

# Teaching Assessable Ethical Reasoning in the Business Classroom.

**Karen Torres, Ph. D.**  
[Karen.Torres@angelo.edu](mailto:Karen.Torres@angelo.edu)  
Angelo State University

## Abstract

In the many years I have been teaching business ethics, I've learned that the biggest challenge is to get students to think about ethical issues in ways that are different from those they have always known or been taught. At a meeting of my academic peers in 2004, those who were actively engaged in teaching business ethics shared similar experiences. The discussion at that time focused on the following issues. First, most students have a set of ethical rules they have learned from their families, friends, peers, churches, teachers, or previous educational experiences. These rules are the ones that students regularly fall back on to make ethical decisions, often without cognitive processing. Second, use of these rules results in conditioned responses to ethical questions. When pushed for clarification, students will often exclaim, "It's just the way it is" or "That's what I've always believed." Finally, when asked to complete analytical assignments designed to present and support an ethical viewpoint, they will often present only their viewpoint and only evidence that supports their viewpoint. There is little or no acknowledgement of competing viewpoints or discussion of the relative merits of the competing viewpoints. For the purposes this paper, I have labeled the above described phenomena as *conditioned thinking*. Conditioned thinking is not ethical reasoning and is generally undesirable in ethical decision-making because it can easily result in faulty or harmful conclusions.

This paper is a direct result of years of work in business ethics courses aimed at improving student learning outcomes and avoiding conditioned thinking. My experience has been that in the course of the first couple of class case studies and class discussions students will generally immediately demonstrate conditioned thinking. While it is useful to point out students' underlying assumptions as they put forth their opinions, it is rarely enough to stop there. Through the course I work with the students to try to get them to recognize that if this were a "real" ethical problem, faulty conditioned thinking could result in a decision that harmed some other person or group unnecessarily. Furthermore, there could have been another solution to the problem that was overlooked and could have avoided harm and even helped others. I strive to teach the students that we want to avoid conditioned thinking when we are making ethical decisions in order to make better decisions that are consistent with our ethical goals of not harming others. Instead of conditioned thinking, we work together to engage the students in a cognitive process of ethical reasoning.

In this paper I present an approach to developing the R. Paul and Elder (2003) model for use in the business classroom. Included in the paper are practical tools for instructional use in a business classroom, such as a decision chart and an assessment rubric. The presentation of this paper will be focused on interactive discussion with session participants to share experiences that could further improve the ethical reasoning approach and result in improved teaching and learning outcomes in business ethics classrooms.

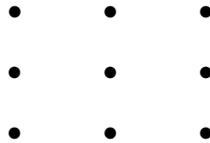
### Conditioned Thinking vs. Ethical Reasoning in the Workplace

In the many years I have been teaching business ethics, I've learned that it is often difficult for students to think in ways that are different from those they have always known or been taught to think. Most students have a set of ethical rules they have learned from their families, friends, peers, churches, teachers, or other influential persons. These rules are the ones that students regularly fall back on to make ethical decisions, often without cognitive processing. In other words, these rules result in conditioned responses to ethical questions. When pushed for clarification, students will often exclaim, "It's just the way it is" or "That's what I've always believed." For the purposes of discussion, let's label this type of thought as *conditioned thinking*. Conditioned thinking is not ethical reasoning and is generally undesirable in ethical decision-making in the business setting because it can easily result in faulty or harmful conclusions.

The following is the script for a simple exercise I use in the very first week of the semester to introduce students to the concept of conditioned thinking and show them how conditioned thinking can get in their way and cause them to make a bad decision.

Your mission for this exercise is to connect all of the dots using four straight lines. You may not lift your pen from the paper or retrace lines. Give it a try!

Nine Dots Puzzle (author unknown)



(I give the students several minutes to solve the problem on their own. When they have either solved it or given up, I have one student come to the front of the room and demonstrate the correct solution.)

