

**ADVISORY EXPERT COMMITTEE FOR THE TEACHING OF ETHICS
DIVISION OF ETHICS OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHS/EST)
UNESCO**

Meeting Minutes

Venue: UNESCO HQs, Bonvin Building
Room XVI
1, rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France

Date: 5-6 July 2007

Participants:

Members of Advisory Expert Committee:

- Mr Ruben Apressyan, COMEST, Russian Federation
- Mr Amnon Carmi, UNESCO Chair, Israel
- Mr Leonardo de Castro, IBC, Philippines
- Mr Donald Evans, IBC, New Zealand
- Mr Diego Gracia, COMEST, Spain
- Mrs Nouzha Guessous-Idrissi, IBC, Morocco
- Mr John Williams, WMA

Members of the Secretariat:

- Mr Henk ten Have, Director SHS/EST
- Mrs Carrie Marias, SHS Regional Adviser (West Africa), UNESCO Dakar
- Mr Darryl Macer, SHS Regional Adviser (Asia Pacific), UNESCO Bangkok
- Mr Tee Wee Ang, SHS/EST

Guests

- Mr Moty Benyakar, Argentina
- Mr Juan Jorge Farina, Argentina

Apologies:

- Mr D. Balasubramaniam, TWAS

Discussion:

The committee recognized that it is necessary to encourage global ownership of the core proposal by increasing the number of examples and cases drawn from various cultural, religious and philosophical traditions. As such, the secretariat will invite participants of the consultation meeting to submit more examples, cases and ideas for consideration and inclusion.

It was also decided that an introduction to the curriculum should be drafted, outlining the purpose of and justification for the core, clarifications on how the core could be used (use and transformation of the units in different years), methods of assessment, clarifications on the level of teaching (non-clinical and clinical stages) and medical orientation of the core, and supplementary materials and additional topics. It was recommended that the introduction emphasize that the core would probably be more effective for students who are already in the clinical phase of their medical education; and that students engaging in research with human beings should partake in additional training beyond the core. It was further recommended that the content note in the core's contents page, explaining the coherence between certain units and the need to teach them in conjunction, should be removed and inserted into the introduction as a guideline.

With regards to the list of specific learning objectives, it was decided that these would be removed from the course learning objectives page. In addition, the following general learning objectives will be introduced in place of the existing one:

- Students should be able to identify ethical issues.
- Students should be able to reason and justify ethical decisions.
- Students should be able to apply ethical principles of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

A decision was made to separate the core proposal into two documents by the next meeting, with the first document containing the introduction, outline and teacher manual, and the second document containing the study materials. The secretariat will also explore the possibility of setting up a database of cases and other study materials for the core proposal so that this portion of the core can be continuously expanded and improved. It was pointed out that cases included in the core should be checked for content that is politically sensitive in some Member States of UNESCO, as well as to ensure that names of countries are removed. The originality and intellectual property rights of cases collected for the core should also be carefully reviewed.

With regards to research, it was decided that no new unit need to be added as the existing units already apply to research and could be improved by adding more discussion and cases on research.

It was decided that Unit 1 and Unit 2 would be kept in the core curriculum with modifications to include more examples, cases and perspectives from around the world. Furthermore, the introduction to the curriculum should suggest that these two units could be adapted to the local context. The secretariat will invite participants of the consultation meeting to submit suggestions for these two units in particular. Mr Gracia invited other members of the committee to co-author these two units. Mr de Castro will get in touch with experts in the bioethics community for ideas that could be incorporated, and Mr Evans is invited to restructure the units.

In Unit 3, some remarks on the different approaches to dignity in different cultures should be added, highlighting the points of divergence and convergence of these different

approaches. This could then be followed by a more philosophical articulation. It was decided that the article by Ruth Macklin should be removed from the group discussion and perhaps inserted into the supplementary resource materials together with articles and responses from other regions. The group discussion for this unit should be replaced by an exercise to discuss whether human dignity is a useless concept, stating that such an idea currently exists. It was also suggested that human rights should be outlined and better integrated into this unit.

