

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM



THE
JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

THE JUBILEE CENTRE FRAMEWORK FOR VIRTUE-BASED PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

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JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER AND VIRTUES

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues is a unique and leading centre for the examination of how character and virtues impact upon individuals and society. The Centre was founded in 2012 by Professor James Arthur. Based at the University of Birmingham, it has a dedicated team of academics from a range of disciplines, including: philosophy, psychology, education, theology, and sociology.

With its focus on excellence, the Centre has a robust, rigorous research and evidence-based approach that is objective and non-political. It offers world class research on the importance of developing good character and virtues and the benefits they bring to individuals and society. In undertaking its own innovative research, the Centre also seeks to partner with leading academics from other universities around the world and to develop strong strategic partnerships.

A key conviction underlying the existence of the Centre is that the virtues that make up good character can be learnt and taught, but that these have been largely neglected in schools and in the professions. It is also a key conviction that the more people exhibit good character and virtues, the healthier our society. As such, the Centre undertakes development projects seeking to promote the practical applications of its research evidence.

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profanation

prof a na tion

pro-fane

to be an author
pro-fessed

pretended.—*adv.* **professedly**

pro-fes-sion

faith or friendship; an open avowal; religious faith; a profession or vocation, especially one learned; as, the profession of the persons engaged in any one

Syn. business, trade, occupation.

pro-fes-sion-al

or occupation requiring a superior following a calling as a means of life, as, a professional baseball player; one who makes his living by an occupation distinguished from an amateur, or practices it occasionally or for pleasure; the singer has the air of a professional singer.

pro-fes-sor

of his feelings and opinions, especially in religious matters; one who teaches in a college, university, or school.

pro-fes-so-ri-al

pro-fes-sor-ship

The Jubilee Centre Framework for Virtue-Based Professional Ethics

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This document provides a generic framework for a virtue-based approach to professional ethics. It is intended to initiate discussion, contribute to the creation of codes of ethics, facilitate excellence in professional decision-making, and inform professional education programmes.

1.2 Aims

A virtue-based approach to professional ethics emphasises the role of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) in the ethical decision-making of professionals. It focuses on virtuous leadership and the creation of virtuous communities of people. It also prioritises the notion of the development of the professional person as intrinsically constitutive of, rather than merely instrumentally connected to, the creation of true professionalism. In other words, to be a professional is to be a person with a distinctive set of character strengths as well as an expertise.

This *Framework* introduces a neo-Aristotelian approach to professional ethics that informs professional ethics education and training by providing a rationale for the ethical dimensions of professional practice.

This *Framework* holds two main aims:

1. to reassert and prioritise the moral; dimension of professional practice; and
2. to advocate for a focus on virtuous professional practice and education.

The *Framework* explores the advantages and disadvantages of professional codes of ethics and how these relate to a virtue ethical approach. Key concepts such as ‘professional identity’, ‘professional purpose’, and ‘professional *phronesis*’ are defined.

The *Framework* concludes in addressing the nature of virtuous leadership in a professional context and the methods by which virtue-based professional ethics, with a focus on practical wisdom, can be cultivated.

This *Framework* develops ideas initially presented in the *Statement on Character, Virtue and Practical Wisdom in Professional Practice* (Jubilee Centre, 2016), which sought to clarify and re-affirm the morally imbued contribution to the public good of a wide range of human occupations, therefore acknowledging their aspiration to professional status.

The *Framework* concludes with Table 2, which breaks down various aspects of the ethical professional, bringing together knowledge, character and practice in the pursuit of professional betterment and acquiring professional purpose.

1.3 Background

Throughout most of the 20th century, the maximisation of societal wellbeing and rationally grounded rules and codes justified the role of the professional and provided guidance in the conduct of practical professional ethics. Detailed ethical codes prescribing correct behaviour, as well as procedures and sanctions to secure such behaviour, were the preferred means of regulating professional agents and ensuring their reputation and legitimacy with the wider public. We believe that the vast majority of professionals are of good standing. However, the occurrence of various scandals within all the main professions has shaken the foundations of this conviction. It suffices here to mention those responsible for the 2008 financial crisis and the recent revelations of corruption within police forces in the UK and USA. Such scandals have eroded public trust in professionals to an all-time low, particularly as the reporting of scandals far outweighs any reporting of virtuous practice.

This perception of the moral fallibility of professionals has motivated a growing concern among professionals about the weakening of professional judgement and its replacement with managerialist orthodoxies that reduce judgement to formalistic accountability and compliance. The Committee for Standards in Public life reported in 2022 that ‘There is a risk that rules on their own may be perceived as something to be navigated, which can diminish responsibility for exercising personal

judgement’ (Committee for Standards in Public Life, 2022: 9). George, Urch, and Cribb (2023: 1) express the same misgiving in terms of codes encouraging professionals to adopt strategies to ‘game the system’ rather than developing professionalism.

This *Framework* presents, therefore, practical wisdom in the professional domain as a helpful way to reinvigorate professional ethics, replacing the sterility of rule-and-code-based formalism, and a culture of mere compliance. This *Framework* asserts that in the context of modern ideas of managerialism, accountability, efficiency, public scrutiny, and increased workplace pressures, professionals need to (re)envisage the ethical nature of their work. This can be achieved by paying attention to what a profession aspires to be, what constitutes professional practice, and how external factors shape the standing and work of professions today.

