaching intervention in the Tutorials module and assessing the impact of this on the ethical development of participating students. The ethical scenarios intervention does appear to have made some impact. Statistically there has been an increase in the ethical scores of individuals and the qualitative comments suggest greater understanding. However, there is evidence to suggest that some of the changes in qualitative comments may relate more to an attempt by students to say what they think tutors want to hear, not necessarily greater understanding or ownership of ethical decision making. Despite this change in a positive direction, the opinions of staff and students as to the effectiveness and, particularly, relevance of the ethical strand was variable. This primarily related to the distinction between human and physical geography, with physical geographers believing that ethics was less relevant to their subdiscipline.

4.0 Implications for enhancement of student experience and academic practice
The previous two sections have outlined the current level of ethical awareness of students in the Department of Geography and Development Studies and explained and discussed the impact of the intervention in the Tutorials module to enhance the ethical development of students. This section discusses the implications of these findings with the aim of addressing the fifth objective of the research: to develop a transferable model of curriculum design which focuses on the sequential development of critical ethical thinking skills. The arguments here apply both within the University of Chester and beyond (Appendix 7 shows the ways the findings from this project have been and will be disseminated). This section first discusses the broader implications of the findings before explaining the future plans for the ethical strand within the Tutorials module.

4.1 Implications of findings
The findings presented here indicate the current level of ethical development of the students in the department, and provide insights into how we might address enhancing student development in the future. The evidence suggests that although students have with some awareness of the complexity of ethical issues they are not all gaining greater understanding of the uncertain, variable, contingent nature of ethical issues. Significantly there is an uneven recognition of how different people have different perspectives on such issues, and how there are not always clear right or wrong decisions. Furthermore the findings of the questionnaire suggest that many students continue not to take ownership of their ethical code of behaviour, rather they seemingly put forward responses that they think tutors want to hear. This may also be reflective of a more general lack of confidence in their decision-making capacity and ability to arrive at an independent conclusion, a trait which is sometimes evident in undergraduate assignments. Either way, this finding has important implications as it suggests we still have some way to go in terms of developing well rounded ‘ethical’ students.

The Tutorials intervention is one way in which the ethical development of students has been enhanced. This has built upon the critical thinking approach to ethics discussed in section 1.1. It
has encouraged students to reflect upon their own position in relation to their code of behaviour and supported them in taking a critical approach to a series of ethical scenarios. As the findings have indicated overall this has been an effective intervention. However, there is much that we can learn from this first experience. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, more needs to be done to explain the relevance of ethics to the diverse range of students taking the Tutorials module. This not only involves the students but also the staff. The initial steps have already been made as the widespread involvement of tutors in this action research has raised awareness of ethics, with more connections already being made to the issue within different areas of the department. Yet, until those students who are most unconvinced that ethics is a part of geography begin to understand the relevance, then the basic requirement of recognising ethical issues will still be wanting.

The final aim of this research was to develop a transferable model of curriculum design which focuses on the sequential development of critical ethical thinking skills. This was a challenging target, for which some preliminary observations are made below, but further cross-disciplinary research and study is needed. It is evident that the teaching of ethics involves a number of inter-linked elements which offer varying degrees of challenge to both tutor and student. It can be argued that key elements to include in the curriculum are 1) subject-specific and more generic ethical issues; 2) consideration of personal values; 3) strategies to approach ethical problems; and 4) encouragement to reflect on, and articulate, individual decision-making in relation to ethical issues. All of these elements are needed to encourage the development of skilled ethical thinkers and should be a part of the curriculum in a sequential and progressive way. The department-specific research discussed in this report has identified that subject-specific ethical issues are regularly a part of the curriculum (point 1) however coverage of the other three elements is much less common.

While it is possible to recognise the importance of these four elements, the identification of a common cross-disciplinary chronology for their inclusion in the curriculum is difficult. It is important that in the earlier stages of their degree programmes, students are made aware of the ethical issues in their studies. As students appear to find the identification of ethical issues to be challenging, then it is important that where they are studying ethical issues this is made explicit. There is also a need to highlight where we address ethics at different points in the curriculum. Several useful ideas on how we might approach this in the department emerged during this research. The two most significant are: 1) a ‘root map’ of where ethical issues are covered in each module, and 2) recognising ethics as a key skill as part of a skills audit alongside other key skills.

It can be argued that the other three elements: encouragement to think about personal values; approaches to ethical problems and reflection on personal decision-making are more challenging facets of ethical thinking and so might be more appropriately included at Levels 5 and 6, although this will vary depending on the content and traditions of different academic disciplines. In some cases it might prove effective to refine existing reflective learning activities and assessments to incorporate an ethical thinking component.

