

## Guidance for teachers

## Difficult decisions

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### Downloads

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- PowerPoint presentation
  - slides 1–13 (some alternatives)

### Background information

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A scientific problem may be approached by generating scientific theories, which may then be tested by experiment. Ethical problems cannot be approached in the same way, since there are no 'theories of morality' that correspond to theories in the sciences. However, this does not mean that all possible answers to ethical problems have the same merit or that ethical problems cannot be the subject of rigorous analysis. A framework of goals, rights and duties is one way of carrying out such analysis. Although defining goals, rights and duties for individuals in different circumstances does not necessarily make decisions easy, carrying out this exercise can help to clarify the issues involved for the different parties in a situation where an ethical dilemma exists.

### Running the activity

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This activity uses PowerPoint presentation slides 1–13.

**Slides 1 and 2** (alternatives) set the scene. Use the slide you feel would be of most interest to your students. The ethical question is how far a person should go in enhancing performance to get a place in a school team.

#### **Slide 3**

Before showing this slide you could ask the class for their ideas of possible things that an aspiring athlete might do to get in the team. These suggestions and / or the ones on the slide should then be discussed to agree which of the suggestions are right and which are wrong.

Few people are likely to find the idea of training in order to increase performance unethical. (Although it is worth noting that in the earlier years of the twentieth century, such a practice was frowned upon by many in the British athletics community as being 'unsporting'.) Equally, few people are likely to condone the use of drugs. Between these extremes lie a number of choices that are likely to be more contentious.

#### **Slides 4, 5 and 6**

The next three slides give you the opportunity to distinguish between scientific questions and ethical questions. You could ask students to 'brainstorm' how science can help in making decisions before showing slide 4.

# Difficult decisions

## **Slides 7 and 8**

These slides are alternatives. Use the slide you feel would be of most interest to your students. The slides personalise the issues by focussing on the cases of two individuals, Anna or Alex (a member of the school athletics squad) and Luisa or Lewis (who would like to be a member of the athletics squad).

## **Slide 9**

This slide allows you to introduce the idea of goals, rights and duties as a way of structuring thinking about ethical difficulties.

## **Slide 10**

At this point you can introduce the table and ask students to discuss in groups, briefly, what they would enter into each blank cell.

## **Slide 11**

Optional statements that students could use to help them complete the table on slide 10. Some statements can be used for both individuals.

This is a possible set of responses.

Person	Goals	Rights	Duties
Anna/Alex	To remain in athletics team  To improve performance	To be treated in the same way as other team members  To be given coaching  To be able to use team facilities	To attend training sessions  To compete fairly
Luisa/Lewis	To improve performance  To get into athletics team	To be given a fair trial	To do your best when trying out for the team

## **Slides 12 and 13**

These slides are alternatives and you should choose the slide that matches the students in slide 7 or 8. Discussion of the various goals, rights and duties and their relationships may help students to identify the possible courses of actions open to Anna/Alex and Luisa/Lewis, and may help them to advocate/defend particular actions. It is worth stressing to students that, while goals, rights and duties will not in themselves solve the problem of deciding which course of action is right and which is wrong, it will help them to see more clearly the choices that need to be made.

## **Suggestions for students who would benefit from additional support**

Slide 11 has some suggestions for statements to put into the table on slide 10.

## Can it be done? Should it be done?

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### Downloads

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- PowerPoint presentation
  - slide 14 – Can we? Should we?
  - slide 9 – goals, rights and duties
  - slide 15 – blank table
- Activity sheet – Can we? Should we?
- Activity sheet – Should we? (extension)

### Background

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This activity provides an opportunity to extend the discussion raised in the 'Difficult decisions' activity. The list of scientific and technological developments could be amended to fit your course specification.

### Running the activity

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'Activity sheet – Can we? Should we?' asks students to consider the question 'Can it be done?' which focuses attention on issues specifically linked to science. Students should individually try to decide if the idea is possible and then consider what scientific information they would need in order to be confident about this decision. This could be set as homework prior to the lesson.

Ask students to discuss their decisions in small groups. You could allocate three or four suggestions to each group and set a time limit for this discussion of about 10 minutes. PowerPoint presentation slide 14, highlights the difficulties in making decisions and introduces the idea of balancing benefits against costs.

For the plenary, each group could enter its conclusions into the table on PowerPoint presentation slide 15 on a whiteboard. This will quickly show where there is consensus and where there are clear differences of view. You might choose to explore further some of the more contentious issues with the whole class.

## Suggestions for students who would benefit from additional support

To help students, you could work through one of the suggestions showing how the table should be completed. You could work through the suggestions and complete the table together.

## Differentiation for students who may need additional stimulus

After completing 'Activity sheet – Can we? Should we?', give students 'Activity sheet – Should we?' This asks students to identify, for each suggestion, individuals who might be affected if the idea were to be put into practice, and generate a set of goals, rights and duties for each individual. These can then be used to decide 'Should it be done?'. PowerPoint presentation slide 9 can be used to revise the meanings of the terms 'goals, rights and duties'.