CCSU General Education Assessment Retreat

January 2023

Ethical Dimensions Learning Outcome Results

Artifacts from Fall 2021 and Spring 2022

Office of Institutional Research and Assessment

Central Connecticut State University

Introduction

As part of our Davis Educational Foundation (DEF) grant, Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) faculty participated in assignment alignment workshops for the Ethical Dimensions general education learning outcome (General Education Objective 9). In Spring 2021, a team of faculty created the new rubric based on samples from other universities and colleges as well as the one created by Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). (Rubric attached.)

The rubric features five dimensions on a rating scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represents the lowest assessable performance and 4 represents the highest performance. A score of zero is awarded in cases where a student failed to address the dimension. The rubric is grounded in the following definition:

> *Ethical Dimensions is a competency that requires reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It may require students to assess their own ethical values, identify ethical principles that guide action, assess the social and political context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, consider how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical issues, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Student's ethical self-identify evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.*

The five dimensions of the rubric include:

- Description of Ethical Issue(s)
- Theoretical and Conceptual Understanding
- Analysis of the Issue(s)
- Application of Ethical Theories and Contexts
- Defense of an Ethical Position

In Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, 12 faculty participated in DEF workshops to align existing assignments to this rubric. Working in teams, faculty helped each other align their respective assignments to ensure that each dimension of the rubric was evident in the assignment. Those assignments were then given to students; upon completion, the assignments were submitted to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment for scoring by faculty at the annual winter assessment retreat.

In January 2023, a team of four CCSU faculty scored 90 student artifacts using the new Ethical Dimensions (ED) rubric. The artifacts were contributed from the faculty participating in the DEF workshops and represented student work throughout the Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 semesters. For scoring purposes, only first-year and seniors student artifacts were assessed. This model provides important information, allowing for the comparison on where first-year students start and where seniors are prior to graduation.

The ED artifacts scored at this retreat represented 18 first-year students and 48 senior-level students from seven courses representing our College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and School of Business. Each artifact was scored by two different faculty and the scores were averaged. During the retreat, it was determined that one assignment was not fully aligned and had to be removed from the data set; this results in a final data set of 37 seniors.

It is important to note that our general education learning outcome assessment model measures student learning on skills and knowledge that are gained across their courses and academic career. As such, this assessment is not reflective of a single instructor nor a single course, but rather a reflection of where students are in their academic journey.

The results presented on the following pages are from our January 2023 assessment retreat, with comparisons between academic groups and demographic data.

Overall Results

As seen in Figure 1, the overall score for first-year students evaluated on their Ethical Dimensions artifacts was 2.3 and represents low mid-level performance. The score for each individual dimension ranged between 2.0 and 2.6, with the dimension *Description of Ethical Issue(s)* having the highest score. *Analysis of the Issue(s)* had the lowest score at 2.0.