If you didn't get the solution to this exercise, why not? Did you assume that you had to stay inside of the box? Why did you make this assumption? More than likely the assumption was based on an old paradigm you learned when you were in elementary school and you learned to do connect-the-dot exercises. In fact, you probably didn't even consciously think about the assumption and immediately allowed it to constrain your thinking before you even started the Nine Dot Exercise. This is a simple example of how conditioned thinking can result in faulty decision-making. If you assume you must stay inside the box, you cannot possibly solve the problem given the other requirements. If this were an ethical problem, the faulty thinking could result in a decision that harmed some other person or group unnecessarily. There could have been another solution to the problem that was overlooked and could have avoided harm and even helped others. We want to avoid conditioned thinking when we are making ethical decisions in order to make better decisions that are consistent with our ethical goals of not harming others. Instead of conditioned thinking, we want to engage in a cognitive process of ethical reasoning (Torres, n.d.).

The summary point is that I want us to work together as a class all semester to avoid conditioned thinking and that my purpose for the class is to help them learn and use tools to improve their ethical reasoning in business situations. Through the remainder of the course, we continually revisit the difference between ethical reasoning and conditioned thinking and emphasize the need to improve our ethical reasoning skills.

Kidder (1995/2003), in his book *How Good People Make Tough Choices*, suggests that we need to develop our ethical fitness so that when we are faced with an ethical dilemma we can reason through the problem or make a decision quickly based on previous work and preparation. Kidder (1995/2003) states that we can't just work to

obtain ethical decision-making skills, we also need to work to maintain those skills in good working order. In other words, ethical fitness requires us to think about ethics, reason through problems, get our minds and knowledge base in working order and tackle the tough issues when they arise in a committed and caring manner. Ethical fitness requires using ethical reasoning that meets intellectual standards, helps us come to a solution, and builds our skills for future ethical problems. The next step with the students is to set this foundation and then present them with the tools they need to develop ethical reasoning skills.

What is ethical reasoning? It is a cognitive thought process by which a solution to an ethical problem is developed. R. Paul and Elder (2003) have developed and defined the following set of elements that when used together form a framework for ethical reasoning.

*Generates Purposes:* Identifies goals and objectives that focus on helping rather than harming others.

*Raises Questions:* Formulates ethical questions in various ways so as to identify the question that best represents the ethical issue.

*Uses Information:* Collects data, facts, observations, experiences needed to solve the ethical problem.

*Utilizes Concepts:* Identifies the ethical theories, definitions, axioms, laws, principles and models that are needed to reason through the issue.

*Makes Inferences:* Generates sets of alternative conclusions and solutions.

*Makes Assumptions:* Identifies assumptions and presuppositions underlying our conclusions.

*Generates Implications:* Follow through to recognize implications and consequences of our conclusions.

*Embodies a Point of View:* Determines whether more than one ethical viewpoint must be considered prior to coming to a final conclusion. (R. Paul & Elder, 2003, pp. 14-15)

There are some fundamental assumptions underlying the Paul and Elder (2003) model of ethical reasoning that we need to examine. The first assumption is that a person cannot be ethical without learning to reason effectively through ethical problems (R. Paul & Elder, 2005). This means that making ethical decisions through conditioned thinking does not make us ethical people. We have to actually work on our skills, abilities, and traits to develop ourselves as ethical people. The second assumption is that human behavior has consequences, both positive and negative, for the welfare of others. Ethical people seek to help others, not harm them (R. Paul & Elder, 2003; R. Paul & Elder, 2005). This leads us to the third assumption, which is that we are capable of knowing when we are harming someone and when we are helping them (R. Paul & Elder, 2003; R. Paul & Elder, 2005). Underlying this assumption is the recognition that we are not trying to account for the diseased, psychopathic, or sociopathic mind. The final assumption is that there are some acts that are inherently unethical including but not limited to slavery, genocide, torture, murder, assault, rape, etc. (R. Paul & Elder, 2003). It is important to recognize these assumptions explicitly because they provide the fundamental basis to begin any discussion of ethical reasoning.

