



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE**

**Religious Studies (8RS0 02)**

Advanced Subsidiary Level

PAPER 2: Religion & Ethics

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## **8RS0\_02 AS Religious Studies June 2025**

There were fewer entries this year than in 2024 but candidate answers were sufficient to give a clear impression of how this subject is being processed by the candidates, what they enjoy and do well under examination conditions, and what they find more challenging. Overall, candidates managed their time to enable them to finish the paper and there were few significant gaps in knowledge, so most were able to attempt all the questions.

### **Question One**

Virtually all candidates were evidently able to identify some key features of Natural Moral Law and the best answers offered key details about Aquinas' contributions to the theory. Primary and secondary precepts, the naturalistic nature of the theory and practical applications were all well considered. The principle of Double Effect was included in stronger answers and even better response embraced Proportionalism. Less effective answers included reference to the primary precepts alone, or focussed on the theory's application to issues such as contraception or euthanasia.

### **Question Two**

There were many interesting answers to this question and whilst they were all essentially based on approaches to environmental ethics in general, they showed confidence in handling concepts of dominion and stewardship, deep and shallow ecology and Gaia theory. It was surprising, however, that most candidates could relate the welfare of animals only to wider environmental ethics. More well-informed candidates were able to refer to Peter Singer's concept of speciesism, but centres are encouraged to widen the scope of study to include the work of animal welfare campaigners and to theories of sentience and emotion in relation to non-human animals.

### **Question Three**

Candidates welcomed this question on Utilitarianism and in general it was the most well answered question on the paper. The majority of candidates focussed on the approaches of Bentham and Mill, drawing attention to the principle of utility, the Hedonic Calculus, Act and Rule Utilitarianism and the notion of higher and lower pleasures. Stronger answers were able to give a good account of Peter Singer's Preference Utilitarianism, whilst candidates who were able to refer to other perspectives, such as Negative Utilitarianism were very few in number.

#### **Question Four**

- (a) Martin Luther King was by far the best represented figure in these answers with many answers failing to go beyond a brief summary of his main achievements. Some candidates used Rosa Parks as the subject of their answers, but there was little representation of anyone outside of the civil rights campaign. The concept of 'contribution' was largely interpreted as 'what they did' rather than how their work may have influenced issues of equality in the present day, so it was particularly pleasing when this was raised in stronger answer.
- (b) Answers to the question of the contribution of religious teaching to issues of equality were generally sparse and limited in the material they were able to access. The same biblical quotations appeared with overwhelming regularity and whilst these are valid and creditworthy, there was little sense that candidates had got to grips with the depth of investigation this topic offers. A closer examination of specific instances of how religious teaching helps or hinders the journey towards equality would be significantly more effective than repeated references to humanity in the image of God, 'Love your neighbour', and, on occasion, Galatians 3:28!

#### **Summary**

- Topics were generally familiar to candidates and all invited scholarship, textual reference and understanding to be credited. Stronger answers included all of these tools whilst the majority struggled to make impactful use of one or more.
- Some candidates were very simplistic in their responses and more in-depth analysis of the topics would enable more candidates to access the top range of the marks available. Many answers were barely of GCSE standard, and centres are encouraged to raise the bar for their AS students and challenge them to access more advanced content.