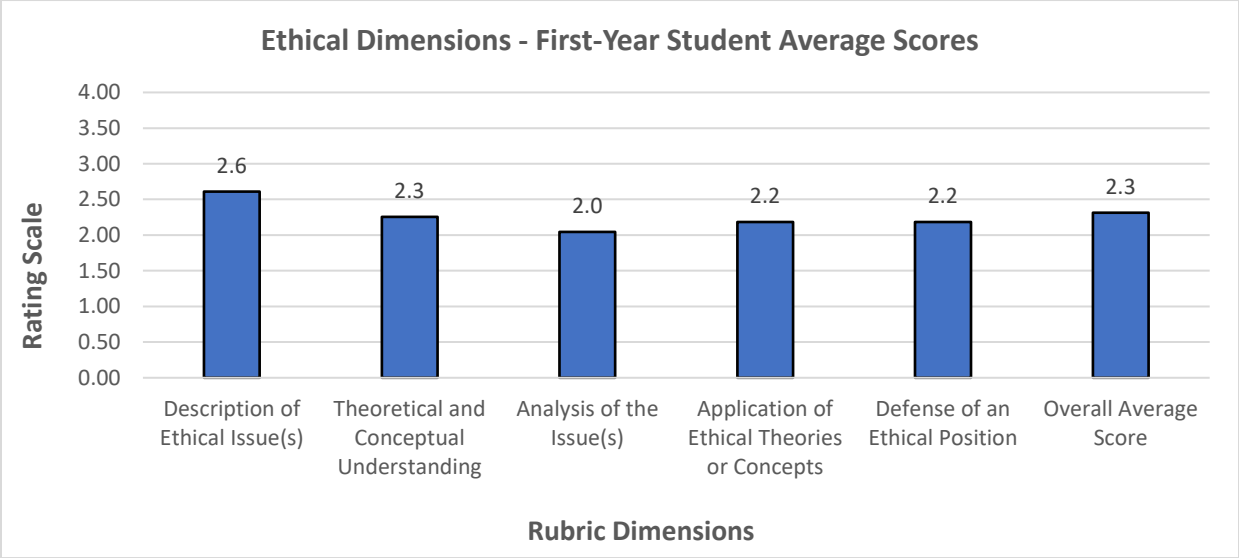

Figure 1. Overall scores of first-year students for Ethical Dimensions Rubric, n=18

Results of senior-level students are shown in Figure 2. The overall score was 3.0, a significant increase of 0.7 points compared to first-year students. Seniors scored highest on *Description of Ethical Issue(s)* as did first-year students. The differential between all dimensions for seniors was only 0.3 points, compared to 0.6 points for first-year students.

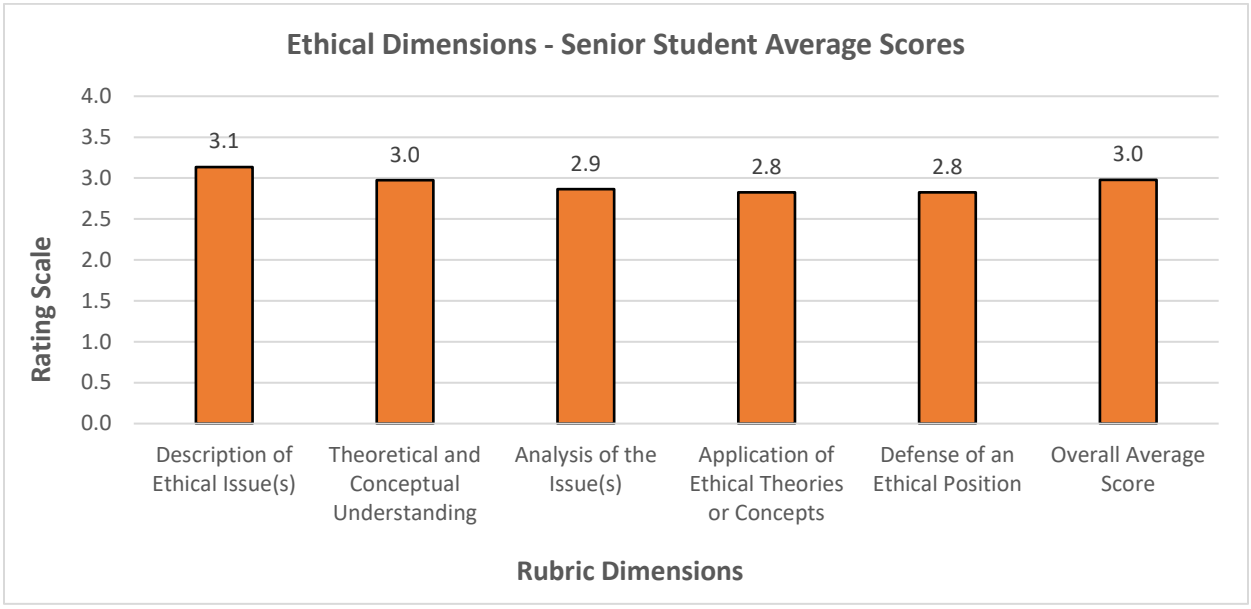

Figure 2. Overall scores of senior students for Ethical Dimensions Rubric, n=37

Data Disaggregated by Gender

When looking at the results of first-year students by gender, only female data are reported as the sample size for male was too small to display due to privacy concerns. As expected, results for female students mirrors the overall results for first-year students in both overall score and on each dimension.