This said, a cautionary note is needed. We learn from experiences, including from our mistakes, but holding ourselves to impossibly high standards can have negative implications. Perfectionism is linked to burn out, anxiety and depression. A virtue-based approach to professional ethics should be a lifelong concern for us all in civic society.

1.4 Clarification of Concepts

Explanations of key theoretical concepts used in this document appear at the relevant junctures. The terms ‘character’ and ‘virtue’, and derivatives of those concepts, such as ‘character caught, taught and sought’, are fully defined and explained in *The Jubilee Centre Framework for Character Education in Schools* (see Jubilee Centre, 2022).

- *Character* is understood to mean the morally evaluable, reason-responsive, and educable part of individual personhood: of who we are as persons. It connotes a moral component, is not understood solely in behavioural terms, but as including the use of discernment, sensitivity, and the ability to hold morally grounded motivations.
- *Virtues* are specific excellences of human character that constitute settled states, making

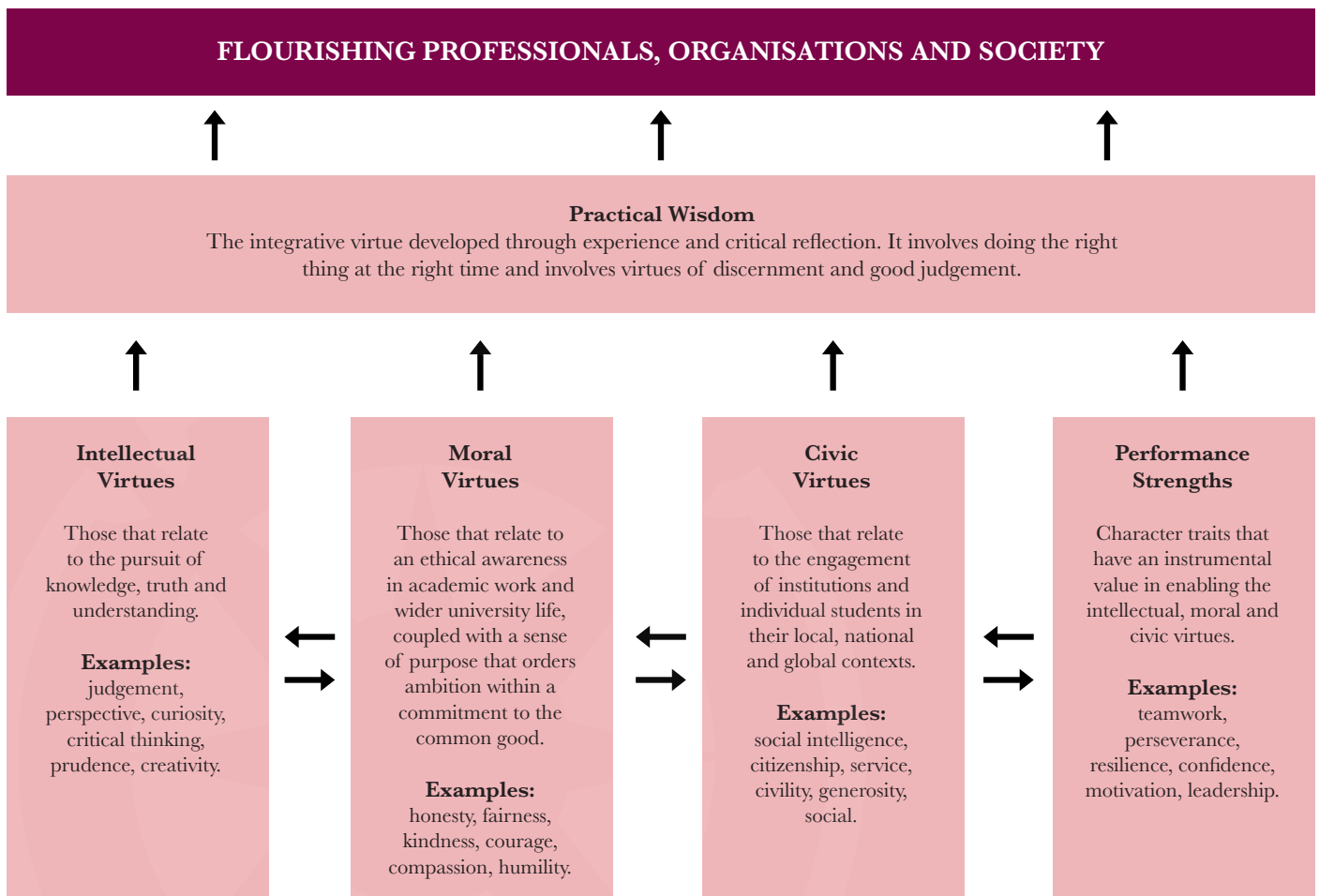
up one's character, and enabling humans and their communities to flourish.

They are sometimes referred to as 'character strengths', as well as other terms, and can be categorised as *moral* virtues, *intellectual* virtues, *civic* virtues, and *performance* strengths, as depicted in Figure 1. The specific integrative function of *phronesis* is introduced later in this *Framework*.

Virtues, then, are comprised of a network of components, each identifiably distinct but which combine to form the full virtue. The Jubilee Centre has identified the following components:

- **Virtue Knowledge and Understanding:** Understanding the meaning of virtue terms and why the virtues are important.
- **Virtue Emotion:** Feeling the right virtue relevant emotion in the right situation in the right way.
- **Virtue Identity:** Understanding oneself as strongly committed to the virtues.
- **Virtue Motivation:** Having a strong desire to act on the virtues.
- **Virtue Reasoning:** Discernment and deliberative action about virtues, including in situations where virtues conflict or collide.
- **Virtue Action and Practice:** Doing the right thing in the right way.