### **Implementing Ethical Reasoning in the Business Ethics Classroom**

The first step in presenting the ethical reasoning process to students in a business ethics course is to discuss the assumptions that appear in the preceding paragraph. I also find it helpful to tie these assumptions back to any relevant course material that has already been presented. For example, I introduce the ethical reasoning process as supplementary material between the third and fourth chapters of the textbook I have adopted for my course. This means that we are roughly in the third week of a sixteen week semester. At that point, we have discussed why ethics are important and the necessity to avoid conditioned thinking, dimensions of social responsibility and its relationship to ethics, as well as common ethical problems across organizations. We are making the transition to prescriptive and psychological approaches to making ethical decisions. I start out by telling the students that I am providing them with a tool to avoid conditioned thinking in ethical decision-making that we discussed in the past several weeks (see script in paragraphs above). I then show the steps of the ethical reasoning process and we talk about why and how each step helps us come to an ethical solution. I particularly stress that the acknowledgment of harms and subsequent avoidance of harm is fundamental to presenting an ethical and socially responsible image to society, both

for individuals and the organization. I also talk about how using the process could help avoid the common ethical problems we discussed in the previous chapter.

There are some important aspects to this process of ethical reasoning (R. Paul & Elder, 2003) that make it attractive for use in the business ethics classroom. First, the ethical reasoning process aligns this form of cognitive processing with other forms of critical thinking and problem-solving for which there are intellectual standards (R. Paul & Elder, 2003). These standards with basic definitions are summarized below .

- Clarity – the reasoning is presented in an understandable way
- Accuracy – the reasoning does not contain errors, distortions, or untruths
- Precision – the reasoning does contain the necessary level of detail
- Depth – the student does justice to the complexities of the problem or issue
- Breadth – the student has included all relevant viewpoints/perspectives
- Logic – the student has reasoned in a manner that consistently applies ethical standards
- Significance – the student has focused on what is ethically important and not overstated trivial points
- Fairness – the student has treated all relevant viewpoints fairly and accurately (R. Paul & Elder, 2003, pp. 28-29).

For business classroom use, I have specifically developed a self-questioning process that business students can use to aid in achieving intellectual standards. The self-questioning process is broken down by step in the original ethical reasoning process to help students demonstrate and articulate logic to their ethical reasoning, which is a required student outcome in the R. Paul and Elder (2005) original work. Second, ethical reasoning performance in student work can then be assessed against performance indicators and outcomes (R. Paul & Elder, 2005). Performance indicators are defined as “the critical thinking abilities that together form the critical thinking disposition [of a student] (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.19).” The performance indicators for students who think critically in the ethical reasoning process (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p. 47) are as follows.

Students are able to:

1. identify ethical questions, issues, and situations and then reason well through them
2. display a common core of ethical principles
3. recognize egocentrism, the law and sociocentric thought and their differences from ethical reasoning
4. recognize the complexity of ethical issues (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.48).

Student outcomes are defined as “the measurable student actions or behaviors [as evidenced by the student work] that can be directly assessed by the teacher (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.19).” The student outcomes as originally written by R. Paul and Elder (2005) appear in Appendix A. I have developed a list of student outcomes that parallel the original but which can be applied more successfully to achieve intellectual standards in ethical reasoning in the business classroom. I have also found that it is helpful to directly relate these student outcomes to each step in the ethical reasoning process. A concise summary of the relationships between the ethical reasoning process, performance indicators, student outcomes, and achieving intellectual standards is summarized in Table 1 below. After discussing each step in the ethical reasoning process and working through an example in class, I have provided this chart to the students for their use in completing class assignments. Some examples of graded assignments I have used with my students appear in Appendix B.

