

# A FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

## 1. Facts & Issues

- Determine both the relevant *facts* and *uncertainties* in the situation. What additional information is needed? Flesh out the case by creating different scenarios.
- Think of some *analogous* cases (*casuistical* ethics). What course of action was decided on?
- Identify the ethical *issues* and *points of conflict* in the situation. What *values* are at stake in making the decision?

## 2. Stakeholders & Obligations

- Identify the affected parties or *stakeholders* in the situation. A stakeholder is an individual, a group, an institution or organization, who is affected by the way the ethical problem is resolved.
- Consider your ethical *obligations* toward the stakeholders (*deontological* or duty ethics). Consult different professional codes of ethics<sup>1</sup>.

## 3. Options & Consequences

- Brainstorm possible *options* or courses of action that could be taken. Look for *creative middle way* solutions to the ethical problem.
- Consider possible *consequences* of different courses of action (*teleological* or consequence ethics). How will each action affect the stakeholders?

## 4. Assessment & Action

- As a final *assessment* of your decision, consider the following *reality tests*: Would you be willing to openly state your decision (*Publicity Test*)? Would you be comfortable if all scientists made the same decision under the same circumstances (*Universalizability Test*)? Would you be willing to have this action performed if you were in the stakeholder's place (*Reversibility Test*)?
- Decide on a plan for action!

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<sup>1</sup> For example, here: <http://www.onlineethics.org/Resources/ethcodes/EnglishCodes.aspx>