Figure 1: Flourishing Professionals, Organisations and Society



When it comes to looking in more detail at the developmental and educational aspects of virtue-based professional ethics, the concepts of character ‘caught’, ‘taught’, and ‘sought’ stand out. They refer to the different ways in which professional virtues can be acquired, transmitted, and consolidated.

The final concept to be clarified in this section is that of *flourishing*: a state professionals reach when they are able to cultivate virtues harmoniously in the service of the common good; have found an alignment between their personal and professional virtues, and have gained a sense of professional purpose. This does not happen only through personal effort exerted by individual professionals. It also requires the existence of various propitious workplace conditions and a wider socio-political context where professional expertise and excellences are valued and encouraged.

Caught: the professional workplace (leadership, colleagues, workplace ethos) must provide the example, culture, and inspirational influence that motivates and promotes character development.

Taught: professional leadership must provide direct educational experiences (through CPD courses and other learning opportunities) that equip professionals with the language, knowledge, understanding, skills, and attributes that enable character development.

Sought: the professionals themselves must acquire the deliberate motivation to form positive character traits and commitments. These motivations – and the sense of purpose and moral identity they furnish – help professionals over time to desire and freely pursue their own character development.

2. THE IDEA OF PROFESSIONALISM

2.1 Professions and Professionals

The criteria below are often used to summarise how professions are defined:

- a profession requires formal qualifications, a high level of education, and a prolonged period of training/induction;
- a profession provides a public service;
- a profession is, and professionals are, held in high esteem within society;
- professions are guided by a code of conduct and ethics specific to that profession.

More specifically, we can use the additional criteria below to define ‘a professional’:

- a professional possesses a certain degree of theoretical and practical expertise in a given discipline or practice;
- a professional adheres to the ethical standards established in any professional code of conduct and ethics;
- a professional acts with integrity, care, honesty and trust, exhibiting a level of professional autonomy and judgement.

Professions contribute to the common good through activities that are constitutive of complex societal practices, such as health, education, law, and commerce. The essential difference between a profession and a non-professional occupation is that the former cannot be defined in terms of its technical proficiency alone. There are additional requirements and responsibilities to do one’s job to both a high technical standard and a high ethical standard. These ethical standards may be more difficult to evidence and evaluate, but are often most obvious

when they are absent. Indeed, the idea of a good or excellent, but exploitative or abusive, professional is conceptually incoherent.

2.2 Professional Practice as Moral Practice

Professions are deemed inherently ethical occupations because they place high moral demands on the conduct of those who participate in them. These ethical and moral demands – which include care, integrity, fairness, and diligence – can be viewed as a *defining feature* of a professional. This reminds us that they are concerned with morally evaluable human actions and interactions. Such demands and standards may also be expected to engender *trust* between professional practitioners and those they serve and/or who employ their services. In short, the public is entitled to expect professionals to be trustworthy; and trust is undermined by moral failures and public scandals.

Often, the virtues described as necessary for ethical professional practice are everyday virtues applied in a professional context. For example, the trust between a doctor and patient, or a teacher and a pupil, has the same overall specification as trust between human beings in general. Yet the ethical conduct expected of professionals goes beyond the contextual application of generic human virtues, to include various other specific ethical aspirations such as:

- being a role model, setting an ethical example and being ready to act as a mentor

- to junior colleagues;
- upholding the reputation and values of the profession;
- being ready to identify and disclose conflicts of interests or witnessed cases of professional misconduct, acting as a ‘whistle-blower’, if necessary;
- seeking to continue to develop professional expertise and practical wisdom throughout one’s career.

In addition, some professions have been given responsibilities that go beyond the self-improvement of the relevant professionals, to include the improvement of others. The clergy are perhaps the most obvious example but teaching and policing are also examples of professions that have a ‘Janus-faced’ moral mission. For example, a large part of modern policing is not about apprehending criminals but about creating – through ‘proactive policing’ – the character virtues in the public that are conducive to peace and order in society. Similarly, insofar as character education is an aim of schooling, teachers have the role of helping students cultivate intellectual, moral, civic, and performance virtues. Taking on this ‘Janus-faced’ mission places additional expectations on the professionals in question, which explains why the public is particularly sensitive to professional misconduct perpetrated by these categories of professionals.

2.3 Flourishing as a Professional

The ideal of ‘professional flourishing’ is about professionals confidently cultivating their virtues harmoniously in the service of the public good, having found an alignment between their personal and professional virtues, and having gained a sense of professional purpose.

These goals may seem clear and commendable, but they all contain complexities. Most professionals will

experience times when virtues conflict, where they are unable to act on all relevant virtues at the same time. Such occasions of conflict can lead to subsequent feelings of moral disempowerment and are frequently attributed to a lack of time to do one’s job well, or of a lack of adequate staffing and resources, or an over-burden of bureaucracy. Professional virtue conflicts can be exacerbated where there are perceived conflicts between an individual’s professional and personal virtues, such as where acting diligently at work requires one to spend time

away from their families and home. At worst, unresolved virtue conflicts can lead to professional burn-out – which is the antithesis of professional flourishing.

It is through practice and attempting to reconcile these conflicts and pressures that one’s sense of flourishing as a professional may emerge. Professional development opportunities are essential for enhancing a sense of professional purpose.