As they progress into Levels 5 and 6 students should continue to be given a variety of opportunities to think and reflect upon ethical issues within their academic, professional and personal contexts to help them develop their skills for managing ethical decisions when they arise. It is, therefore, important to continue to develop learning opportunities, such as the Tutorials intervention, which enable students to think about and reflect upon a range of different
ethical issues. The Tutorials intervention designed here is transferable to other disciplines with minor adjustments, given that it generally focused upon ethical issues relevant to all students, not just geographers. It is important that we also continue to learn from other disciplines about how they teach ethics in order to develop a series of different ways of encouraging critical thinking about ethics within the different programmes in the department.

4.2 The future of the ethical strand in the Tutorials module
The same general approach to the teaching of critical thinking about ethics will be pursued in the 2011-2012 academic year. Continuity is considered important to assess the reaction of a different cohort of students to this initiative. However, based on the evidence collected during this project, a number of refinements to the teaching strategy are likely to be introduced:

- Removal of the choice options from most of the scenarios
- Some re-ordering / re-writing of the scenarios so that there is a greater emphasis on geographical problems in the earlier stages of the module
- Providing an opportunity in the first tutorial for tutors to check on progress and student understanding of the initial scenarios
- Greater involvement of physical geography tutors when the ethical strand is discussed in the full group sessions.

Some refinements to the module as a whole are also planned which should prove beneficial to the ethical strand of activity:

- Refining the module focus by placing less emphasis on the historical dimensions of geography and more on its contemporary significance
- Providing all the tutorial resources in week one so that students are collecting only the ethical scenarios during the module.

Furthermore, better guidance will be provided to tutors to ensure that consistent and clear messages are provided to the students during the module.

4.3 Future research
This research suggests that more work is needed to support our students to meet the graduate attribute of ‘Ethical, Social and Professional Understanding’. In an increasingly complex world this attribute is likely to become more significant. This research examined only one discipline, and the research evidence suggests that the nature of the ethical issues and ethical thinking required by graduates varies between disciplines (Lane & Schaupp 1989; Rooy & Pollard 2002). For example, the ethical issues pure scientists face when testing on human subjects or undertaking animal experiments are of a different nature from those dealt with by social scientists when interviewing or observing people, or those explored in literature when deciding whether a character made the appropriate ethical choice. However, many ethical issues are multidisciplinary in nature, for example assisted suicide may be studied from many different disciplinary perspectives, yet the ways in which students might approach and think about such topics may differ between disciplines. Hence there is a need for comparative studies which examine the ethical understanding and development of students in different disciplines and explore the range of effective strategies for teaching ethics in different disciplinary and institutional contexts.
5.0 References


Appendix 1

Teaching Ethics in Geography and Development Studies

This short questionnaire is part of a teaching and learning project being conducted in the Department of Geography and Development Studies. The project aims to improve how we teach ethics in the department. We invite you to complete this questionnaire, as your views would be very helpful to our research and will be used to help us understand how to support your learning. More information about the project is available on the Participant Information Sheet at the end of this questionnaire.

Your completion of this questionnaire is entirely voluntary. The information collected will be anonymous.

Information about you
Please tick next to the relevant information about yourself:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender:</th>
<th>Male [ ]</th>
<th>Age:</th>
<th>&lt;18 [ ]</th>
<th>18 [ ]</th>
<th>19 [ ]</th>
<th>20 [ ]</th>
<th>21 [ ]</th>
<th>&gt;21 [ ]</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Female [ ]</td>
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<td>Year:</td>
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Programme of study:
[ ] Single Honours Geography
[ ] Natural Hazard Management AND Geography
[ ] International Development Studies AND Geography
[ ] Combined Honours Geography AND (please indicate)
..........................................................................................................................................................
[ ] Natural Hazard Management AND (please indicate)
..........................................................................................................................................................
[ ] International Development Studies AND (please indicate)
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For geography students only:

Your geographical interests are:
Geography as a whole [ ]
Mainly physical geography [ ]
Mainly human geography [ ]
What does the term ‘ethics’ mean to you?
For example, what do you think of when you hear the term?

In your previous studies at university or school, please provide an example of an ethical issue you have studied:

“A dilemma is a situation in which a choice must be made between alternative courses of action or argument.”

