

**AS LEVEL**

Examiners' report

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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**H173**

For first teaching in 2016

**H173/02 Summer 2024 series**

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## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper 2 series overview

The Religion and ethics paper introduces candidates to a range of both religious and secular ethical theories as well as looking at key debates within the field. The paper assesses knowledge and understanding (50%) and analysis and evaluation (50%).

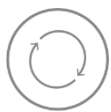
The responses this year demonstrated that candidates seemed to be well prepared by their centres and very few candidates attempted to answer all three questions. The legibility of some scripts remained challenging and this may be due to candidates not having the experience or practice of writing essays by hand.

The responses to this year's questions saw a full range of ability. Successful responses showed developed arguments with clear, focused exemplification of the content of the key ideas. These also had sustained and justified judgements on the issue raised by the question.

The responses that were less successful were not as focused on the question or did not demonstrate the required knowledge and understanding of the specified topic. In their evaluation, these candidates stated alternate ideas but did not actively evaluate or analyse in relation to the question.

Entries this year seemed to be more AO1-driven, and as a consequence, at times the analysis and evaluation required for AO2 in order to address the question were noticeably absent.

### Assessment for learning



Although 50% of the marks are for AO1 and 50% are for AO2, it is important for candidates to make sure that they are not prioritising one over the other. The two assessment objectives rely on each other and work most effectively when woven together.

### Focus on the specific wording of the question

It is important to emphasise that candidates need to focus on the full wording of what the question requires them to address/discuss, rather than the general topic area.

Question 2 was the most popular question that the majority of candidates attempted; the other two questions were as popular as each other.

Overall, most candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the ethical approaches/perspectives effectively to address the questions to the best of their ability.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wrote specific responses to the question that had been asked on the paper</li> <li>• focused on the wording of the question and the terminology used; for example, 'most useful' in Question 1</li> <li>• produced essays that developed an argument focused on the question and sustained it throughout, culminating in an appropriate conclusion</li> <li>• were able to select scholarly material to exemplify their points and counterpoints</li> <li>• effectively selected material to use to address the question; this was often about what was excluded rather than what was put in to the essay</li> <li>• were able to balance their argument effectively, using at least two different approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outlined all that they knew about the topic/area of study, rather than focusing on the question; for example, in Question 2 outlining all of the key points of Kant's ethical theory</li> <li>• prioritised knowledge rather than engagement with analysis and evaluation</li> <li>• conflated aspects of different ethical or philosophical theories together in an attempt to develop synopticity</li> <li>• prioritised their own general knowledge and opinion rather than using the ethical theories/approaches to address the question.</li> </ul>

## Question 1\*

1\* 'The four working principles are the most useful part of Situation Ethics.' Discuss.

[30]

In addressing the question, some candidates identified that there was a requirement to evaluate the four working principles in relation to other aspects of Situation Ethics and to come to a conclusion whether the four working principles are the most useful of the aspects of the theory.

Less successful responses evaluated the usefulness of the four working principles without comparison or contrast with other aspects of Situation Ethics. Other less successful responses chose to compare and evaluate the principles with other ethical ideas like telos, duty or utility, therefore, becoming an analysis of the most useful ethical system.

Very successful responses demonstrated nuanced understanding of how the four working principles can be useful if applied with agape rather than by other motivators. Some successful responses analysed each of the principles and concluded that perhaps not all four of the principles were the most useful parts of Situation Ethics. The effective evidence that these candidates used to support their arguments included a variety of thinkers, as well as specific examples that Fletcher used himself beyond just 'Mrs Bergmeier'.

Fewer candidates this year answered this question by reducing it simply to 'doing the most loving thing' and therefore the exemplification of AO1 was better than in previous sessions.

## Exemplar 1

	<p>Weaknesses of the four working principles include the fact that they may be too broad and hard to apply in every situation, that rather features such as the agapeic calculator make decision making in more specific situations easier. For example, in certain situations, personalism may be harder to apply as there are larger groups of people, in this case the agapeic calculator would need to be used to calculate the net good + most loving action for the most people. The agapeic-calculator is a flawed component of situation ethics, however, as consequences cannot be calculated as they go on forever, as rightly put forward by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This argument renders the agapeic calculator useless.</p> <p>A weakness of both the agapeic calculator and the four working principles is their subjectivity, the most loving and the most pragmatic solution tends to vary from person</p>
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to person and therefore can't be used to build an ethical theory from. For example, ~~Richard~~ ~~uses~~ ~~the~~ ~~example~~ ~~of~~ ~~sacrificial~~ ~~altruism~~

A somewhat valid argument could be brought forth arguing that the 6 six fundamental principles are the most useful part of situation ethics, however this is ~~clearly~~ not a great argument as only some fundamental principles are really strong while some tend to be weaker. For example the principle that the "Ruling norm of Christianity is brotherly love" is criticised by Richard Mouw<sup>(2)</sup> for disregarding the other rules and norms of Christianity that take ~~precedence~~ precedent in many cases. This argument could also be argued ~~link~~ link to the four working principles also, especially relativism as in *Veritatis Splendor* (1988) Pope John Paul II argues ~~for the~~ ~~existence~~ ~~of~~ ~~moral~~ ~~absolutes~~ <sup>that there is the existence</sup> within Christianity. While situation ethicists bring forth the example of the Sabbath, absolutists use Matthew 5 to justify that explain how Jesus puts law above all as he says "I did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it".