3. VIRTUES IN THE PROFESSIONS

3.1 Personal and Ideal Virtues

With a recent resurgence in the recognition that character informs the moral performance of professionals, there have been numerous studies dedicated to professional ethics in general. The differences between professions cannot be underestimated, particularly between public and private sector professions. This is a tension of professional ethics research that seeks to engage all professions, but also seeks to remain particular and specific enough for particular professions, educators, and regulators to take notice of findings. This *Framework* seeks to draw attention to context, but it encourages those leading work in ethics in each profession to take responsibility for embodying an understanding of the good in a professional context.

Analysis of the data collected from Jubilee Centre-led studies into how participants

from six discrete professions self-ascribe their own personal virtues, and which virtues they perceive to be the ideal virtues within their profession, reveals that honesty and fairness appear in the top three personal virtues for all six of the professions.

Table 1 shows the top three cited personal and ideal virtues for each profession from survey results.

In colour-coding these in terms of their ‘type’ of virtue, one notices a proliferation of moral virtues, in pink, as important personal qualities of character, which is contrasted by a mix of intellectual, moral and performance virtues, as important to the ‘ideal’ professional. This highlights a disconnection between ideas of professional virtues and the ideal of professions serving the public good. Policing and nursing were the only professions in which the personal and ideal virtues largely coincided.

That said, there were a number of discrepancies between the virtues highlighted in surveys and those highlighted in interviews with participants. For example, doctors interviewed reported the virtues they most hope to demonstrate as care, trustworthiness, and having a good relationship with patients (Arthur *et al.*, 2015b), whereas business and finance students interviewed did not mention honesty as important. Instead, they spoke of competence-based skills such as communication or leadership (Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017a). There is, of course, a desire to be employable, the received wisdom among business and finance students is that the business sector is more concerned with performance rather than moral virtues.

Key: Virtue Type

| | |
|-------|--------------|
| Moral | Intellectual |
| Civic | Performance |

Table 1: Top Personal and Ideal Character Strengths

| Character Strengths | Business and Finance | Nursing | Medicine | Law | Teaching | Policing |
|----------------------------|----------------------|----------|-----------|--------------|------------------|----------|
| Top three personal virtues | Honesty | Kindness | Fairness | Fairness | Fairness | Honesty |
| | Fairness | Honesty | Honesty | Honesty | Honesty | Fairness |
| | Teamwork | Fairness | Kindness | Humour | Humour | Teamwork |
| Top three ‘ideal’ virtues | Leadership | Kindness | Fairness | Judgement | Fairness | Honesty |
| | Judgement | Honesty | Honesty | Honesty | Humour | Fairness |
| | Teamwork | Teamwork | Judgement | Perseverance | Love of learning | Teamwork |

3.2 Professional Purpose

In interviews with 510 aspiring and practising professionals, participants were asked questions across three areas: professional purpose, facilitators to, and barriers discouraging virtuous professional practice. The perceived professional purpose of practitioners across the six professions, defined in these studies as ‘a personal commitment, volition, and motivation to do useful work for the betterment of others and society, which sees beyond immediate individual or organisational goals’, was analysed (Arthur *et al.*, 2019).

This research has shown that teachers and nurses reported statistically higher perceived professional purpose when compared with the other professions (doctors, lawyers, business and finance professionals, and police officers). Conversely, lawyers reported statistically lower perceived professional purpose than the other professions. However, these results at times conflicted with the qualitative findings in interviews with professionals. For example, interviews conducted with those in the police profession typically reported higher levels of professional purpose than of those that responded to the survey. Taking bias into account – those who agreed to be interviewed may have had already a stronger sense of professional purpose than those who declined – the findings still paint a picture of professionals (pre- and in-service) having morally-focussed aspirations, but recognising that a mix of virtue types are necessary to do one’s job well.

The conditions required to *facilitate* virtuous professional practice, across the professions, were identified as *workplace culture*, inclusive of *support from colleagues*, *positive team dynamics* and *leadership* (Arthur *et al.*, 2015a; Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017b; 2021b). *Autonomy* to make decisions was also important, incorporating notions of *empowerment*, and trust of one’s professional judgement as essential in virtuous professional practice.

Barriers to displaying virtuous practice were also identified, although there were greater profession-specific examples given. For example, nurses reported *lack of staff, time*, and *resources* as barriers to displaying good character. Business and finance professionals emphasised the perceived *overregulation* of the sector (Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017a), and law professionals reported *financial and business pressures* as having an impact upon displaying virtue. Teachers described a similar picture, with time constraints and policy changes regularly cited as barriers to practising virtue in the workplace. When these barriers are paired with the facilitators, a picture emerges of the importance of professionals being provided with the *support, freedom* to make decisions and *capacity* to express their (good) character.

3.3 Moral Reasoning

Other findings indicated that virtue-based moral reasoning plays an important role in guiding professionals towards ethical courses of action, in the context of professional

moral quandaries. However, the professions are guided by virtue-based reasoning to differing extents. According to those studies, professionals rely most heavily on deontological (rule-and-code or duty-based) reasoning. Virtue ethical reasoning comes second, with utilitarian reasoning third. Notably, lawyers, teachers, and business and finance professionals relying on virtue-based reasoning to a greater extent than the others (Arthur *et al.*, 2014; 2015b; Kristjánsson *et al.*, 2017a).