Please provide an example of an ethical choice that you have made or dilemma that you have faced as part of your school or university related activities:
### Your Thoughts On Ethics

Please complete the following by putting an X in the box which represents the statement most close to your opinion **(one X per line)**. Please be honest about your views, there are no right or wrong answers, where you position yourself in relation to the statements reflects your personal perspectives on different issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Definitely my opinion</th>
<th>More or less what I believe</th>
<th>Neither statement represents my view</th>
<th>More or less what I believe</th>
<th>Definitely my opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moral questions have absolutely right answers.</td>
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<td>Personal moral values are the same forever.</td>
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<tr>
<td>People cannot choose their values because values are either right or wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not doubt that my values are the right values to have.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is not my place to make moral choices, because right answers have been found already by others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A good moral answer is short and simple, because you know the right answer.</td>
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There are very few absolutely right answers in the world and answers to moral questions are not one of them.

Personal moral values need to be reconsidered from time to time.

I am committed to a set of values I have chosen for myself.

I need to commit myself to a set of values even when I am uncertain whether they will always be the right values to have.

When I have a moral problem I try to think the answer through myself.

You cannot have a good moral answer without arguments to support it, because moral answers are never straightforward.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I believe we can always make a judgement whether actions are right or wrong and these rules do not change.</th>
<th>When we make moral decisions, the best we can do is to decide what is right as far as we can tell in different situations.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think discussing moral problems is beneficial for me unless a right answer can be found at the end.</td>
<td>Discussing values with other people gives me a beneficial opportunity to reflect on my values, even when there is no agreement in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t enjoy discussing moral problems unless the teacher can give the right answer in the end.</td>
<td>I enjoy discussing my values in the class even when we cannot agree on one right answer in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think teachers should assess my moral arguments if they do not know the right answers yet.</td>
<td>It is important that teachers assessing moral arguments look for logical structure and good reasoning rather than a particular answer.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
This research will inform the development of how the Department teaches ethics in the future by exploring student understandings of ethics at different stages in the degree programme. As part of the second year Tutorials Module we are introducing a new strand of ethical discussion to see if this supports students’ ethical development. In the light of these findings we plan to reflect on the whole programme to enhance the teaching of ethics during the degree. The first stage of this research is to gather baseline information by use of a questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your views of ethics and your own ethical development.

Why have I been chosen?
All the students in the department are being invited to answer this questionnaire.

Do I have to take part?
Completion of the questionnaire is entirely voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not provide any advantage or disadvantage to you. We would, however, greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

What will happen to me if I agree to take part?
This is a paper-based questionnaire which students in all year groups will be asked to complete at the beginning of the year in class (or in their own-time if they are unable to attend the class and wish to participate). Students taking the second year Tutorials Module will be asked to complete a second version of this questionnaire at the end of the course. It is expected that the questionnaire should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire requires you to consider ethical dilemmas or decisions you have made in the past and your reasoning behind your decisions. Your completion of the questionnaire will be taken as your consent to participate in the research.

Why do you ask me what programme I am studying?
We are trying to understand the influence of different programmes upon ethical understanding and ethical development. As such it would be useful to know which programme you are studying. However, if you do not wish to identify your programme, you do not have to.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This research is being funded by the University of Chester’s Learning and Teaching Institute.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The results will be analysed by the researchers detailed below. When any results and findings of this research project are presented or reported to others inside or outside of the University, your anonymity is guaranteed. Reference to specific people, who you may mention, will also be removed from any quotations that are used.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
Yes. Do not write your name on the questionnaire. For second year students taking the Tutorials Module only: in order to evaluate the impact of changes in teaching to support students’ ethical development we need to be able to match questionnaires completed before and after new teaching initiatives. In order to trace students’ ethical progression anonymously you will be issued with an envelope containing a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Please note you PIN on the top of the questionnaire and then seal the envelope and write your name on the front. This envelope will be returned to you when you complete the subsequent questionnaire so that you may write the same number on both questionnaires. This will enable us to trace individual student’s progression anonymously.

What if something goes wrong?
We recognise that sometimes recalling ethical dilemmas and decisions may cause distress. If this is the case, and you wish to talk about this to anyone, please contact Student Counselling (Tel: 01244 511550 or E-mail: student.counselling@chester.ac.uk). If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this research, please contact Professor Jethro Newton, Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement, University of Chester, Email: j.newton@chester.ac.uk, Tel: 01244 511938.