~~This would render some of the working principles~~ <sup>or relativism as</sup> ~~practical and useful~~ ~~an impractical and useless for legalist Christians~~ This example challenges ~~the~~ 6. This example shows how impractical situation ethics is for ~~an~~ absolutist Christians who put the law in the bible above human want in decision making.

This response demonstrated good understanding of the four working principles in an earlier paragraph and then in this extract weaves together other aspects of Situation Ethics (fundamental propositions) to analyse whether the four principles are the most useful. The reference to scholars and the use of the propositions show that this is a candidate who is focused on the question.

## Question 2\*

2\* Assess the view that Kantian ethics relies too much on reason to be of help in moral decision-making.

[30]

This question was the most commonly answered question this year and was the question that at times showed the biggest disparity between the balance of AO1 and AO2. Many candidates identified the question as focusing on strengths and weaknesses of the ethical teachings of Immanuel Kant and they proceeded to outline everything that they knew about Kantian ethics, e.g. duty, categorical versus hypothetical imperatives, three postulates, summum bonum, etc. Some candidates did refer to reliance on reason but did not link it to moral decision making.

The accuracy of AO1 was mostly good, however the selection of appropriate material to address the specific question was not always effectively managed by candidates.

Many candidates had a generally good understanding of reason and attempted to use Kant's theory to explain and exemplify his use of it; some candidates included examples to make their points clear, the most common being the enquiring murderer and the shopkeeper. However, practical examples illustrating points were not always used effectively to focus on the set question.

Less successful responses reduced Kant's theory to just following rules and duty and, therefore, following reason is following rules/duty. Many of these responses also stated knowledge with some explanation but were not focused on the specific question.

Candidates who successfully focused on the question were able to effectively select appropriate material from Kant's teachings to develop coherent and suitably justified arguments to address the question. These candidates were able to access the highest marks by contrasting the knowledge of Kantian ethics' reliance on reason with alternative perspectives, including the use of empathy and sympathy when making moral decisions.

In general, candidates had very good knowledge of Kantian ethics but didn't always transfer the knowledge effectively into analysis of the question.

### Engaging fully with all of the question

It is important for candidates to identify that a question may require them to analyse and evaluate more than one aspect of the theory/approach, e.g. Kantian ethics has too much reliance on reason *and* how this reliance on reason may be unhelpful in moral decision making.

## Exemplar 2

	<p>comfort. Home rightly supports this idea of loyalty and argues that MAs do not treat everyone equally but favour some people over others. Therefore, by relying on reason KE becomes unrealistic for MAs as it expects MAs to cause harsh and undesirable consequences for their loved ones. However, Kantian ethicists argue that KE strives for a good end through the KOE. KE The third formula of the CI states that MAs should make decisions as if they lived in a perfect moral society (the KOE). This <sup>weakly</sup> shows that KE <del>strives for</del> ultimately strives for a loving end in the KOE. However, this is too abstract and uncertain to be justification for harsh moral actions. Therefore KE is too reliant on reason as it disregards the role of love and loyalty in moral decision making.</p>
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This response demonstrates good focus on the question set and both refers to the 'reliance on reason' and evaluates how this affects moral decision making. The focus on moral agents (MA) and reference to the categorical imperatives (CI) exemplifies good use of AO1 which is then analytically used to develop a well-reasoned and supported evaluation.

### Question 3\*

3\* To what extent is corporate social responsibility more important than profit-making for business? [30]

This question was generally well answered by most candidates, although there was some disparity between business ethics knowledge and application of knowledge of the ethical approaches. Many candidates were able to apply appropriate AO1 knowledge from across the business ethics topic to effectively illustrate both concepts in the question. However, some candidates were less effective in demonstrating their AO1 knowledge in responding to the question due to misconceptions about what corporate social responsibility means, e.g. only multinational businesses can be socially responsible.

The question could be approached in a variety of valid ways, as long as the argument presented was in relation to whether corporate social responsibility is more important than profit-making.

Many candidates took the approach of using ethical theories (predominantly Kantian ethics and utilitarianism) to assess the question. The more effective responses that took this approach were able to use alternate interpretations of the ethical approaches (e.g. prima facie duty, preference utilitarianism, proportionalism) to provide a nuanced and analytical investigation of the question with reference to practical examples to illustrate their points. Less successful responses that took the ethical theory approach were more likely to outline content of the theory with a short evaluative point about corporate social responsibility or profit-making at the end.

The other common approach to the question was to explore the importance of both principles in the question through exemplification of business ethics theories and practical examples, with some candidates exploring the role and importance of whistleblowing or globalisation as examples to support both principles. These responses, for the most part, were successful, nuanced and focused in their analysis of the question with some good evidence and application of the normative ethical theories.

More skilful responses showed a diversity of content and relevant practical examples, with many concluding that if a business is a morally good profit-making business then it is a corporately socially responsible business and therefore neither is more important than the other.