Arthur *et al.* (2021) examined standardised mean differences in professional purpose across different character-judgement profiles. Participants (2,340 professionals from medicine, teaching, business and nursing) were asked to rank their top six virtues from a given list of 24, and also to rate how strongly they agreed or disagreed with six statements on their feelings of professional purpose. From the ranked character qualities, four distinct character-judgement profiles were identified; *alternative character* (those who valued character and judgement below the sample average), *judgement-only* (those who valued judgement above the sample average), *character-only* (valued character above the sample average), and *character-judgement* (valued character and judgement concurrently).

In simple language, the findings suggest that those who value both moral and intellectual virtues are most likely to experience a sense of professional purpose.

4. PROFESSIONAL CODES OF ETHICS

4.1 Nature of Ethical Codes

Professions have typically aimed to capture the moral dimensions of their practice in the form of codes of professional ethics. Professions have also established governance institutions to formulate professional policy, to educate, and discipline those who deviate from the standards.

Codes of professional ethics take various forms and are expressed in different ways. Where previously codes might have listed rules of behaviour and their corresponding sanctions for breaking them, more recently, there has been a move towards encouraging individuals to monitor their own behaviour, promoting a climate of moral responsibility, and greater self-regulation. From a virtue ethical perspective, codes of behaviour and conduct should incorporate professional ethics that promote moral character, rather than as a set of codifiable rules. Character virtues provide a rich resource for constructing

professional ethics codes by reflecting on:

- what virtuous character amounts to in the profession;
- how professionals’ character influences their practice; and
- how character develops through professional ethics education.

The terms ‘code of professional ethics’ and ‘code of conduct/behaviour’ are often used interchangeably, but there are important differences. Codes of conduct clearly state which actions are appropriate and which are not. They are guidelines for acceptable workplace actions and behaviours. However, they cannot necessarily provide a guarantee that professionals will act morally. Codes of professional ethics provide guidance on values and choices and cover a broad range of themes. They encourage professionals to consider what actions best reflect who they are and who they want to become. These codes contain aspirational language

that addresses both compliance and virtuous choices (integrity, excellence).

There is a requirement for codes of professional ethics to be clear, purposeful, yet concise, and present a meaningful and aspirational message in terms that professionals can understand and respond to. If the message is unclear, it is likely to be misinterpreted, or result in unnecessary conflict. The language used should be accessible to all and avoid, where possible, overly abstract, legalistic, philosophical, and technical terms. Codes written from within a virtue ethical approach focus on choices that result in doing the right thing, for the right reason; encouraging professionals to own the decisions they make, rather than simply adhering to rules and requirements.

Codes can be used to convey to members of a particular profession that they are required to follow specified rules and normative standards, which are reinforced by sanctions

where these rules are broken, or competencies are not met. Words such as ‘duties’, ‘rules’, ‘obligations’, and ‘competencies’ are popular in many variations of codes across professions. Such language is an example of a rule-based code, rather than encouraging virtue-based reasoning from professionals. These words also set a minimum expectation or standard for professionals, rather than, on their own, providing inspiration to achieve excellence.

4.2 Professional Codes: Similarities and Differences

The Jubilee Centre undertook a survey of 50 ethical codes from U.K. professions in 2023. While all the codes stipulated that practitioners should demonstrate good judgement and accountability, there were considerable differences between the codes in terms of length, definitions employed, content, and structure. Our review relating to the virtue words used in them revealed little agreement regarding definitions. Integrity is, for instance, cited by 68% of the codes, but definitions of what ‘integrity’ is, when provided, vary. Firefighters, for example, see integrity as being ‘open, honest and consistent’, while the Police view it as doing the ‘right thing’. Childminders view integrity as ‘acting in line with [one’s] beliefs’, while the Air Force see it as ‘being honest’.

Further, the majority of codes view ‘respect’ as a matter of equality and fairness, with a minority expressing the concept in terms of an individual’s feelings, wishes and rights.

There is also a difference between the virtue terms that are contained within written codes provided by professional bodies and those selected by practising members of the professions, as studied in Jubilee Centre research. Of the top eight most frequently selected virtues by professionals (when presented with a list of 24 ‘character strengths’), the terms that also appeared in the written codes were ‘honesty’, ‘teamwork’, and ‘judgement’. ‘Honesty’ was the virtue selected most frequently by professionals and also featured in 70% of professional codes. Yet, ‘humour’ was ranked fourth by professionals, but did not appear in any professional code.

Importantly, when categorising the virtues identified in the 50 codes into the Jubilee Centre typology of virtues, moral virtues featured more prominently than intellectual, civic, and performance virtues in the written codes, as well as being the most prioritised as ‘personal’ and ‘ideal’ virtues in Jubilee Centre research (Table 1).

There were also differences in the cited virtues in the codes of the private and public professions. In the public sector, the three

most cited virtues were ‘respect’, ‘care’, and ‘judgement’. In the private sector, they were ‘responsibility’, ‘service’, and ‘honesty’.

4.3 The Limits of Codes

While ethical codes are useful, their effectiveness relies on professionals becoming familiar with them. Effectiveness is not only predicated on awareness of codes, but also on professionals seeing them as useful, and of valuing good ethical practice in its own right. Of course, deliberate professional misconduct can still occur. This tells us that the education and training of professional practitioners requires more than an acquaintance with codes of conduct or formal lessons in compliance. Exemplary practice requires practitioners who not only have theoretical knowledge of the values and principles of their occupations, but who are also agents of moral character: in other words, we need lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, etc., who are honest, caring, compassionate, courageous, and fair.

