

Student handout 2.2

A tool to analyse and solve dilemmas

This is a toolbox, not a checklist. Not all questions fit every case, so you should choose which questions work best. Thinking about a few questions carefully is more helpful than ticking off the whole list.

1. Collect information.

- Who is involved?
- What do they want? (What are their rights, needs, goals or interests?)
- What roles do people enact?
- What is the problem/dilemma?
- What does this case have to do with me?
- What does the law say? (Must I observe any legal obligations or rules?)
- What do we not know – what do we not understand?
- How big would the effort be to find the missing information?
- ...

2. Consider the consequences.

- What are the alternative choices?
- What effect would each of these choices have, and for whom? (Others directly involved, other people living today or in the future, here or somewhere else.)
- ...

3. Define your priorities.

What criteria do I consider most important to guide me in my decision, for example:

- To what extent do I understand the consequences of my decision?
- What moral or religious principles are important for me?
- What is legal – what is illegal?
- What can I expect others to accept – and vice versa? (Would I accept this decision if I were on the receiving end?)
- What works best? (Solving the problem, financial aspects.)
- What are the desired or undesired long-term effects or side effects?
- Is my decision irreversible (“point of no return”), or can I correct it later?
- ...

4. Make your decision.

- Must I opt for one goal and violate the other?
- Is there any chance of finding a compromise?
- Under the given conditions, what does my intuition tell me? With what decision can I identify most?
- ...