#### Practical examples used in applied ethics

Many of the examples that candidates use are older examples that appear repeatedly in various sources (e.g. Rana Plaza, Nestlé, Enron). Some candidates learn these examples without fully understanding their relevance to the theory as they are less contemporary examples. It may be useful to include and explore some more modern business studies examples to assist with understanding of the concepts/theories, e.g. the Post Office or the Boeing whistle-blower.

## Exemplar 3

3	<p>§ <del>Corporate</del> Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the idea that businesses hold some responsibility for things outside of making a profit. Some examples of CSR may include: environmental sustainability, social <del>or</del> good working conditions etc... In this essay I will argue that CSR is <sup>more</sup> <del>equally</del> important <del>as</del> profit making.  <sub>than</sub></p>
	<p>One of the arguments for businesses making a profit being <del>more</del> important <del>than</del> businesses <del>make</del> do the most important thing comes from Milton Friedman, who argued that the sole purpose of a business is to maximise profit, and that it is ethical for a business to do this. From a Utilitarian standpoint, this may be valid, as <del>max</del> when a business maximises profit, they will try and reduce average cost, meaning they can offer cheaper goods. This means consumers will benefit from lower prices leading to a general increase in standard of living. However, it could be argued that this is only the case in high income countries (HICs), and that in LICs workers will be exploited, so it could be argued that the net happiness created is actually quite low. Furthermore from a Kantian standpoint, this would be unacceptable, as if the businesses sole purpose was to maximise profit, firstly they would use consumers as a means to an end of making a profit; then they would use workers as a mere means to produce goods and services; <del>and they <del>eventually</del> use Earth's <del>resources</del></del> This goes against Kant's second categorical imperative. Businesses only making a profit would also go against the first categorical imperative, as when businesses solely focus on making a profit, they will not help anyone</p>

around them, and universalizing this would create a world other which one would not will, ~~as~~ as you say "no man is an island" and everyone requires help.

In addition, returning to the Utilitarian approach, it may seem that cheap products ~~are~~ maximise happiness at first, but as time passes, ~~at~~ a future world in which companies focus only on profit may be dystopian, leading to happiness not being maximised. Furthermore, it could be argued that buying things is like a lower pleasure, so J.S Mill would argue that from a utilitarian point of view, cheap goods would not maximise happiness.

Since, ~~maximising profits~~ leads to a dystopian future, it could be argued that although one of the purposes of a business is to ~~make~~ make a profit, it could be argued businesses should also ~~focus on~~ CSR\*. Firstly, if businesses do not treat workers well, there may be high turnover, ~~so~~ ~~has~~ due to low worker satisfaction, meaning they will not make much produce anymore, leading to lower total profit. In addition, consumers are more attracted to businesses with more CSR, so this will boost ~~consumers~~ is the company's public image and drive sales up. Furthermore, if businesses did not worry about environmental CSR, although in the short run they may make a lot of profit in the long run, they will ~~not~~ ~~make~~ many people endanger the future of the world itself, by increasing climate change's effects, making parts of the world uninhabitable. This would

\* Furthermore, it could be argued CSR leads to higher profits.

definitely reduce their profits, as they would reduce the population of the world ~~and~~ thus reducing the number of possible consumers. Furthermore, unsustainable use of resources could lead to resources being depleted, due to the tragedy of the commons, ultimately leading to businesses shutting down. So, from this it is clear that CSR leads to maximising profits to some extent.

\*2

However, it could be argued that the Utilitarian and Kantian approaches ~~only~~ there will always be people who run businesses that will be unethical, and will always find a way to attract consumers. One of these ways may be lower prices, and since humans are inclined to save money, they will go to these unethical businesses regardless, as it is a Augustinian world argue that humans will always go for lower prices as our nature is fallen. Furthermore, even if consumers thought of the consequences, and only went to businesses with CSR, it is arguable that most people will still go to the firm with lower prices. This may disincentivise businesses to follow CSR.

\* Finally, Adam Smith, the father of economics argues that CSR is very much needed, as without CSR, companies may do unethical things leading to unethical government intervention, which undermines the power of free market economies, as government intervention reduces the efficiency of free trade, and the invisible forces of the demand and supply. Milton Friedman also agrees that free markets are better, so surely his profit maximisation principle is flawed, as the profit maximisation function leads to (1) a ~~fact~~ world which

		we cannot will and (2) a world where profits diminish over time due to <del>environment</del> not being sustainable.
		In conclusion, I believe that CSR is more important than profits, as CSR leads to profits, and without CSR, the world would not be a place which can be lived. Furthermore, it is impossible to separate ethics from business, according to Dennet, so businesses should be ethical. Although on the exterior, CSR seems needed, it is very much needed.

This response shows a diversity of content exemplified with real-world applications and references to thinkers. The use of both Kant and utilitarianism is woven into the essay to provide a coherently developed and justified evaluation of the question. The question set requires an overview of ethical approaches to be explored and this response has done it effectively. The response demonstrates that a candidate can add relevant information after completing the essay by going back and further developing their justification/analysis of their points.

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