In spite of its overall attractiveness, some aspects of the ethical reasoning process in its original form are difficult to effectively implement in a business classroom because of their abstract characteristics and lack of specific applications to business problems. In my early experiences teaching the ethical reasoning process I tried to present the model, work through an example in class and then assign a paper for the students to display their skills. It was, frankly, a bit of a disaster. In retrospect, I suspect it was a little like trying to walk into an English literature class and ask the students to use a SWOT analysis to analyze the plot of a novel. My current work with the ethical reasoning process attempts to overcome these difficulties by specifically restating, redefining, and delineating abstract aspects into language and concepts found in most business ethics courses. In the following paragraphs I

discuss each aspect of the model in more detail as well as the developments I have made to date to improve business classroom usage.

It is often difficult to get business students to think about the full spectrum of harms that are potentially associated with their decisions. Therefore, when asking the students to identify and state the purpose for engaging in ethical reasoning to solve a specific problem, I specifically ask them to first specify potential harms as well as whether or not at least some of the harms can be mitigated or avoided. Not only does this help clarify the purpose, but it also helps set the foundation for putting themselves in others' shoes and recognizing others' rights. This also provides a natural segue to forming ethical questions, the next step in the process. In order to truly tease out all of the relevant ethical questions as well as establish both complexity and significance, it is important to force the students into a stakeholder analysis. By first outlining all potential harms, the students already have a good start at identifying all relevant stakeholders. In the questioning process, I ask them to delve into this more deeply, including an assessment of the rights and values held by these stakeholders and potential conflicts between different rights and values. It also useful to force students to explicitly state what is complex about their ethical problem to again reinforce the need to avoid conditioned thinking. The next step in the process is for students to examine what additional information would be useful in reasoning through this process. Where that information is researchable, they are required to do so for the assignment. Where it is not researchable, they are required to specifically state how and what information would be collected from the position of the decision-maker. For example, we recently discussed a case in class where a 14-year old girl was expelled from her private school because her parents were both gay. We were using the ethical reasoning process to analyze the decision made by the principal of the school. It wasn't possible to research all of the necessary information, so we talked about what information we would collect if we were the principal making the decision and why that information could be important. The next step in the process, application of concepts from class, is fairly self-explanatory. I have provided examples in Table 1 of the concepts we cover in my class that the students are expected to consider in their analyses. The stakeholder analysis provides a good transition into the discussion of points of view and implications. Even so, I find that this is often the most difficult step in the process to get the students to work through. Many students want to jump immediately to their own point of view with little or no treatment of alternatives. I will confess to forcing the issue in some assignments by requiring that at least two viewpoints, in addition to their own, be analyzed in the paper to receive passing credit for this performance indicator. I recognize that this is a bit artificial, but for the purposes of teaching and learning the ethical reasoning process I believe it is justified. Finally, throughout the process it easy to fall into the trap of making assumptions. Typically, in the business classroom, the most common assumptions will be that a legal perspective is sufficient to make a decision or that business norms such as remaining financially competitive override other concerns. In order to get students to acknowledge these assumptions and force them to face the source of any conditioned thinking they may be engaging in, I force them to explicitly state their underlying assumptions. The final part of the paper is to come to a decision and follow the implications for all affected parties.

I have worked in organizations where the students' work is assessed both for grading purposes and for institutional effectiveness initiatives. The last part of this paper will discuss an assessment rubric I have developed and used that is relevant for either situation and is aligned with the ethical reasoning process, performance indicators, and student outcomes.