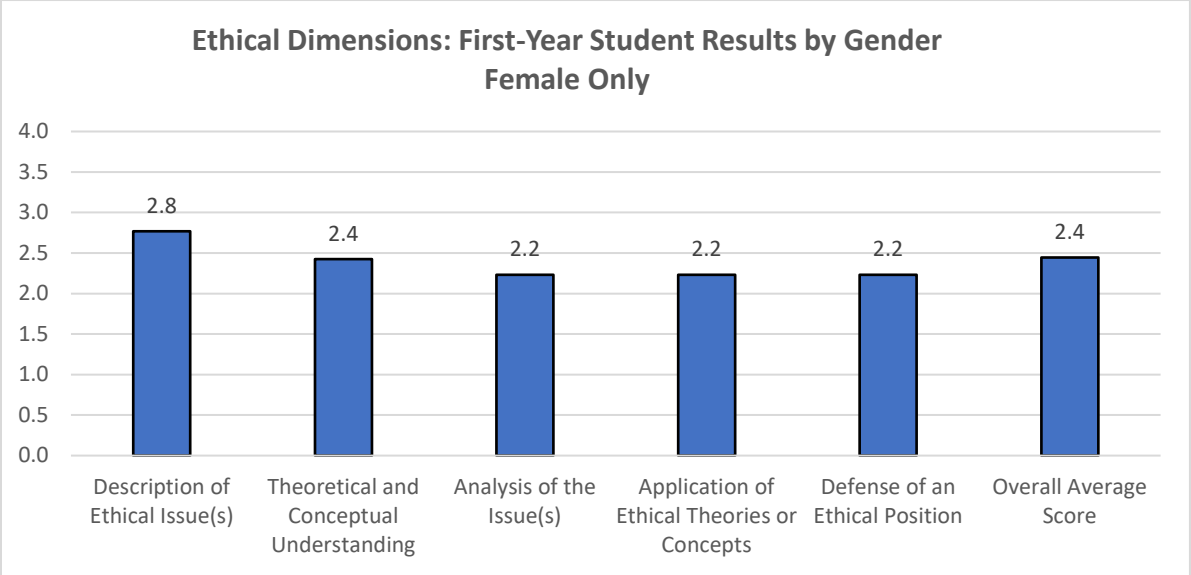

Figure 3. Scores of first-year female students

For senior-level students, males had higher scores than females for each dimension. *Theoretical and Conceptual Understanding* had the highest differential of 0.5 points and *Description of Ethical Issue(s)* had the smallest differential of 0.1 point. When comparing first-year and senior females, senior females scored higher on every dimension, with the largest differential of 0.5 points for three of the dimensions and for the overall average score.