In summary, while this *Framework* is not meant to underestimate the value of professional codes, it holds that such codes are necessary but not sufficient for good professional practice.

5. PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, PURPOSE AND *PHRONESIS*

5.1 Identity

So far, this *Framework* has focused on the character traits of professionals, and in particular on the stable traits of character called virtues. What matters for virtuous functioning as individuals or professionals, however, is not only who we are, but also who we think we are; in other words, our ‘identity’. It is the internal mirror in which our character, our core selfhood, is constantly reflected. A close correspondence between identity and selfhood (of who we think we are and who we really are) produces ‘self-knowledge’; disharmony between the two engenders ‘self-deception’.

Identity holds the key to professional *self-esteem* – the professional’s sense of the ratio of their perceived accomplishments to aspirations – and moral identity has been shown to have a moderate effect on actual moral behaviour. A professional’s moral identity will reflect the degree to which being a moral person is important to the professional’s sense of self. Further, one’s professional identity is often tied up with various emotions experienced towards the

job one is doing and how well one perceives that to be going. Professional practices are practices where one’s identity is variously intertwined with strong emotional experiences.

Moral identity can be a two-edged sword, however, both at the professional and personal levels (Krettenauer, 2022). For example, if mainly driven by external motivation, it can foster moral hypocrisy (where one acts professionally only in the hope of external rewards): low levels of abstraction in one’s conception of purpose can promote moral licensing (where the professional fails to see the bigger picture); and an orientation to prevent loss of purpose can foster moral disengagement (where the professional acts reactively rather than proactively).

5.2 Purpose

One’s professional purpose is deeply connected to one’s broader ideal moral identity, as explained above. This is because the way we choose to spend our time, energy, and resources through our professional endeavours is a reflection of the values and

principles we hold dear. We all have an innate drive to find meaning and fulfilment in our lives, and our professional endeavours can play a crucial role in fulfilling this drive. The way we view ourselves, the way we see ourselves in relation to the world, is a fundamental aspect of our moral identity. Our professional purpose, being the intention behind the work we choose to do, is rooted in our broader moral identity.

A person with a strong moral identity is likely to be more aware of the impact of their professional choices on society and the world and seek out opportunities that align with their values and beliefs. They may be drawn to careers in fields that promote the common good. In addition, a person with a strong moral identity is also likely to have a greater awareness of the ethical implications of their professional choices. They may take a more critical view of the way organisations and companies operate and may choose to work for those that align with their values and beliefs. They will also be more likely to consider the impact of their work on society and the environment and make choices that reflect their moral and ethical values.

The culmination of professional flourishing is gaining a sense of professional purpose. For that to happen, various educational, institutional, administrative, and wider socio-political conditions must be in place. The professional must experience the worth of their activities and their contribution to the greater good in a context within which it is worth operating.

A lack of professional purpose can be caused by various intrapersonal and interpersonal factors. The list below, taken from the Jubilee Centre’s research, provides some examples:

- a perceived inability to be able to act out one’s personal moral character traits in the given professional context;
- a general sense of one’s professional context not being conducive to professional development;
- a sense of an overbearing and inflexible managerial structure that does not allow for practical wisdom;

- feelings of inadequacy in negotiating dilemmas in the workplace;
- a sense of belonging to a profession that is not considered as worthy by the general public or by employers.

Purpose is a multi-faceted construct and a large number of the possible factors constitutive of the concept need to coincide in order for the professional to achieve full professional purpose. Even so, a profession’s ultimate goal should be to ensure that as many of its actors as possible experience a sense of purpose.

5.3 *Phronesis*

The concept of *phronesis* (practical wisdom), in general, and professional *phronesis*, in particular, is the key concept that holds together the approach to virtue-based professional ethics represented in this *Framework*. *Phronesis* is the moral agent’s intellectual meta-virtue that integrates and

adjudicates upon the different moral, civic, and performative virtues. *Phronesis* is the conductor of the orchestra of virtues.

Reimagining the ideal of professional *phronesis* means re-equipping professionals with the capacity, and sense of responsibility to make excellent ethical decisions themselves, building on their moral/civic virtues, and their insights into situational complexities – something that referring to a code can never do.

Without *phronesis*, the different aspects of a professional’s virtuous make-up will fail to become integrated. A lack of attention to *phronesis* thus amounts to an act of de-professionalisation. Rules will only take any professional organisation so far, whereas helping professionals focus on the values that can guide them, and how to integrate those, can facilitate wise decision-making in response to changing circumstances.

THE FOUR FUNCTIONS OF *PHRONESIS*

Constitutive Function

Phronesis involves the cognitive ability to perceive the ethically salient aspects of a situation and to appreciate these as calling for specific kinds of responses.

This ability can be cultivated in professionals and amounts to the capacity to ‘read’ a situation by seeing what is most important or central.

Blueprint Function

The integrative work of *phronesis* operates in conjunction with the professional’s overall understanding of the kinds of things that matter: the professional’s own ethical identity, aims, and aspirations, their understanding of what it takes to live and act well and their need to live up to the standards that shape

and are shaped by their understanding and experience of their professional life. This amounts to a blueprint of professional flourishing.