### **Creating a Rubric to Assess Competency In Ethical Reasoning**

R. Paul & Elder (2005, pp. 20-21) provide a solid departure point for developing an assessment rubric to use for student assignments in ethical reasoning. According to R. Paul & Elder (2005, pp. 20-21) the ethical reasoning assessment rubric can be used in two ways. The first is to score student achievement for each student outcome. In the case of multiple reviewers, an average score for each student outcome is calculated. Certain outcomes may be excluded under certain conditions. For example, some colleges and universities teach business ethics in the lower division and may need to include only the simpler outcomes. Upper division and graduate level ethics courses should include all of the listed outcomes. A decision needs to be made by the instructor and organization whether the complete list of outcomes should be included with a 0 assigned to excluded outcomes or whether only those outcomes incorporated into the instructional process should be included. R. Paul & Elder (2005, p. 20) state that it is important to recognize that ethical reasoning competency cannot be fully achieved unless and until all student outcomes are fostered in the teaching and learning process. The student outcome rubrics can be

structured on a 5-point or 10-point scale (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.20-21) with the following definitions of frequency and depth of achievement: almost never (lowest rating, 0-1 points); rarely (1-2 points); sometimes, but with limited understanding (3 points or 3-5 points); often, but inconsistently and sometimes superficially (4 points or 6-8 points); typically and characteristically, and with depth of understanding (highest rating, 5 points or 9-10 points).

The second way to use the assessment rubric is to assess student performance by providing a composite score to show student performance of the ethical reasoning competency. At this point, the R. Paul and Elder (2005) assessment rubric becomes less effective for the business classroom. They suggest that the scores for all student outcomes be averaged for a total score for the entire ethical reasoning competency. While I find an overall average useful from an organizational perspective, it doesn't help students understand which performance indicators are being achieved and which need improvement. Therefore, I have grouped student outcomes with performance indicators to more specifically describe student's achievement of intellectual standards for ethical reasoning. The overall score for each performance indicator is an average score of all outcomes associated with that performance indicator. The total ethical competency score is an average of all of the performance indicator scores. When using this for grading purposes, it is necessary to establish in advance what point values in the rubrics translate to each grade and to specify weights for each outcome or indicator, if necessary. In cases where writing style is part of the assignment grade, the instructor should specify that this assessment rubric is for the content portion of the grade only.

### **Summary**

Ethical reasoning and the development of ethical reasoning skills is not currently a strong part of the business ethics textbooks used at the university level. This paper serves as a starting point for discussion by taking a well-ground critical-thinking model and developing it for application to teaching business ethics. Applications are based on years of experience in the business ethics research field and classroom. It has been pre-tested with real students in a real classroom. That having been said, it is important to realize that the effective use of the presented tools assumes a commitment to developing one's own ethical reasoning competency in the role of business ethics instructor or professor. The determination of ethical competency must be made by subject matter and academic experts (Whitaker, 1989). Furthermore, all faculty or other personnel involved in the assessment of ethical competency should receive training and continuous professional development to build their own ethical reasoning and assessment skills (Whitaker, 1989; Paul & Elder, 2005). Further work to develop this model will be focused on refining the usability of the assessment rubric as well as presentation and application materials to improve student acceptance and learning.

Table 1: Ethical Reasoning Chart With Performance Indicators and Expected Student Outcomes