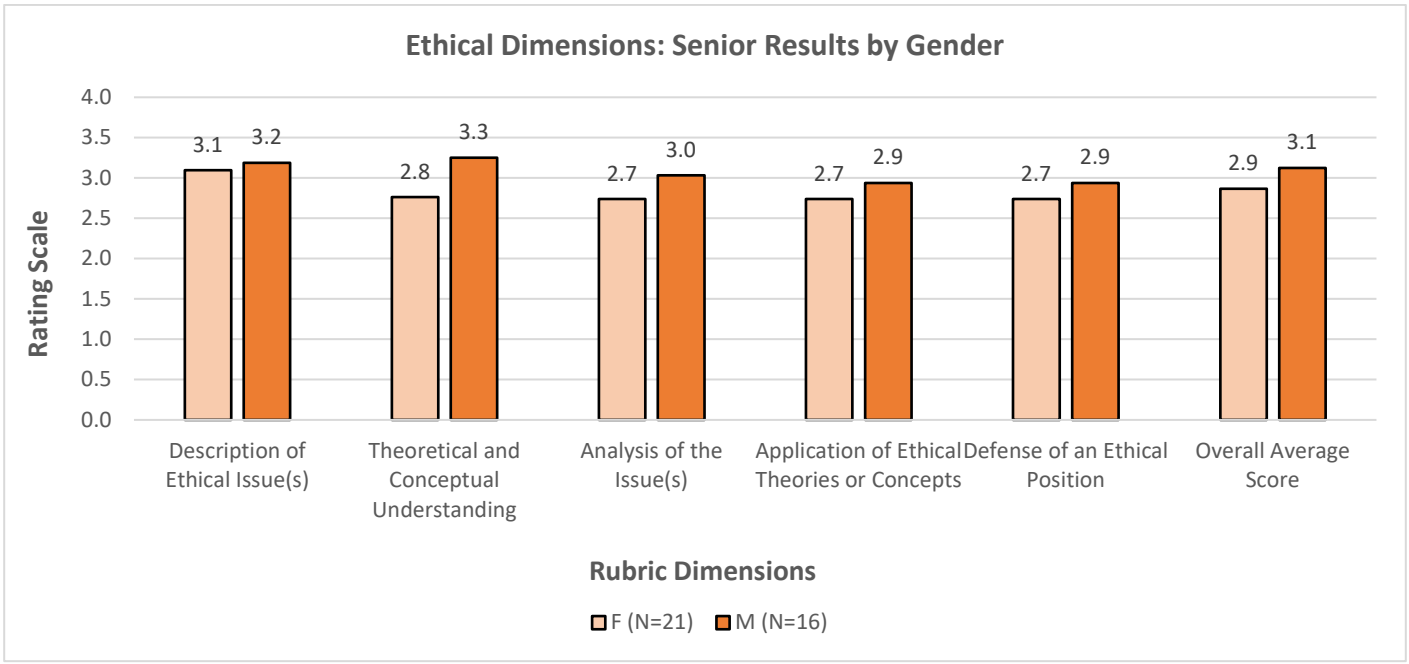

Figure 4. Scores of senior students by gender

Data Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity

Results based on race/ethnicity for first-year students are not presented; the sample sizes were too small and their data are not included for privacy concerns.

When looking at the data for seniors by race/ethnicity, the overall average scores are similar between both groups. White students scored the same or slightly higher than Hispanic or Latino students for all dimensions and the overall score. The largest differential of 0.3 points is evidenced *Application of Ethical Theories or Concepts* and *Defense of an Ethical Position* (Table 1).

Table 1. *Senior Student Results by Race/Ethnicity**

	Hispanic or Latino (n=9)	White (n=21)
Description of Ethical Issue(s)	3.2	3.2
Theoretical and Conceptual Understanding	2.9	3.0
Analysis of the Issue(s)	3.0	3.0
Application of Ethical Theories or Concepts	2.7	3.0
Defense of an Ethical Position	2.7	3.0
Overall Average Score	3.0	3.1

*The sample sizes for American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Resident Alien, Two or More Races, and Unknown were too small to show, and their data were not included in the table for privacy concerns.

Data by Distribution of Scores

Looking at the distribution of student scores within each dimension, the largest percentage of first-year students scored between 2.00 and 2.99 for four of the five dimensions (Figure 5). Interestingly, first-year students had scores between 3.00 and 3.99 for all five dimensions; *Description of Ethical Issue(s)* had the highest at 56%. *Application of Ethical Theories or Concepts* and *Defense of an Ethical Position* offer the greatest opportunity to advancing student learning as both dimensions had the highest percentage of first-year students score between 1.00 to 1.99, with 28% each.

