

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H573

For first teaching in 2016

H573/02 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction 3

Paper 2 series overview 4

 Question 1* 6

 Question 2* 7

 Question 3* 9

 Question 4* 11

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.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

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 some key debates within the field. The paper assesses knowledge and understanding (40%) and analysis and evaluation (60%).

Candidates' responses to the questions on this year's paper demonstrated the full range of marks. Questions 1 and 2 tended to be more popular than Questions 3 and 4. Where Question 4 was answered, responses were generally strong. Question 3 tended to produce slightly less successful responses on average. Candidates generally managed time well although there were some candidates who produced a shorter third essay. This may be due to less secure knowledge of an area or poor time management.

The AO1 seemed better than in the previous year. Candidates' knowledge of the subject areas being assessed was good, particularly on metaethics, which historically has not always been the case. Although not required to achieve top marks, it was pleasing to see that some candidates had broadened their learning from the standard material to cover negative utilitarianism on Question 2 and Philippa Foot's naturalism on Question 4. While AO1 was a little stronger overall, it was noticeable that understanding of ethical theories was superficial for some candidates – e.g. utilitarianism is just pleasing the majority. There was also some sense that although candidates knew the individual components of a theory such as natural law, they had difficulty in seeing the big picture of how the component parts linked to each other.

Candidates who used an argument driven approach outlining a thesis/judgement in the introduction and considering the arguments raised throughout tended to do well. Yet equally some candidates wrote essays where they outlined AO1 early on before moving on to the argument. There is no "OCR house style" in terms of essay writing and both approaches worked well for candidates.

Key point: The need to stop, think and plan

The questions are intended to test how well candidates can use the material they have studied to respond to a specific question. It is not just a recall test. Candidates need to think and plan their responses, rather than seeing a key word and launching into a long pre-prepared answer.

Where candidates did less well, selection and focus on the precise question was often an issue. A number of candidates attempted to write everything that they could think of that related to the question and this often resulted in a loss of focus. Selection of material in response to the question is as much about what a candidate leaves out as it is what they put in. In relation to this it was noticeable that many responses were significantly longer than in previous years. Longer is not necessarily better and in some cases the longer an essay was, the more the focus drifted. Candidates might have benefitted from more time spent thinking and planning rather than racing to see how much material they could include in the 40 minutes or so they were writing.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • had an in-depth knowledge of the content of the topics assessed • were focused and able to use material in order to respond to the precise question • were argument driven in their approach, writing coherent essays where the introduction, the main paragraphs and the conclusion clearly fitted together • understood some of the subtleties and nuances of the ethical theories that were being discussed • were able to see the connections between aspects of theories rather than viewing each aspect in isolation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produced essays where the focus wandered in and out of the precise question • seemed afraid of missing something out and attempted to do too much or to fit too much into the essay that they were writing • argued by assertion stating that a certain theory was flawed or that an argument was invalid without fully showing why • had a less developed understanding of ethical theories which, although not incorrect, were simplistic caricatures or outlines • were less able to see the links between aspects of theories, approaching them as separate chunks of information.

OCR support



Candidates may wish to look at the excellent [blog produced by the Subject Advisor](#) in consultation with senior examiners which explores advice on exam technique in more detail.

Question 1*

1* 'The five primary precepts are the most important part of natural law.' Discuss.

[40]

This question was answered reasonably well on the whole. Candidates generally demonstrated a secure knowledge of the primary precepts. They could describe natural law and related Thomistic factors of its application including: conscience; synderesis; double effect and the relationship with Aquinas' categories of law.

A common approach to this question was to outline a number of different features of natural law in turn before considering whether each one was more or less important than the primary precepts. This sometimes meant that AO1 scored higher than AO2. There was good discussion around the secondary precepts. Some candidates argued that the secondary precepts were better as they were more specific; others argued that the primary precepts were the basis of the secondary precepts and thus more significant. Some candidates were aware that both lines of argument could be validly made.

There was generally good consideration of the synderesis rule and the place of natural law within Aquinas' 4 tiers of law. This, on occasions, led to good discussions around orientation towards the good, the problem of the fallenness of humanity and the relative merits of methods based on reasoning versus those based on divine revelation. Understanding of ideas such as double effect was often less secure and real and apparent good were on occasions conflated with interior and exterior acts.

Responses that were less successful tended to see the various aspects of the theory of natural law as unconnected chunks or segments. These responses seemed unclear about how the pieces related to each other in the thought of Aquinas. This approach tended to miss the point and became an assessment of telos, double effect, etc. without linking back to consider the place of the primary precepts in the big picture.

Assessment for learning



Candidates struggled at times to make connections between the different aspects of natural law. An activity where students highlight different aspects of an idea and are invited to suggest a link may help them develop the big picture.

Other candidates focused almost entirely on the primary precepts and were intent of evaluating whether the primary precepts were helpful. These responses tended to suggest the precepts were outdated and not helpful in a more secular society. While these points may be partially relevant, the question requires that the relative importance of the precepts within the theory is explored.

Some candidates were able to make use of examples such as IVF, homosexuality, euthanasia etc to critique the primary precepts. In other cases, examples were not always explained clearly in a way that linked back precisely to the question.