Emotional Regulative Function

Professionals foster their emotional wellbeing through *phronesis* by bringing their emotional responses into line with their understandings of the ethically salient aspects of their situation, their judgement, and their recognition of what is at stake in the moment. For example, a professional might recognise that their appraisal of the situation is problematic, giving rise to an emotional response that is inappropriate to the situation. The emotional regulative function can then help them adjust their appraisal and emotion by, for instance, giving herself an inner ‘talking to’.

Integrative Function

Through *phronesis*, a professional integrates different components of a good life, by way of a process of checks and balances, especially in circumstances where different ethically salient considerations, or different kinds of virtues or values, appear to be in conflict. In some cases, integration may call for a ‘blended’ or ‘synchronised’ virtuous response, such as being compassionately honest or honestly compassionate; in other cases, a virtue may have to be put on hold completely in a given situation in light of the overriding requirement of a conflicting virtue. Therefore, this function allows the person to engage in the adjudication of moral matters when conflicting desiderata arise.

6. LEADERSHIP

6.1 Leadership, Culture and Character

The nature of leadership is changing, becoming less dependent on role-based power. The perception of leadership as being dependent on one person is considered

outdated. Insights into leadership often fail adequately to explain its complex and contextual nature. The virtue-based view of leadership may assist in addressing this deficiency. It outlines six qualities of good leadership: experience, sound decision-

making, modesty, friendship, happiness (flourishing), and the ability to remain calm.

Virtuous leaders should be ethical stewards who seek to create organisational relationships and systems that build trust and justice and

earn the commitment of others. To this end, the leader must understand the importance of individual purpose and strive to foster an environment in which others may also develop their understanding of the concept. The virtuous leader should respect the individual whilst taking into account the interests of the group as a whole. To do this, leaders should build teams based on friendship and shared endeavour. Leaders craft a narrative that motivates others to join with them in action, and cultivate practical wisdom in themselves and in their employees.

6.2 Teamwork and Collective *Phronesis*

Most significant professional decisions nowadays, especially at a leadership level, are made by leadership teams, rather than individual leaders. This encourages a

collective *phronesis*, underpinned by a shared notion of purpose.

Much of contemporary virtue-based professional ethics remains individualistic in focus. The lesson from a virtue-based focus on collective *phronesis*, however, is that individual leaders may fail to see all the parts of the whole, and that leaders operating in groups, and pooling their individual *phronesis*, are more likely to see the whole picture. Through a process of presenting their vision to one another, reflecting upon it, and modifying it in light of the conclusions of their dialogue, they have a chance to come up with a solution that is more coherent and universal, and less easily corruptible, than any single person's vision.

One way to foster collective *phronesis* through recruitment is to ensure that recruitment

processes value diversity in personalities and character strengths. In addition, it is important to have a diverse hiring team involved in all stages of the recruitment process. By having a team that represents a variety of perspectives, it is more likely that candidates will be evaluated holistically and that unconscious biases will be minimised. We know that teams perform best when they are composed of individuals with diverse capacities but not so different so as to create polarisation. It is reasonable to suppose that these general findings will carry over into any study involving the creation of collective *phronesis* forums or leadership teams. Any plausible account of leadership derived from an approach of virtue-based professional ethics is thus bound to have a lot to say about the value of teamwork and diverse and distributed decision-making.

7. VIRTUE-BASED PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

7.1 A Virtue-based Approach

Ethics education and training is extremely important in an increasingly complex world. We need to educate, train, and develop people so that they acquire the understanding, skills, and capacities that help them navigate the ethical dilemmas that they will encounter in their professional lives. This should be integrated with other professional development so that it can assist in helping best develop ethical practice.

Historically, professional education has reduced its focus on ethics, focussing instead on teaching technical skills and knowledge, and has excluded any explicit focus on developing any notion of practical wisdom. A refocussing of ethical education around practical wisdom should involve teaching individuals how to make ethical decisions, navigate complex professional situations where virtues may clash, and to balance competing demands.

A virtue-based professional ethics course could include the following:

- Defining ethics in philosophical and professional contexts.
- Identifying different approaches to professional ethics; prioritising professional application over abstract philosophy in explaining the main alternatives.
- Articulating the mission, vision, and culture of the organisation – considering who is responsible for ethics and its applications in practice.
- Honing the organisation's code of professional ethics – understanding and following a code and making the code

relevant to professionals.

- Considering which the key virtues at stake are. For example, integrity, trustworthiness, etc.
- Developing ethical reasoning skills, i.e. *phronesis*.
- Understanding the nature and limitations of a solely compliance focus to ethical practice, and the role that whistleblowing can play.

There is no comprehensive list of skills that such introductory ethics courses can seek to develop, but it is certainly the case that undertaking one training session should not be seen as sufficient to 'complete' one's ethical education.

Graduate entry to a number of the professions includes university short courses in professional ethics. Pre-service professionals are required to cultivate certain ethical perspectives and commitments appropriate to their chosen profession. Traditional university courses, however, often treat ethics as an area of theoretical content, privileging cognitive outcomes – reasoning, interpretive, evaluative, and critical abilities about moral issues. This approach is concerned with knowledge, and analysis and is far removed from the aspiration that the student becomes ethical in the sense of being a certain kind of person. The ethical life of pre-service professionals is seldom a subject of discussion or study.

7.2 'Caught' Virtues

Much of professional ethics will be *caught* from the workplace environment and organisational culture. Practical wisdom will

not be caught from a learning environment that is inimical to virtue development. Whatever the quality of teaching materials or delivery of ethics, no significant learning will take place unless the workplace culture that surrounds it is conducive to such learning.