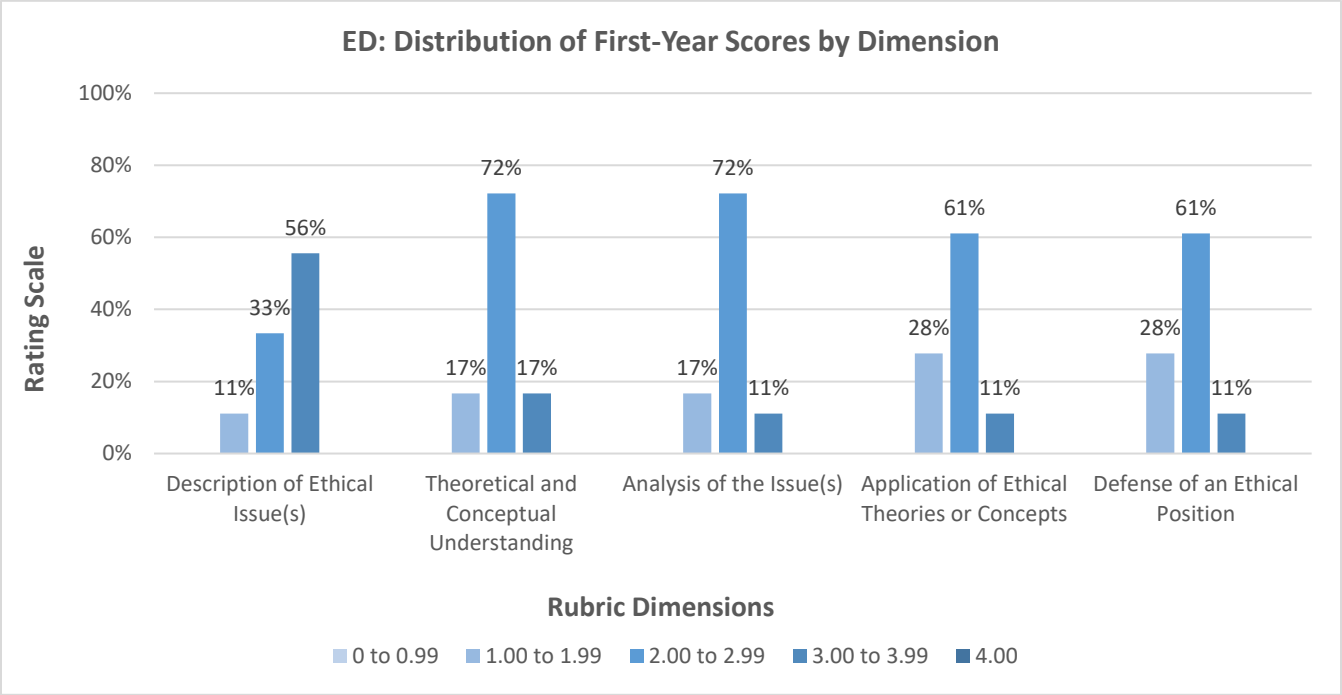

Figure 5. Distribution of first-year student scores

In Figure 6, seniors had the highest percentage of scores in the range 3.00 and 3.99 for two of the five dimensions, *Description of Ethical Issues(s)*, and *Theoretical and Conceptual Understanding*. These two dimensions, along with *Analysis of the Issue(s)* had at least 10% of students receiving a perfect score of 4.0. The last two dimensions, *Application of Ethical Theories or Concepts* and *Defense of an Ethical Position*, have distributions that skew towards scores in the 2.0 to 2.99 range. In fact, 51% of the students scored lower than 3.0.