Who may I contact for further information?
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01244 511236

Thank you for your interest in this research.
Appendix 2

Results: The percentage of MEQ responses in different positions for each pair of statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement 1</th>
<th>Graph of Responses</th>
<th>Statement 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is not my place to make moral choices, because right answers have been found already by others.</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Graph of Responses" /></td>
<td>When I have a moral problem I try to think the answer through myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Graph of Responses" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal moral values are the same forever.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal moral values need to be reconsidered from time to time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Graph of Responses" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t think discussing moral problems is beneficial for me unless a right answer can be found at the end.</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Graph of Responses" /></td>
<td>Discussing values with other people gives me a beneficial opportunity to reflect on my values, even when there is no agreement in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average 4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statement 1

I don’t think teachers should assess my moral arguments if they do not know the right answers yet.

Average 4.0

I don’t enjoy discussing moral problems unless the teacher can give the right answer in the end.

Average 4.0

A good moral answer is short and simple, because you know the right answer.

Average 3.9

Statement 2

It is important that teachers assessing moral arguments look for logical structure and good reasoning rather than a particular answer.

Average 4.0

I enjoy discussing my values in the class even when we cannot agree on one right answer in the end.

Average 3.9

You cannot have a good moral answer without arguments to support it, because moral answers are never straight forward.
Statement 1

I believe we can always make a judgement whether actions are right or wrong and these rules do not change.

People cannot choose their values because values are either right or wrong.

Moral questions have absolutely right answers.

Statement 2

When we make moral decisions, the best we can do is to decide what is right as far as we can tell in different situations.

I am committed to a set of values I have chosen for myself.

There are very few absolutely right answers in the world and answers to moral questions are not one of them.
I do not doubt that my values are the right values to have.

I need to commit myself to a set of values even when I am uncertain whether they will always be the right values to have.
### Appendix 3

**Outline of the nine original Perry (1999) positions of ethical development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Short description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1. Basic Duality</td>
<td>Reality with no uncertainty or diversity, belief in absolute answers and authorities, obedience instead of responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Multiplicity pre-legitimate</td>
<td>Perception of diversity, but classified as unwarranted confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Multiplicity sub-ordinate</td>
<td>Diversity and uncertainty accepted, but classified as temporary in a search for absolute answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>4. Multiplicity correlate or relativism subordinate</td>
<td>First attempt to accommodate diversity and uncertainty with the expectation to do the right thing either by accepting no answers as truth-bearing or by subordinating to authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Relativism correlate, competing, diffuse</td>
<td>Revolution through the inability to assimilate uncertainty and the existence of absolute answers, everything becomes relativistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Commitment foreseen</td>
<td>Awareness of the need of orientation in a relativistic world, experimentation with different methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>7. Initial commitment</td>
<td>Initial commitment to moral values in response to threat of identity loss and disorientation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Orientation in implications of commitment</td>
<td>Experience with commitment and responsibility, time of personal choices of how to fulfil perceived responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Developing commitment</td>
<td>Confirmation of identity within situations of multiple responsibilities, commitment seen as an ongoing activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: adapted from Clarkeburn et al. (2003: 446)
Appendix 4

GE5006  
Tutorials module

Tutorial 7: Making ethical decisions  
(3 and 10 March, 2011)

Introduction

The final tutorial brings to a conclusion the activities related to ethics which run through the whole of the module.

From October 2010 to February 2011, you will be presented with a total of eight case studies (scenarios) which you must reflect on and decide upon the course of action that you would take in the circumstances described. To introduce the approach that is being taken, the first of these ethical scenarios was given out in the full group session on 7 October and discussed as a group then. At the conclusion of the session, the second scenario was distributed for you to consider in your own time, with a further scenario distributed at the end of each tutorial session. Each scenario is also stored on IBIS once it has been distributed in class. The full group session on 9 December will provide an opportunity to review progress with the ethical scenarios considered so far.

To help build up some preparatory notes for this tutorial and help you answer the questions below you are required to complete the recording pro-forma attached to each scenario. A further copy of this pro-forma is attached here for information.

Please also read the short extract available at:  
http://www.scu.edu/ethics/practicing/decision/framework.html

Questions

Considering the final ethical case study (scenario 8), distributed at the end of your last tutorial meeting:

1. What course of action have you decided to take and why?

Considering ALL of the scenarios that you have been presented with during the module:

2. For you, which was the most difficult scenario to decide on the most appropriate course of action? Why do you think this was?

3. To what extent have you found yourself discussing the scenarios with other people? Have you found that you are swayed much by other people’s views?

4. In the article above (and in the full group session on 9 Dec), five approaches to resolving ethical dilemmas are presented: Utilitarian, Rights, Justice, Common Good, and Virtue. Have you consciously or unconsciously adopted any of these approaches whilst deciding on the most appropriate course of action for particular scenarios? Can you think of any other approaches to resolving ethical dilemmas?