Role-modelling is an effective mode of ethical education, role models can be drawn from great literary narratives, from the close family, from popular culture and current affairs, or from other aspects of life. Role models can be presented through biographies and narratives that focus on the trials and tribulations that they may experience, the ethical scenarios that they encounter, and the qualities of character and examples of practical wisdom that they show in their decision-making. The best role models for professional ethics education are *attainable* and *relatable* ones (Han *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, the ideal moral exemplars are not literary figures, but people who are already close to the moral learner, such as university tutors and workplace colleagues who serve as models for emulation.

7.3 Cultivating Practical Wisdom

Methods of developing practical wisdom should always aspire to cultivate a *sought* approach from students, whereby they pursue opportunities for personal moral development independently. This is not straightforward, and, indeed, may explain – in part – why current ethics courses remain theoretically focussed.

The professional ethics courses available currently, and accessible to open online searches, appear to have a heavy focus on

the practical implementation of ethics in the workplace. Whilst there is also some focus on knowledge of ethical theories, this is not as prominent as the practical side of the courses.

There is less of a focus on developing professionals of good character, who possess the right virtues, with no mention at all (in the selected ethics programmes searched) of empowering individuals to use their own moral reasoning to make the right ethical decisions. Where there is mention of ‘virtue’, or reference to specific virtues, (often they

are referred to as ‘values’), this is often not linked to the idea of developing a collective professional practical wisdom, or for a wider notion of flourishing. Often, notions of personal and professional ‘values’ are presented as separate.

There is no official list among ethical educators of the precise set of skills and principles an ethics course should develop. We propose that they should seek a number of outcomes, including: professionals being reflective and thoughtful; being able to

identify and articulate moral issues; being conscious of cultural context; understanding the potential consequences of moral issues and being aware of rules and policies. Table 2 outlines three interconnected components that, when integrated into professional education programmes, help build ethical professionals. The three components are intended to be indicative of the key principles relevant to each component. Virtue propels action and action in turn creates virtues.

Table 2: Becoming an Ethical Professional

| Aspects of an Ethical Professions | | Components | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | | Knowledge/Expertise | Good Character | Good Practice |
| 1 | Virtue | Intellectual virtues | Moral virtues | Performance virtues |
| 2 | Competence | <i>Knowing</i> a certain kind of expertise | <i>Being</i> a person with self-awareness | <i>Doing</i> a certain kind of job with competence |
| 3 | Self-Knowledge | Gaining appropriate <i>theoretical</i> and <i>technical</i> knowledge | Percieving ourselves as we are | <i>Transferring</i> knowledge and skills that are aided by practical wisdom into ethical practice |
| 4 | Moral Identity | Developing <i>reasoning</i> and <i>judgement</i> | Developing your sense of who you are and <i>how you want to be</i> in the world | Aspirations that are acquired through practice |
| 5 | Motivation | <i>Balancing</i> education and training to not over train or under-educate | Cultivating motivation to <i>link</i> ethical judgement and action | Doing the right thing and having the <i>determination</i> to complete the task |
| 6 | Practical Wisdom (<i>Phronesis</i>) | Cultivating knowledge that helps to <i>illuminate</i> and <i>propel</i> you on the path to professional competence | Gaining practical wisdom through <i>formational experiences</i> | Virtuous professional action |
| 7 | Internalisation | Attaining <i>emotional intelligence</i> and cognitive abilities | Holding <i>personal values</i> and goals | Learning from <i>doing</i> |
| 8 | Application | Acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills | Possessing <i>purpose</i> and meaning | Successfully <i>applying</i> and implementing |
| 9 | Action | Knowing <i>how and when</i> to act | Discerning <i>how best</i> to act | Having the <i>disposition</i> to act |

If ethical education only focus on imparting knowledge and expertise, it can become disconnected from professionals’ day-to-day experiences. Knowledge by itself does not necessarily lead to ethical practice. The integration of all three of the components presented above is essential in any pre-service education and continuing professional

development programme. The content presented in Table 2 strikes a balance between calls for more ethics and less philosophy and between more practice and less theory.

More practical ethics usually means an emphasis on professional decision-making. However, we also need to treat ethics as a

matter of rationality, objective reasoning, curiosity, and critical thinking. Philosophy teaches us to think critically and to reason about difficult questions. We need to retain some degree of careful analysis of moral concepts and the study of normative theories and principles within any ethical course. We also need to recognise that practical

ethics cannot be limited to a classroom or online session and must involve a practical experience in a workplace environment.

7.4 Research-informed

The Jubilee Centre's approach to virtue-based professional ethics is data-driven, as well as

being theoretical in a virtue-based sense; i.e., it is grounded in extensive empirical research into how professionals in the UK make ethical decisions, value certain virtues in themselves and others, and find (or lose) ethical purpose within their profession. It is hoped that the present *Framework* will aid professionals – in the UK and elsewhere – to articulate

their sense of professional purpose and to consolidate their understanding of the nature and value of practical wisdom, in the service of both their own personal and professional flourishing for the common good.

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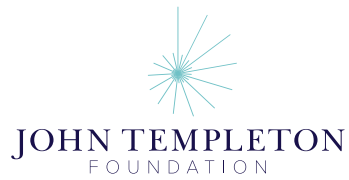
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For more information about the *Framework*, or to view published research and resources, or to get involved with the work of the Jubilee Centre, please visit www.jubileecentre.ac.uk