Candidates tended to focus on Aquinas' version of natural law. A small number of candidates branched out to consider Aristotle, Stoicism and/or the work of John Finnis.

Question 2*

2* 'According to utilitarianism, a business should focus on profit-making and nothing else.' Discuss. [40]

This question was generally answered well with good content knowledge of both utilitarianism and business ethics. Typically, candidates contrasted act and rule versions of the theory, or Bentham and Mill, and came to a conclusion as to whether either of the approaches or scholars could support profit-making.

Understanding of utilitarianism was variable. There was some sophisticated awareness and application of John Stuart Mill, including his harm principle. A small number of candidates used Singer's preference utilitarianism and/or Popper's negative utilitarianism to good effect. Other candidates broadly understood utilitarianism but conflated all aspects of Mill's thinking (higher and lower pleasures, tyranny of the majority, non-harm, rules based on experience) under the label rule utilitarianism. Less successful responses did not tend to explain much beyond 'greatest good' and a sense that Bentham's wanted to 'keep the majority happy.'

There was good understanding of some of the issues raised in business ethics. Corporate social responsibility was often used as a counterargument to profit-making. There was good discussion of ethical issues raised by globalisation with some candidates showing good awareness of aspects of politics and economics such as the neo-liberal concept of trickle-down economics which suggests that profit will ultimately benefit all.

Most scripts successfully interwove utilitarianism and business ethics together so that they were not completely one-sided essays. Candidates who used utilitarianism to structure the essay tended to do better than those who attempted to structure using business ethics. Candidates who used the issues in business ethics to drive the essay following a 3-4 paragraph structure (corporate social responsibility, globalisation, good ethics is good business, whistleblowing) were not always able to be precise in linking to the question, particularly on the latter two issues.

Some candidates gave in-depth descriptive details of the case studies instead of using them efficiently to drive the argument. Better responses were able to use cases such as Rana Plaza, Ford Pinto and Sports Direct and apply utilitarian ideas to these examples to make an argument. Some candidates either through misreading or through a lack of subject knowledge tended to assume that all forms of utilitarianism support profit-making as this is majority 'happiness' or 'pleasure', and did not explore or justify this well.

Assessment for learning



The specification requires that candidates know about the hedonic calculus and act and rule utilitarianism. It is important that when faced with an applied ethics question, candidates don't overly simplify their account of utilitarianism and can explain how different aspects of the theory may apply to the issue in question.

Exemplar 1

		However, utilitarianism could justify a sole focus on profit due to its measuring of the
		intensity of a pleasure, due to the 'Hedonic Calculus'. The amount of pleasure shareholders derive from large amounts of money, as well as the pleasure of workers lifted from poverty due to Transnational corporations, & the overall trickle-down benefits of a free-market (as Thatcher argued), could mean that the pleasures of profit are valued as greater, therefore disregarding the suffering of child-labour, underpaid employees, & customers the dignity of the customers & their trust, as Kant would argue. Perhaps in this light, Kantian Ethics is better, as there is less confusion as to whether the focus should be on profits: rather, Kant emphasised the importance of treating people as ends, & that if one cannot universalise a law maxim (such as lying in business to increase profits) it cannot in good conscience be enacted. Perhaps such a clear guide emphasises that utilitarianism's sole focus in business truly is profit-making, as even its focus on prioritising everyone as equals can circle back to simply making the business look good for money.

A number of candidates showed good knowledge of the political and economic background to business ethics such as the views of Milton Friedman and ideas such as trickle-down economics.

Question 3*

3* To what extent is Kantian ethics only concerned with duty?

[40]

Although there were some strong responses, this question was answered less successfully overall. While many candidates knew some of the key features of Kantian Ethics, they were not always able to use these to write focused responses to the question.

Better responses showed subtlety in understanding of the role of duty and the scope of Kantian Ethics. There was some excellent analysis of the nature of 'duty' according to Kant and how important it is/is not. This included his rejection of emotion and consideration of the relative merits of the idea of 'good will'. Candidates used the Categorical Imperative formulations to good effect and argued either that these were more significant than duty or that these reaffirmed Kant's commitment to duty – both approaches could be made to work well.

A number of candidates made use of the idea of persons in the second formulation, and ideas of Freedom, Immortality and God in the 3 postulates to consider whether these were more or less significant than duty, or merely different aspects of one overall theme. Although most candidates had some understanding of these ideas, some struggled to demonstrate how these would support or oppose the focus on duty.

The two standard examples of the shopkeeper acting out of duty and the murderer inquiring about the location of his victim appeared commonly in answers. On occasions these were deployed to show how significant the idea of duty was to Kant that he demands such actions. On other occasions, the links to the question were not clear. A small number of candidates were able to extend the discussion to other scholars such as Ross or Sartre, using prima facie duties and conflicting duties to good effect.

Less successful responses tended to miss the point of the question and offer arguments for and against duty in ethics before offering a conclusion as to whether Kant is right to focus on duty. Some candidates did not focus sharply enough on duty and there were some unnecessary comparisons with other ethical theories. These comparisons did not add to the response and caused the response to lose focus.

