

# The Moral Compass: Introducing The Principles of The MHA/MCA Through A Symbolic Bioethical Framework

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## Project method

PUPSM introduces medical students to the principles underlying the Mental Health and Mental Capacity Acts through the Moral Compass model, a symbolic model based on an alphabetic list of the major bioethical principles (see below). This structured bioethical framework highlights potential oppositions between major ethical principles including the necessary balance between benevolence and autonomy (red axis). The compass mnemonic is also linked to thinking around the patient in 360 degrees to help students consider ways to address / mitigate the “losses” experienced due to illness under each principle heading.

A	Autonomy		associated loss related to illness
B	Benevolence		A loss of control / dignity
C	Confidentiality		B direct losses due to effects of disease
D	Do no harm		C loss of privacy
E	Equality		D indirect losses due to iatrogenic effects
			E socioeconomic losses due to illness

The same bioethical principle also map to the five guiding principles of the updated Code of Practice for the Mental Health Act per below.

		MHA 1983: Guiding Principle
A	autonomy	empowerment & involvement
B	beneficence	purpose & effectiveness
C	confidentiality	respect & dignity
D	do no harm	least restrictive option
E	equality	efficiency & equity

The Moral Compass is used to anchor ethical and legal content relating to mental health and capacity issues within the spiral curriculum. The ultimate learning objective is to provide students with a firm foundation for ethical practice throughout their careers in a format which is easy to recall at the bedside, and in complex and challenging clinical circumstances. The same model has been extended into a general form patient social contract (attached).

## Project results/evaluation

Understanding of the MCA is evaluated by both formative and summative assessment. A jewel in the crown of the undergraduate teaching at Plymouth is the 2 hour weekly clinical reasoning sessions undertaken in years 3+ 4. A senior clinician will explore understanding of student clerking/ presentations with a maximum of 3 students. During the multiple adult and old age mental health related sessions, understanding of the MCA is evaluated(formative assessment). Also, during the Observed Mental State Examination in-vivo competency assessment, students can be asked to comment on mental capacity assessment.

## Project area classification

Hospital care	X	Dementia	X
GP care	X	Learning disability	X
Social care		Other mental health	X

Voluntary sector		Palliative care	X
Financial services		Advance planning, LPAs	X
Police		Commissioning	
Legal		Training	X
Community health care	X	For professionals?	X
Nursing and care home	X	For public and service users?	
Acute care	X	Emergency care	X
Chronic care	X		