5. Do you feel that you’ve been consistent in your decision-making in relation to the scenarios?
6. You completed the 3M exercise in the first session of the module (7 Oct). This encouraged some self-reflection using three headings: mission, (role) models and mirror. A digital copy of this pro-forma is available on IBIS if you need it. Would you now amend your responses to this exercise in light of how you have responded to the various ethical scenarios?

(CR/RH, Dec 2010)
Appendix 5

Scenario One

Year One: 4 weeks into the First Term

Outline
It is your first few weeks at university. You have been settling in reasonably well however, you still do not feel entirely at home in the unfamiliar environment.

You have an essay due in one week’s time. The subject of this essay draws on ideas from lectures and activities in a particular module’s teaching sessions.

One of the new people you have met since starting university has missed 3 weeks of teaching sessions. They came for the introduction but nothing else in this particular module. Consequently they have access to the PowerPoint slides but not the additional notes from the tutor or the in-class activities.

This person has now asked if they could borrow your lecture notes to help them with the assignment. You haven't had that many conversations with this person, but you keep bumping into them on nights out and they are always good for a laugh.

Generally you get on well with this individual. However, you have recently heard that they borrowed someone else’s work a couple of weeks ago and forgot to return it.

Options
You have one of two options in the situation:

1) To share your lecture notes with this person.
2) To not share your lecture notes with this person.

Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision. What was it that led you to your specific option?

Further reading
Note: This book does not talk directly about ethics. Rather it discusses different practical skills for studying geography. Chapters on for example time management may be relevant to thinking through some of your options.
Scenario Two

Year One: 2 weeks after the Christmas holidays

Outline
You are working in a group of 4 to produce a poster. You were put into groups before the Christmas holidays and have met with two of your group members five times to divide work, plan the poster and to do the work as a team.

The fourth person has only attended the second meeting of the group. They don’t live in Chester and have to commute in. Consequently it has been very difficult to arrange a time when all four people could meet. This was additionally complicated by the three weeks of the Christmas holidays.

Although the fourth person offered to work on their part of the poster in their own time and e-mail this to the group, the other two members of the group felt that this was unfair. They believed that everyone should meet together to work on the poster, especially as the module leader has placed a lot of emphasis on groups working collaboratively. Since then the fourth person has done very little.

Your group has finished the poster and has been given the group marking form. The other two members of the group think that this person should be marked down for the lack of work on the poster. Do you agree with them?

Options
You have one of three options:

1) To go along with the rest of the group and mark the person down the maximum amount to receive 80% of the mark.
2) To argue for the fourth person’s mark to be docked, but to a smaller extent.
3) To argue for an equal division of the mark across all members of the group.

Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision. What was it that led you to your specific option?

Further reading
Note: Have a look for group work in the index. This may be further thoughts on how to manage working with others, and the issues which may arise.

Scenario Three  

*(Distributed in tutorial no. 1: 21 or 28 October 2010)*

**Year One: Early February**

**Outline**

You have a part-time, weekend, job working nine hours in a busy clothes shop in town. You knew that it was always likely that you’d need to earn some money during your studies and you got this job during the run-up to Christmas when the shop was busier. You felt from the start that your line manager seemed to have a positive view of your work and the way you dealt with customers and this was confirmed when you were kept on after Christmas. You find the job fairly easy but dull, however the money is proving absolutely essential not least after ‘over-spending’ whilst back at home during the Christmas vacation.

Four other people generally work with you on the shop floor each weekend. Two of these are also students, one in the same Department as you, taking some of the same modules during the first year. You get on well enough with all of these people, though you have some doubts about their commitment to do a ‘good job’ at times. They’ve all worked at the shop longer than you and seem to have some ‘history’ with your manager. Though you’re not sure exactly why, there is clearly some animosity between your work colleagues and your manager, and that this seems to be getting worse.

You hear your colleagues talking about a Facebook group which has been set up, seemingly with the intention of ‘bashing’ the manager. You visit the site, which includes degrading comments and edited photographs making fun of them. From what you know of your manager, and their interest in computing, you doubt very much that they are aware of the Facebook group.

**Options**

You have one of four options:

1) Ignore it
2) Speak to your work colleagues about the issue
3) Discuss the issue with your manager
4) Report the issue to someone senior in the company

**Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it.** In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

*To be completed by tutorial no. 2: 11 or 18 November 2010.*

**Further reading**

Castells, M. (2001) *The Internet Galaxy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. This might be a bit heavy in places but flicking through it might help you question the role of the internet and how ‘ethical’ it is in more general terms.