There was some confusion at times around Kant's understanding of duty, which was explained either as vaguely 'doing the job you have been given' or was attributed to religious motives such as duty to God.

Misconception



There is some confusion around Kant and his religious ideas. Kant's idea of duty is not a duty to God. Nor is his kingdom of ends the same thing as the Summum Bonum or the Kingdom of God. Kant sees his 3 postulates which include the existence of God as being separate to the content of morality.

Exemplar 2

~~to~~ A weakness of Kantian ethics is that it places too much emphasis on duty. ~~To the~~ To Kant, in the scenario whereby a person is hiding from a murderer and you know where they ~~is~~ and they asked you where they were hiding, it would be against your duty to withhold ~~that~~ information of where they are. ~~However~~

~~This is~~ ~~too~~ ~~unconcerning~~ because Kant believed that given all actions have a consequence, not telling the murderer would hold ~~you~~ you responsible for any outcome. This argument is unconvincing given that it places duty over the safety of a ~~for~~ person to simply be truthful. A further criticism of Kant is that his rejection of emotion in decision making is unrealistic but also cold. For example, if a friend was in hospital and you went to visit them it would be out of worry and care for them not because it was your 'duty' to do so.

		therefore, Kant arguably places
		too much concern on the duty to
		an extent where it is almost
		impossible because emotions cannot
		simply be removed from a situation.

A number of candidates offered assessment of the problems of duty rather than considering its place within Kantian Ethics as the question required.

Question 4*

4* 'In meta-ethics, the term "good" has an objective factual basis.' Discuss.

[40]

This seemed to be a less popular question but when attempted, it was answered very successfully on the whole. Unlike in previous series, there were very few candidates who wrote normative ethics essays.

There was a depth and nuance when discussing the ideas, and a wide variety of scholarly views and examples. The knowledge demonstrated about naturalism in particular was impressive this year with good use of normative ideas in context to illustrate the position. This went beyond the usual Bentham/Mill and Aquinas and sometimes explored F H Bradley, Philippa Foot's ideas, or virtue theory more generally.

As with other questions, better responses were argument driven, often establishing early on what would be argued and why. Other candidates tended to deliver a standard metaethics essay going through naturalism-intuitionism-emotivism with some evaluation as they went along. This could achieve some success depending on whether the candidate was able to clearly link material back to the question; in other cases, ideas were merely juxtaposed and presented without relating them to each other. The best responses were those ones which were able to focus specifically on the question about the nature of goodness being objective.

Candidates were able to draw on a range of arguments both philosophical and sociological to support their views including discussion as to whether there is cultural agreement on moral views, the Is-Ought Gap, the Open Question Argument and the problems faced by a theory such as emotivism where the lack of moral truth risks trivialising ethical discussion. There was also good use of John Mackie's criticisms of objective morality such as the Argument from Queerness.

Candidates occasionally struggled with intuitionism; some responses still understood it in a colloquial fashion, almost a 'gut instinct' rather than as a metaphysical concept. Candidates recognised that intuitionism could be used to either agree or disagree with the question and both arguments were successfully made. There were at times subtle discussions about what may or may not constitute a fact.

OCR support



It has been pleasing to see more diverse thinkers being considered by candidates including some excellent use of Philippa Foot on this question. OCR have produced posters and videos to signpost teachers to some of these thinkers. These resources can be found on [Teach Cambridge](#).

Exemplar 3

Therefore, naturalism is the most effective meta-ethical theory, and it proves that the term "good" does have an objective factual basis. Naturalists believe that there is an external, objective moral law and that ~~to doing~~ what is right we must follow the law. The most convincing naturalist perspective is that of the philosopher Philippa Foot, since her view of naturalism avoids the criticism of theological and hedonist naturalism (such as the arguments that God doesn't exist or we cannot understand his will, or G.E. Moore's naturalist fallacy and open question criticism). Philippa Foot argues that moral evil is "a kind of natural defect" and that goodness ~~is an~~ has an objective factual basis because it is observable in the world. To prove this, she gave examples from the natural world, such as an oak tree with deep and sturdy roots. She claimed that we can ^{observe} ~~observe~~ that

an oak tree with deep and sturdy roots is a "good" oak tree because it is effective, rather than defective. She also gave the example of observable traits of goodness you can find in a person, such as their willingness to help others and their trustworthiness. ~~Philippa~~ Foot's examples are convincing arguments for the term "good" being objective and factual, since she shows evidence that "good" can be observed in the world.

This candidate has skilfully used the work of Philippa Foot as their example of a naturalist approach that overcomes some of the issues that other types of naturalism experience.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

[ExamBuilder](#) is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an [Interchange](#) account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

[Find out more](#).

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Need to get in touch?


If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk


For more information visit

 **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**

 **ocr.org.uk**

 **facebook.com/ocrexams**

 **twitter.com/ocrexams**

 **instagram.com/ocrexaminations**

 **linkedin.com/company/ocr**

 **youtube.com/ocrexams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



I like this



I dislike this

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2024 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource in your centre, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the resource. Resources intended for teacher use should not be shared with students. Resources should not be published on social media platforms or other websites.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.