Step in Ethical Reasoning Process	Relevant Performance Indicators and Student Outcomes	Achieving Intellectual Standards for the Ethical Reasoning Competency in Business
<p>Purpose</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to help rather than harm others</li> <li>-to minimize harm when it can't be avoided by offering assistance</li> </ul>	<p>Clearly identify purpose of the issue to be reasoned through.</p> <p>Accurately determine what rights are relevant and when they are being violated.</p> <p>Demonstrate honor toward rights.</p> <p>Demonstrate virtues associated with ethical good as opposed to those associated with ethical failings.</p>	<p>What are the harms that could occur to any party affected by this decision?</p> <p>What help can be given to alleviate potential harms to anyone listed above?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Can help be given that avoids the harm completely?</li> <li>- Can help be given that minimizes harm when it is unavoidable?</li> </ul>
<p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- best embody the issue</li> </ul>	<p>Identify the ethical questions accurately.</p> <p>Clearly state the ethical questions and their significance.</p> <p>Recognize the complexity of the issue.</p>	<p>Who or what is affected?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- relevant individuals and work groups</li> <li>- relevant organizational interests such as goals and values</li> <li>- relevant stakeholder groups</li> <li>- size of stakeholder groups</li> </ul> <p>What values are at stake?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- personal values</li> <li>- organizational values</li> <li>- societal values</li> <li>- universal values</li> </ul> <p>What values are in conflict?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- personal value(s) vs. personal value(s)</li> <li>- organizational value(s) vs. organizational value(s)</li> <li>- personal value(s) vs. organizational value(s)</li> </ul> <p>What rights are at stake?</p> <p>What rights are in conflict?</p> <p>What duties are relevant?</p> <p>What duties are in conflict?</p> <p>What is complex about this issue?</p>
<p>Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- identify and use information about options for action</li> </ul>	<p>Identify and consider fairly all significant facts relevant to an ethical question.</p>	<p>Policy information</p> <p>Legal information</p> <p>Background information of the specific problem and parties affected by the problem</p> <p>Organizational precedents</p> <p>Official investigation findings</p> <p>Historical information relevant to the problem</p> <p>Other relevant information that I may have forgotten or overlooked</p>
<p>Concepts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- utilizes concepts that contribute to the well-being of others.</li> </ul>	<p>Identify and apply the ethical concepts relevant to the ethical question</p>	<p>Apply relevant class concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Definitions (e.g. fairness, equity, impartiality, reciprocity, social responsibility, rights, duties).</li> <li>- Theories (e.g. utilitarianism, deontology, virtue theory, stakeholder theory, moral development, due care, social contract)</li> <li>- Principles (e.g. universal values, universal ethical principles, universal rights, universal duties)</li> <li>- Models (e.g. models presented in class text)</li> </ul>

Step in Ethical Reasoning Process	Relevant Performance Indicators and Student Outcomes	Achieving Intellectual Standards for the Ethical Reasoning Competency in Business
<p>Points of View and Inferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- makes judgments or conclusions about what helps or harms other.</li> <li>- determines whether more than one ethical viewpoint needs to be considered.</li> <li>- recognizes our own inferences as well as those of others.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrate the ability to put self in the place of others and recognize how they would think and feel. Clearly state own judgments and conclusions</p>	<p>What are my own judgments and conclusions about what helps or harms others?            Are there other ethical viewpoints that also avoid harm to others? What are these viewpoints and what inferences do I need to recognize?            If I were in their shoes, how would I think and feel about this decision?            How do my inferences compare with those of others?</p>
<p>Assumptions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- recognizes assumptions used and checks to make sure they are valid.</li> </ul>	<p>Distinguish with clarity ability to recognize and avoid potential pitfalls associated with incorrect assumptions and thinking.</p>	<p>Have I avoided egocentrism?            Have I lapsed into conventional or religious thinking without examining its validity?            Have I lapsed into legal thinking exclusively?            Have I recognized all of the evidence?            Have I engaged in rigid thinking?            Have I assumed my opinion is better than other opinions?</p>
<p>Implications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- follows the ethical implications of a decision.</li> </ul>	<p>Demonstrates understanding that behavior must be consistent with stated universal principles</p>	<p>What are the implications for me/the decision-maker?            What are the implications for others affected by the decision?            If I have arrived at alternative conclusions, what are the implications for each alternative?            Have I recognized and avoided potential inconsistencies in my behavior by making this decision?            Have I recognized and honored ethical values and principles with this decision?</p>