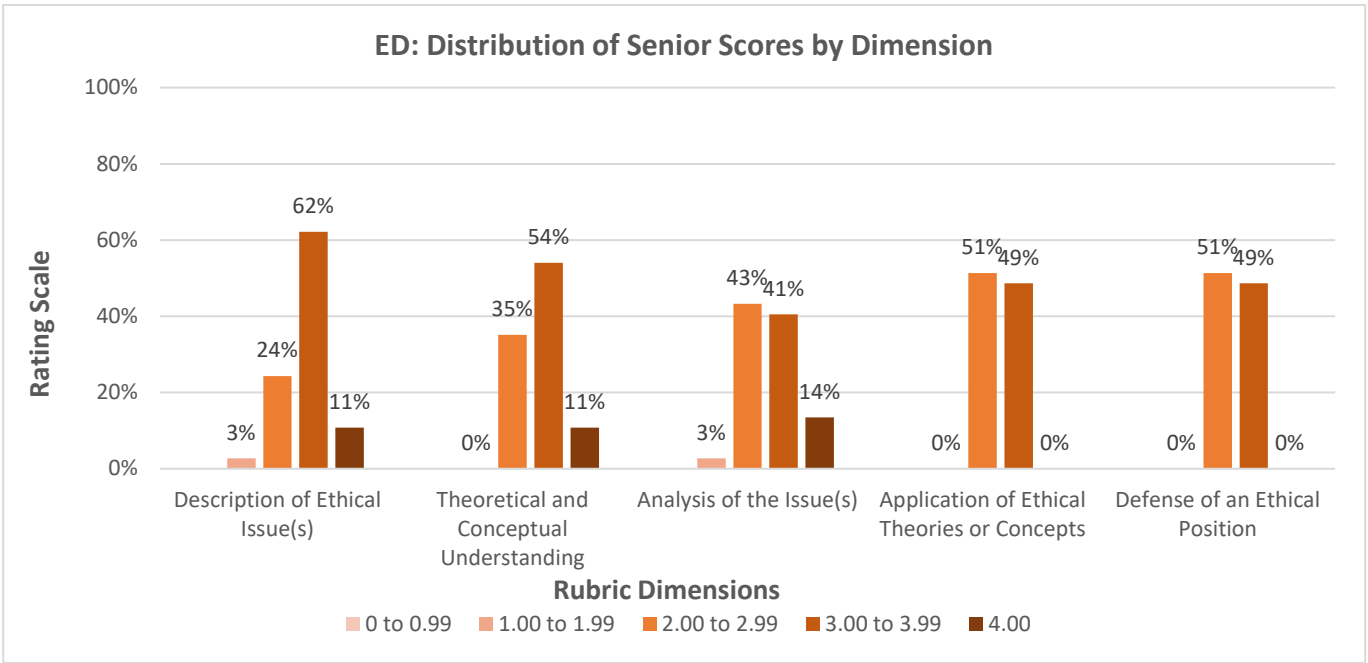

Figure 6. Distribution of senior-level student scores

Conclusion

It is our hope that you find these results both informative and valuable. As with any assessment, the results can be used to validate current practices, applaud successful outcomes, and/or identify areas for further attention.

Some faculty have found the following questions helpful as they review these data:

- Where did our students demonstrate success in Ethical Dimensions?
- Which Ethical Dimensions performance dimensions are clear areas for continued growth?
- How might these data be used to inform teaching and further students' Ethical Dimensions learning?

To conclude, it is important to note that these scores reflect multiple factors at work and should be viewed within that context. As we continue to seek improvements on the various factors that go into scoring, our ultimate goal is to have CCSU undergraduate students demonstrate enhanced performance for our Ethical Dimensions Learning Outcome, providing them with a solid foundation for future intellectual and personal pursuits.

Please contact Martie Kaczmarek, Assessment Coordinator, OIRA, if you would like additional information. Email: mkaczmarek@ccsu.edu or call 860-832-2304.

CCSU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment January 2023

ETHICAL DIMENSIONS RUBRIC

Central Connecticut State University

Definition

Ethical Dimensions is a competency that requires reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It may require students to assess their own ethical values, identify ethical principles that guide action, assess the social and political context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, consider how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical issues, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Student's ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.[1]