Scenario Four
(Distributed in tutorial no. 2: 11 or 18 November 2010)

Year One: March

Outline
You are going through your notes from a previous lecture when you stumble across an additional piece of paper slotted between two of the hand outs you were given. This piece of paper turns out to be an exam paper dated for the upcoming summer exams.

The exam is for a module in the department that you are not taking. However, one of the people you are living with in university accommodation is taking the module. You have heard rumours that the assessment and feedback for this module has been poor. The assessment briefs have been vague and so far feedback on assessed work has been minimal and non-specific. Despite their hard work you are aware your housemate has been struggling with this subject and doesn't understand what they need to do to improve.

They have tried to see the tutor who is running the module. However the tutor lives some distance from the university, and so often works from home. They insist that students see them in their office hours, however these often clash with another module your housemate is taking and consequently they continue to struggle with the module.

At this stage it is looking likely that your housemate will fail the module. They have already made the decision not to continue with this topic area in their second year when selecting their optional modules. They intend to focus on topics that they are more confident and comfortable with. However, they will not be able to continue into the next year until they have passed the module.

Options
You have one of four options:
1. Pretend you haven't seen the paper and dispose of it
2. Tell the tutor and return the script
3. Explain what has happened and hint to your housemate what is on the exam
4. Give your housemate the exam paper, with the promise that they will not share it with other students on the course

Remember to still use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

To be completed by tutorial no. 3: 25 November or 2 December 2010.

Further reading
Scenario Five

(Distributed in tutorial no. 3: 25 November or 2 December 2010)

Year One: Mid-May– Residential field course

Outline
On the second full day of the field course, the focus has been the processes of long shore drift along a coastline. Following the introduction in the first part of the morning, a number of groups of five students were formed, each with responsibility for collecting data from different coastline locations in the area. Each group was dropped off towards the middle of their study section and pick-up times were arranged. The members of each group then fanned out individually in each direction from this central point with the aim of collecting beach sediment samples from designated locations on a provided map.

Your group follows the same pattern as everybody else and after about 90 minutes, everyone has returned to the pick-up point. As you discuss progress with your colleagues, you realise that you’ve collected your sample from the wrong location – you seem to have gone to a location around half a mile away from the correct point! To make matters worse, you’ve only collected three samples from the beach profile, when five were required. You are frustrated at your mistake but there is no time to rectify it before the pick-up.

Back in the lab at the field centre you are the last in your group to sieve and analyse your sample. By this time, all the other group members have entered their figures into a spreadsheet and you see a clear trend in the data which is indicative of long shore drift. Glancing at the results of some of the other groups you see similar trends – everything seems to be working as the tutor had predicted. You know already your sample is flawed both in terms of location and size. Your group’s findings and the wider project for that day are in danger of being undermined. Everyone’s figures have to be used to ensure statistical validity – without your data the sample size will be too small.

You note that it’s relatively easy to predict what the results from your sample would show if they had been collected correctly. Moreover, you are confident that you understand your data collection errors, including identifying the collection marker post that you had previously missed, and would definitely do everything correctly if given another chance in the future.

Options
For this tutorial there are no specific options to choose from. Rather you need to decide how you would proceed in this situation. You will have the opportunity to discuss this further in the full group session on 9\textsuperscript{th} December 2010.

Remember to still use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

To be completed by group class session on 9\textsuperscript{th} December 2010.

Further reading
Scenario Six
*(Distributed in tutorial no. 4: 13 or 20 January 2011)*

**Year Two: Fresher’s week**

**Outline**

It is the beginning of your second year at university. You have just received your timetable for the upcoming year and discovered that a double module that you have selected is scheduled for two, 3 hour, teaching sessions on both Thursday and Friday mornings.

Over the summer you had been fortunate to get a job working in a local club. This was much needed as you had exhausted your student loan and were some way into your student overdraft at the beginning of the summer. You practically worked full time at the club over the summer months, however having had a short holiday with some friends from home, you now have very little money left. You need to continue to work as you require the extra money. Unfortunately because there are a number of people who have been working at the club for longer, they have first option over which nights they work, and consequently the nights you have been offered are Wednesdays and Thursdays.

As the club does not close until 3am, after closing the club and cleaning up, realistically you do not get home until 4am at the earliest. With long teaching sessions on Thursday and Friday mornings starting at 9am you recognise that it would be difficult for you to maintain your attendance at these sessions.

It is essential that you work and have some financial income and, indeed, you quite like your current job because it doubles as part of your social time as your friends frequently come to the club, and the job is relatively well paid. You know that it would be difficult to find another job now that all the other students have come back from the summer holidays and taken a lot of the part-time jobs in the area.