Table 2: Assessment Rubric

Performance Indicator (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.48)	Student Outcome	<p align="center"><u>Score Using a 10-point scale ( (R. Paul &amp; Elder, 2005, p.20-21)</u></p> Typically and characteristically, and with depth of understanding (9-10 pts.) Often, but inconsistently and sometime superficially (7-8 pts.) Sometimes, but with limited understanding (3-6 pts.) Rarely (1-2 pts.) Almost never (0 pts.)  Comments in space provided.
Identify ethical questions, issues, and situations and then reason well through them.	Clearly identify purpose.	
	Identify the ethical questions accurately.	
	Clearly state the ethical questions and their significance.	
	Identify and consider fairly all significant facts relevant to an ethical question.	
	Identify and apply the ethical concepts relevant to the ethical question.	
	Clearly state own judgments and conclusions.	
	Total Performance Indicator Score	
Display a common core of ethical principles	Accurately determine what rights are relevant and when they are being violated.	
	Demonstrate honor toward rights.	
	Demonstrate virtues associated with ethical good as opposed to those associated with ethical failings.	
	Demonstrates understanding that behavior must be consistent with stated universal principles.	
	Total Performance Indicator Score	

<u>Performance Indicator</u> (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.48)	<u>Student Outcome</u>	<u>Score Using a 10-point scale ( (R. Paul &amp; Elder, 2005, p.20-21)</u> Typically and characteristically, and with depth of understanding (9-10 pts.) Often, but inconsistently and sometime superficially (7-8 pts.) Sometimes, but with limited understanding (3-6 pts.) Rarely (1-2 pts.) Almost never (0 pts.)  Comments in space provided.				
Recognize egocentrism, the law and socio-centric thought and their differences from ethical reasoning.	Distinguish with clarity ability to recognize and avoid potential pitfalls associated with incorrect assumptions and thinking.					
	Demonstrate the ability to put self in the place of others and recognize how they would think and feel.					
		Total Performance Indicator Score				
Recognize the complexity of ethical issues.	Recognize and demonstrate insights from inconsistencies in human behavior in ethical dilemmas.					
	Distinguish between simple ethical questions and complex ethical questions.					
		Total Performance Indicator Score				
Total Ethical Reasoning Competency Score						

Appendix A: Student Outcomes for Ethical Reasoning as Presented in the Original Work (R. Paul & Elder, 2005, p.48)

1. Demonstrate understanding of ethical reasoning, by accurately elaborating and exemplifying its meaning.
2. Distinguish with clarity the difference between ethical reasoning and other forms of thinking; i.e. religious, conventional, and political/legal.
3. Accurately identify fundamental human rights.
4. Demonstrate understanding that ethical principles are based in the rights of humans and other conscious creatures.
5. Accurately articulate universal human and animal rights.
6. Accurately determine when human or animal rights are being violated.
7. Demonstrate honor toward universal human and animal rights.
8. Recognize and articulate the logic to ethical reasoning.
9. Demonstrate through the ethical reasoning process an understanding and commitment to meeting intellectual standards that apply to other domains of knowledge.
10. Distinguish between simple ethical questions and complex ones.
11. Identify and consider fairly all significant facts relevant to an ethical question.
12. Demonstrate the ability to put themselves in the place of others and recognize how they would think and feel if someone were to act toward them as they are acting toward others.
13. Demonstrate awareness that ethical reasoning means doing what is right even in the face of powerful selfish desires.
14. Demonstrate understanding that much of our ethical insight come from recognizing inconsistencies in human behavior.
15. Identify and apply the ethical concepts relevant to ethical questions.
16. Demonstrate understanding of the fact that doing ethical good involve certain virtues such as kindness, compassion, understanding, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, etc.
17. Demonstrate understanding of ethical failings caused by other virtues; cruelty, injustice, thoughtlessness, greed, hypocrisy, unkindness, insensitivity, etc.
18. Accurately state, elaborate and exemplify acts that are inherently unethical.
19. Recognize and demonstrate avoidance of pitfalls of thinking that include forgetting evidence, rigidity, seeing ourselves as better than others, etc.