Framing Language

The Ethical Dimensions rubric is designed to assist faculty in their evaluation of student work on ethics. The rubric requires students to articulate, analyze, and evaluate ethical issues and to defend an ethical position or recommend an appropriate action. This rubric is meant for numerous disciplines and assignment types, thus the requirement for theoretical or conceptual understanding is meant to be broad. While one assignment may merely require a clear understanding and discussion of a legal concept (e.g., when non-disclosure agreements are binding or what constitutes sexual harassment) others may require applying general moral theories (e.g., utilitarianism), comparing different theories, or applying the moral guidelines of a particular profession (e.g., the AMA code of ethics). Theoretical and conceptual understanding is then the identification of the appropriate theories (e.g., utilitarianism, Kantianism, constructivism, behaviorism, etc.), codes or codes of conduct (e.g., the AMA code of medical ethics), frameworks (ethics or process, ethics of policy etc.), principles (e.g., the APAs ethical principles of Psychologists), laws, perspectives, and/or concepts (e.g., justice, equity, human health, plagiarism, intellectual honesty, privacy, disclosure, moral courage, legal classifications, etc.) that are important for evaluating the issue(s).

The rubric focuses on five elements: Description of Ethical Issue(s), Theoretical and Conceptual Understanding, Analysis of the Issue(s), Application of Ethical Theories and Contexts, Defense of an Ethical Position.

Glossary

These definitions were designed to clarify terms used in this rubric only.

Stakeholders: The relevant individuals, groups, organizations, or entities that have an interest in the issue(s).

Ethical Principles: In a broader sense refers to ethical principles, frameworks, codes, theories, laws, concepts, guidelines, or perspectives.

CCSU ETHICAL DIMENSIONS RUBRIC

[1] Adapted from AAC&U Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric, https://www.aacu.org/ethical-reasoning-value-rubric.

	Capstone - 4	3 Milestones 2		Benchmark - 1
Description of Ethical Issue(s)	Student articulates the issue(s) in detail, including why the issues are relevant and of importance.	Student articulates the issue(s), including why the issues are of importance, so that understanding is not seriously impeded by omissions.	Student articulates the issue(s), but description leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplored, boundaries undetermined, and/or backgrounds unknown.	Student's articulation of the issue(s) is stated without clarification or description. Student uses biased or unrepresentative language.
Theoretical and conceptual understanding	Student thoroughly articulates the aspects of the ethical principles that are important for evaluating the issue(s).	Student discusses the ethical principles that are important for evaluating the issue(s) in a cursory manner.	Student provides minimal discussion of the ethical principles that are important for evaluating the issue(s) or misunderstands several important aspects when doing so.	Student provides minimal discussion of the ethical principles that are important for evaluating the issue(s) and misunderstands several important aspects.
Analysis of the Issue(s)	Student demonstrates a clear and thorough understanding of the necessary perspectives or contexts of the issue(s) by including any of the following or similar: identifying the different stakeholders involved, highlighting potential biases involved in framing the issue, recognizing the student's own ethical beliefs or intuitions, recognizing relevant empirical evidence, and including insightful examples.	Student demonstrates some understanding of the necessary perspectives or contexts of the issue(s).	Student demonstrates a very basic understanding of some of the necessary perspectives or contexts of the issue(s) or fails to indicate several of the aspects needed to properly analyze the issue or misrepresents some perspectives or contexts of the issue.	Student includes minimal discussion of the necessary perspectives or contexts of the issue(s) and misrepresents necessary perspectives or contexts of the issue.
Application of ethical theories or concepts	Student accurately and thoroughly applies the identified principles to the issue(s).	Student accurately applies the identified principles to the issue(s) but neglects key aspects.	Student applies the identified principles in a cursory or haphazard manner.	Student misapplies the identified principles.

Defense of an ethical position	Student clearly and carefully states a position. Student defends their position and/or recommends a realistic action. Statement includes consideration and/or identification of possible objections to the chosen position (e.g., theoretical weaknesses, other possible interpretations of theoretical application, empirical evidence that might challenge the view).	Student states and defends a position throughout the assignment and/or recommends an action and identifies but does not respond to some objections to the stated position.	Student states or defends a position throughout the assignment, and/or recommends an action but the defense is weak, or the student does not identify and respond to objections to the stated position.	Student does not defend the same position throughout the assignment or student's argument in the assignment contradicts the thesis.