You have three weeks from the start of term in which you may change your modules. You’re really interested in the double module on the Thursday and Friday morning and see its relevance to your future career plans, but you fear you may struggle to concentrate on account of your lack of sleep the night before. You have looked at the department timetable and seen that you could swap to another module which is taught at the beginning of the week, but you do not find this subject particularly interesting.

**Options**

You have one of three options:

1) Stick with your current job and current module. (To collect Scenario 7a)
2) Leave your current job, try to find another one, and stick with your current module. (To collect Scenario 7b)
3) Stick with your current job and change your current module. (To collect Scenario 7c)

**Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it.** In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

*To be completed by tutorial no. 5: 27 January or 3 February 2011.*

**Further reading**

Scenario Seven (a)

(Distributed in tutorial no. 5: 27 January or 3 February 2011)

Year Two: End of November

Outline
At the beginning of the year you decided to **stick with your current job and maintain the modules** that you were interested in, despite the clash of timing with your work. You have continued to work on Wednesday and Thursday nights. As Wednesday is such a big student night you often find yourself getting home even later than you had expected, nearer to 5am. Furthermore with the knock on effects of Wednesday night and, when you’ve made it, Thursday morning, after you’ve finished work in the early hours of Friday morning you are exhausted. You managed to keep your attendance at the first couple of weeks’ lectures, but your attendance has been dwindling more recently. As a consequence of your absence you are starting to recognise that you do not fully understand the key aspects of the module.

An essay assignment is now looming and you need to include key ideas from the module so far in this assignment. You have found a useful website which seems to cover most of the key issues you don’t have information on, only without having attended the teaching sessions you are struggling to put it into your own words. You feel you have a general understanding of the topic, but the technicalities and finer details of the topic are lost on you. Without the information you have found online, you think you will struggle to complete the essay and, now, unfortunately time has got away from you and it is due in the following day (Thursday). As usual you are working tonight (Wednesday) and need to get the essay finished. You have tried a few times to write up the key ideas from the web site in your own words, but you just don’t know whether you have the meaning correct.

Options
You have one of two options:

1) To persevere and try to put the ideas into your own words.
2) To copy word-for-word key sections of the text from the web site

Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

To be completed by tutorial no. 6: 10 or 17 February 2011.

Further reading

Scenario Seven (b)
*(Distributed in tutorial no. 5: 27 January or 3 February 2011)*

**Year Two: End of November**

**Outline**
At the beginning of the year you decided to leave your current job and look for a new one in order to maintain the modules that were interested in. It has been a challenge to find a new position. However, after seven weeks of term you were finally offered a job working at a shop in the run up till Christmas. Having not been working for several weeks you are in need of as many hours as you can get to sort out your finances, with Christmas coming up and your next month’s rent due. This has meant that over the last few weeks you have missed several teaching sessions in order to work at the shop during weekdays.

An essay assignment is now looming and you need to include key ideas from the module so far in this assignment. You have found a useful website which seems to cover most of the key issues you don’t have information on, only without having attended the teaching sessions you are struggling to put it into your own words. You feel you have a general understanding of the topic, but the technicalities and finer details of the topic are lost on you. Without the information you have found online, you think you will struggle to complete the essay and, now, unfortunately time has got away from you and it is due in the following day (Thursday). You have tried a few times to write up the key ideas from the web site in your own words, but you just don’t know whether you have the meaning correct.

**Options**
You have one of two options:

1) To persevere and try to put the ideas into your own words.
2) To copy word-for-word key sections of the text from the web site

*Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it.* In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

*To be completed by tutorial no. 6: 10 or 17 February 2011.*

**Further reading**

Scenario Seven (c)
(Distributed in tutorial no. 5: 27 January or 3 February 2011)

Year Two: End of November

Outline
At the beginning of the year you decided to change your modules so that they did not clash with your job. Although you have been attending the teaching sessions on the new modules you are finding the subject quite boring. As such you find it difficult to do the further reading. As a consequence of your lack of interest in the subject you are starting to recognise that you do not fully understand the current topic.

An essay assignment is now looming and you need to include key ideas from the module so far in this assignment. You have found a useful website which seems to cover most of the key issues you don’t have information on, only without having done the extended reading you are struggling to put it into your own words. You feel you have a general understanding of the topic, but the technicalities and finer details of the topic are lost on you. Without the information you have found online, you think you will struggle to complete the essay and, now, unfortunately time has got away from you and it is due in the following day (Thursday). As usual you are working tonight (Wednesday) and need to get the essay finished. You have tried a few times to write up the key ideas from the web site in your own words, but you just don’t know whether you have the meaning correct.

