

Secondary curriculum

General structure

Each year begins with an Introductory Topic which introduces students to the fundamental elements of ethical inquiry and the Primary Ethics Guidelines for Discussion. Topics are then sequenced in two sets; one to be taught in odd years, and the other to be taught in even years. At the end of every term, there is a Term-Break Lesson which provides students with an opportunity to reflect on the various ethical issues considered that term and how well the class has been working together to explore those issues.

Stage 4 (2022 – even year) topic overviews and sequencing

Topic 1: Role models

Practical Reason

Students consider what makes a good or bad role model, how they might choose role models for themselves, and how role models can be used to help make decisions in life.

Topic 2: Who wants to live forever?

Future and Technology

Students consider the potential of new and future medical technologies to radically extend human lifespan, and how this may change society and individual lives for better or worse.

Topic 3: Friendships

Life, Value and Meaning

Students consider the value that friendships and different kinds of friends bring to our lives, and the influence of peer pressure. They are also introduced to the first Primary Ethics Discussion Move: Giving examples and counter-examples.

Topic 4: Stewardship [working title]

Society and Culture

Students consider what responsibilities we have to conserve the environment, including considering Indigenous conceptions of the environment and our relationship with it. They are also introduced to the second Discussion Move: Working out the implications.

Topic 5: Belonging and community [working title]

Life, Value and Meaning

Students consider how a sense of membership in different communities might contribute to overall self-conception and value in life.

Topic 6: Why won't you listen to me?

General Ethical Theory

Students consider whether it is unfair to not listen to or believe what children and teenagers have to say. They are also introduced to the third Discussion Move: Checking for understanding.

Topic 7: Giving and accepting apologies

General Ethical Theory

Students consider reasons for apologising, what makes a good or bad apology, and whether groups of people sometimes need to apologise, including for historic injustices.

Topics 8 to 10: To be determined

These topics are still in the early stages of development.

Stage 4 (2023 – odd year) topic overviews and sequencing

Topic 1: You're not the boss of me

Life, Value and Meaning

Students consider how much control children and teenagers should have over their own lives, and who should have authority to limit their freedoms.

Topic 2: Life under COVID-19

Society and Culture

Students consider various ethical issues that everyday people have faced during the pandemic, including hoarding, lockdowns, social isolation, and more broadly government restrictions on freedom.

Topic 3: Truth and media [working title]

Society and Culture

Students consider the relationship between truth and media, and the why, what and how of misinformation. They are also introduced to the first Primary Ethics Discussion Move: Giving examples and counter examples.

Topic 4: Happiness

General Ethical Theory

Students consider what it means to be happy, and explore some ethical issues that arise from attempts to maximise global happiness. They are also introduced to the second Discussion Move: Working out the implications.

Topic 5: Welcome to our robot overlords

Future and Technology

Students consider the increasingly pervasive use of algorithms in our lives, and how we might deal with a future where artificial intelligences have surpassed human capabilities.

Topic 6: 'Winning' a conversation? [working title]

General Ethical Theory

Students consider the aim of discussion and how a community of inquiry is different from debating. They are also introduced to the third Discussion Move: Checking for understanding.

Topic 7: Yuck! Does it matter if something is disgusting?

General Ethical Theory

Students consider the experience of disgust, what people find disgusting, and whether finding something disgusting is evidence that it is morally wrong.

Topic 8: Thinking hot, thinking cold: When emotions influence behaviour*Practical Reason*

Students consider the influence of emotions on behaviour, particularly whether emotions help or hinder us in making good decisions.

Topic 9: The meaning of life*Life, Value and Meaning*

Students consider why people care about the meaning of life, what might make a life or activity meaningful, and what the meaning of life might look like from a cosmic perspective.

Topic 10: The cost of a human life*Society and Culture*

Students consider how and why governments place specific monetary values on human life, and problems with choosing the right value. They are also introduced to the idea of opportunity cost as a way of framing decisions.