



AS

# Religious Studies

7061/1 Philosophy of religion and ethics

Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

All questions were marked with direct reference to the published Level Descriptors for AO1 and AO2.

There were some very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years, and most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers. There was limited critical analysis at AO2. Some students have been taught to write ‘this is a strong argument because...’ or ‘this is a weak argument because.’ This strategy does not always lead to creditable critical analysis. What is required is a reply to an argument presented, or a dialogue between different views.

### **1.1 Explain the relationship between reason and faith in arguments for the existence of God.** **[15 marks]**

Some students appear to have found this question difficult; some left it until the end and others skipped it altogether. However, there were some very successful responses to this question which considered directly the interplay between reason and faith in at least one of the arguments for the existence of God. The majority of students discussed the ontological argument and one other. Students who mentioned faith and reason in the context of a more general analysis of arguments for the existence of God were able to access the middle levels of response, but those who merely set out the arguments without considering the roles of faith and reason in them were unable to progress beyond Level 2, ‘limited application to the question’.

### **1.2 ‘Religious experiences have little influence on religious faith.’** **Assess this view.** **[15 marks]**

The strongest answers considered critically the influence of specific types of religious experiences on the faith of individual and communities, and in many cases on the foundation of a religion, with reference to appropriate scholars. References to epilepsy and Persinger’s experiments as non-religious explanations for such experiences were creditable. Some stronger answers then engaged critically with these explanations. Answers which focused on describing one or more specific religious experiences with limited reference to their influence on faith struggled to exceed Level 3 because they lacked the necessary focus. As with all the AO2 answers, some critical analysis was required for Level 4 and above, so those students who merely enumerated arguments for and against the statement without any dialogue between them were unable to achieve the highest levels.

### **2.1 Explain how the evidential problem of evil influences belief in God.** **[15 marks]**

Most students were able to describe the problem of evil, but not all of them addressed the *evidential* problem of evil in their response. Similarly, some explained the evidential problem well, but struggled to explain how it influences belief in God. The best answers showed a clear understanding of the focus of the question and incorporated good evidence and examples in their explanation.

**2.2 ‘Arguments for the existence of God do not prove that God exists.’****Assess this view.****[15 marks]**

Those students who had learnt the arguments for the existence of God and criticisms of them required by the specification were able to access at least Level 3, and there were relatively few who failed to do so. There were some students who confused the names and arguments of scholars featured in the specification, which sometimes limited the effectiveness of the evidence presented. As in all the AO2 answers, the presence and quality of critical analysis was usually the factor which determined the higher levels.

**3.1 Explain different approaches to moral decision making.****[15 marks]**

This question had a cap at Level 2 for answers that explained only one approach. The majority of students were able to describe at least two approaches using appropriate language to describe the *approach*, for example that Natural Moral Law is largely deontological. Mid-range answers tended to list theories with limited reference to the approach of each one. Weaker answers merely described one or more normative ethical theories, and in a few cases, there was considerable confusion between theories.

**3.2 ‘Character based ethics have more strengths than weaknesses.’****Assess this view.****[15 marks]**

Compared to other AO2 questions, many students performed less well on this. Apart from the few who did not know what character-based ethics are, almost all were able to enumerate some strengths and weaknesses. However, this misses the thrust of the question, which asked students to consider *whether or not* there are more strengths. Since focus is a key feature of Level 4 and Level 5 responses, those who merely listed strengths and weaknesses, often two of each, and then concluded that they agreed or disagreed with the statement were unable to move beyond Level 3. The best answers used critical analysis, and focused on whether or not the number of strengths is greater than the weaknesses.

**4.1 Explain ethical arguments for and against capital punishment.****[15 marks]**

There were some sound responses to this question which mostly applied Natural Moral Law and Situation Ethics, each supporting one view. The best answers showed how two or more ethical theories might both argue for and against capital punishment depending on how they are applied. There were a few answers which failed to use any of the specification ethical theories and depended on general knowledge and unsupported opinion, and these generally failed to progress beyond Level 2.

**4.2 ‘Voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide are morally justifiable.’****Assess this view.****[15 marks]**

The prominence of this topic in current affairs clearly influenced many responses to this question, which was, in general, done well. There were some passionate arguments in favour of voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide, which were mostly treated as a single topic. A few students were so carried away with their own strong, often well-supported, view that they omitted to offer an alternative view, and these

answers were limited to Level 2. As for all AO2 questions, the very best responses showed good critical analysis. Simply listing arguments in support and against the statement without critical analysis limited marks to the top of Level 3.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.