Options
You have one of two options:
1) To persevere and try to put the ideas into your own words.
2) To copy word-for-word key sections of the text from the web site

Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it. In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

To be completed by tutorial no. 6: 10 or 17 February 2011.

Further reading

Scenario Eight
(Distributed in tutorial no. 6: 10 or 17 February 2011)

Year Two: April-May of the second year

Outline
You have selected the work placement module for the final weeks of the second year. Like all students who have chosen this module, you are working full-time for an organisation for five weeks, beginning mid-April. You need to produce a report reflecting on your experiences by the end of May. This will constitute a key part of the assessment for the module, along with an evaluation provided by your employer which is sent to the University.

You requested a work placement with an environmental theme, ideally working outdoors. The University has organised a placement for you with a private environmental consultancy firm in the local area. Although asked previously, this is in fact the first time the organisation has agreed to have a University of Chester placement student working for them.

You are particularly pleased with this placement opportunity, not least because you felt that the interview for the placement was quite a challenging one and there seemed some other good students who wanted this placement too. You’re pleased that you have been given a data collection project to complete during the placement based on a topic you are interested in. It links to some of your future career plans and, moreover, the organisation has already hinted that there may be further (paid) opportunities with them during the summer and possibly a project which could form the basis of your final year dissertation.

The project is based in the upland zones of two river catchments in an Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). The work involves collecting repeated water quality samples from prescribed locations within the two areas over a three week period. The particular focus is the extent to which farming activities are adhering to the requirements of the ESA, which can be partly assessed by studying pollutant levels in the water. At the end of the placement, there will be a formal meeting between all the key stakeholders affected by the project (including Natural England and local farmers) at which you will be required to present your findings.

The placement begins well and the organisation is very supportive and provides clear guidance on the data collection methods and how the samples should be analysed back in their laboratory. After a few initial teething problems, you soon begin to carry out the work effectively and efficiently. You are particularly pleased that local farmers have been helpful in providing access to the data collection sites, indeed often helping you find these locations in the first place. One of the unexpected benefits of the placement has been how it has enhanced your understanding of upland livestock farming and its pivotal role in maintaining the traditional look of the countryside landscape. You have developed an admiration for the hill farming community, working on the margins of production and earning a living in very challenging circumstances. You have got to know one of the longstanding farming families in the area very well, particularly after they kindly provided you with somewhere to stay for the night after the vehicle you were using broke down late one afternoon. Over an evening meal in the farmhouse, the discussions turned to the financial challenges that hill farming faces. It seems that this farm, like many of the other smaller farms in the area, is close to bankruptcy and a relatively small setback could undermine its viability for good.

As you approach the end of your data analysis, you begin to see some worrying trends in the data. Clearly the pollutant levels in some streams feeding the rivers are appreciably above the recommended levels. In the absence of other potential sources of pollution, three farms in particular appear to be the source of the poor water quality. You are aware that Natural England tends to impose quite severe financial penalties on
offending farmers when pollutant levels exceed the maximum threshold. One of three problem farms you have identified is the one at which you took refuge just a few days previously.

It’s now one week until you have to complete your work and present the key findings to the stakeholder meeting.

**Options**

For this tutorial there are no specific options to choose from. Rather you need to decide how you would proceed in this situation and this will be discussed in the final tutorial on either 3 or 10 March (see the brief for tutorial no.7).

**Remember to use the pro-forma to record your decision and the reasons for it.** In making your choice you need to think through the process as to why you came up with your final decision.

*To be completed by tutorial no. 7: 3 or 10 March 2011.*

**Further reading**

Natural England information on Environmentally Sensitive Areas:

Rural watchdog highlights need to tackle poverty amongst farming households:
## Appendix 6

**Ethical scenarios: recording sheet**

(please complete one sheet for each scenario)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical scenario number:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief details of the scenario:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What was your final decision?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why did you decide to do this? On what grounds can you justify your course of action?</th>
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<tr>
<th>Was this a difficult dilemma for you to resolve?</th>
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</table>

Continue on a separate sheet if necessary

*A digital copy of this pro-forma is available in the module’s online learning area on IBIS.*
Appendix 7

Dissemination

The project has been disseminated within the university and nationally, and we have applied successfully to present at an international conference. The following presentations have been, or will be presented:

One presentation has been delivered within the University:

One workshop has been delivered within the University:

One presentation has been delivered externally:

One conference paper has been peer reviewed and accepted:

Additionally, two articles are planned for submission; one to the Journal of Geography in Higher Education and the Journal of Academic Ethics.
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