In Unit 4, it was pointed out that “do no harm” is a pre-Hippocratic notion and should be recognized as such. With regards to study materials, if no relevant cases are found for the ideas listed under the cases section by the next draft of the proposal, these will be deleted. It was decided that all references to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM IV) in the group discussion’s case should be removed, and more guidelines should be provided on how this case could be discussed.

In Unit 5, it was suggested that paragraph 1-a-ii be removed, and the unit should only have a general description of autonomy. It was also pointed out that the unit should emphasize that autonomy is not contrary but complementary to collective decision-making. With regards to the comment about the existence of autonomy beyond responsibility, it was asserted that this is not autonomy but self will.

In Unit 6, more attention should be given to consent in research situations (as a separate paragraph to increase the visibility of this aspect); to the supposed antagonism between community and individual consent (community consent might be needed but individual consent is always required); and to the circumstances influencing consent such as community traditions and illiteracy. It was also suggested that paragraph 4 be reordered as 4-b, 4-c, 4-d, 4-e, 4-a, 4-f and 4-g. This unit should also be consistent with the upcoming Report of the IBC on Consent.

In Unit 7, more attention should be given to research situations (as a separate paragraph to increase the visibility of this aspect). The second sentence of paragraph 2-b-v-1 should also be modified to “On the one extreme, demented people cannot make coherent choices”. It was also suggested that paragraph 3 should include the role of normative ethical provisions; and that paragraph 3-b should include more specific provisions within international human rights law on consent and capacity to consent (this paragraph should explicitly state that international human rights law must be given priority over national legislation). Since the Anglo-Saxon distinction between “competence” and “capacity” might not translate to other languages or cultures, it was decided that the term “capacity” is preferred for the syllabus. It was also highlighted that “advance directive” or “living wills” should be in accordance with domestic law.

In Unit 8, it was asserted that the term “chronic illness” in paragraph 2-c-iv is not accurate, and suggested that the term “new illness” be utilized instead.

Mr Williams will review Unit 9 to see if it is too restrictive. It was suggested that the term “related to autonomy” in paragraph 1 be reworded; and that some reflection be made

on the confidentiality of public figures. In paragraph 4, it was pointed out that secrecy is a duty while privacy and confidentiality are rights (Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). It was further clarified that the exercise under role-play should be moved to group discussion.

With regards to the comment made during the consultation meeting that more examples of global inequalities should be included for Unit 10, it was decided that these would be better placed in Unit 15.

In Unit 11, it was suggested that traditional medicine should be mentioned, but important to describe this situation as a reality and not a norm. Concerns were raised that the two cases of this unit might not be suitable.

In Unit 12, it was decided that the word “traditional” in case 2 should be removed from its title; and that paragraph 1-a should be expanded to include a definition of pluralism. It was suggested that objective 3 could be rephrased to state that students should be able to deal with cultural diversity and take into consideration cultural specificities (appropriate approach and limits). An observation was made that moral diversity could be covered under paragraph 1-a. It was further suggested that traditional healing could perhaps be included as a different knowledge system under paragraph 1-c-i.

In Unit 15, it was recognized that the cases are too lengthy and should be summarized while maintaining the purpose of illustrating different models of benefit sharing. The acronyms ICBG and ICBP in the cases should be checked and expanded.

In Unit 17, under objective 2, the spelling of “anthropocentric” should be corrected. It was suggested that the 1987 UN Report *Our Common Future* (Brundland Report) and the Report of the Club of Budapest should be included.

With regards to the production of multimedia resources for the core proposal, it was suggested that a password protected website be established by Mr Benyakar’s team so that members of the committee are able to submit and review ideas of video clips that might be useful for the curriculum (submitted video clips must be accompanied by a translated transcript in English). Considering the global reach of the curriculum, it was pointed out that Mr Benyakar’s team would require funding for the translation and technical work needed to create a comprehensive multimedia resource for the core proposal. If possible, each unit should be supplemented with two or three video clips illustrating different perspectives and contexts from around the world. It was recommended that the secretariat investigate the possibility and feasibility of establishing a centralized international arrangement for copyrights of the video clips to be used for the multimedia resource. Members of the committee were invited to suggest video clips from movies that might be useful for this effort.