Appendix B: Sample Graded Assignment Formats  
Short Paper Assignment Formats

**Ethical Reasoning Paper #1**

**General Comments:**

Your first paper will partially address an agreed upon ethical problem using ethical reasoning processes discussed in class. It is due on the date listed on your syllabus. Your paper should be 5-7 pages in length not including your reference list. All sources must be documented using either the APA or MLA style.

**Choosing a Topic:**

You may pick your own topic, but pick something that interests you enough to write not just this paper, but the next paper also. You must obtain approval from me for your topic. Remember, the topic **MUST** have an ethical issue found in the workplace associated with it to qualify. To clarify, let's say you wanted to write a paper on reward systems in the workplace. In order for the topic to fit the criteria for this paper, you would have to write about ethical problems perceived by employees in the implementation of the reward system.

**Content of the Paper:**

1. Define the ethical question or issue present in your topic.
2. What are your goals and objectives as you reason through this problem?
3. What information do you need to help you in the process? This could include data, facts, observations, experiences, etc.
4. What concepts from class (including theories, definitions, laws, principles, and models) are applicable to this problem?
5. Brief summary of findings or conclusion about the information gathered for this paper.

**Grading:**

Your paper will be graded on the following criteria:

Content - Demonstration of correct and comprehensive understanding of the topic/issue as well as steps in the ethical reasoning process.

Style - Correct grammar, word usage, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.

Incorporation of class concepts - Degree to which you have incorporated concepts from class readings and discussions.

**Ethical Reasoning Paper #2**

**General Comments:**

Your second paper will continue to address the ethical problem you chose in Paper #1 using ethical reasoning processes discussed in class. It is due on the date listed on your syllabus. Your paper should be 5-7 pages in length not including your reference list. All sources must be documented using either the APA or MLA style. Your first paper must be attached to the second paper when it is submitted.

**Content of the Paper:**

6. Given what you learned in paper #1, what judgments have you made regarding what helps or harms others in the problem you are addressing?
7. What assumptions have you been making as you work through this problem? What have you taken for granted? Is it valid to make these assumptions? Why?
8. What are the implications and consequences of your judgments and assumptions? Who is helped rather than harmed by your decision?
9. Brief summary of your point of view and how it will guide your future actions.

**Grading:**

Your paper will be graded on the following criteria:

Content - Demonstration of correct and comprehensive understanding of the topic/issue as well as steps in the ethical reasoning process.

Style - Correct grammar, word usage, sentence structure, punctuation, etc.

Incorporation of class concepts – Degree to which you have incorporated concepts from class readings and discussions.

Ethical Reasoning Project Format

Brief Outline:

1. Identify a specific ethics problem in business organizations that you would like to critically analyze.
2. Gather available information to write a short case study of this problem to illustrate how it might manifest itself in the organization and what effects it might have both short-term and long-term.
3. Using the ethical reasoning process from class, reason through the problem. You should incorporate at least three different alternatives (including your final decision) in your analysis.
4. Make recommendations to improve ethical behavior in organizational members relevant to this specific problem.

General Guidelines:

1. Anticipated length of the final product is between 10 and 20 pages, but is negotiable through discussion with me.
2. Final product should include a cost analysis of every recommendation.
3. All researched information must be properly documented in APA or MLA style including a reference list and internal citations.
4. Final product should be in professional, presentable format – no typos, grammatical errors, etc.

## References

- Kidder, R.M. (2003). *How Good People Make Tough Choices: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living*. New York: Quill, An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers. (Original work published 1995)
- Paul, R., & Elder, L. (2003). *The Miniature Guide to Understanding the Foundations of Ethical Reasoning*. [Based on Critical Thinking Concepts & Principles]. Dillon Beach, CA: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
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- Torres, K. (no date). Conditioned vs. Unconditioned Thinking in Business Ethics. *Classroom Exercise Presentation and Script*. Unpublished manuscript, Angelo State University.
- Whitaker, U. (1989). *Assessing Learning: Standards, Principles, & Procedures*. Philadelphia: Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.