



Mark Scheme (Results)

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 2: Religion & Ethics

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Question Paper Log Number P78596A

Publications Code 8RS0/02 2506_MS

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Paper 2: Religion and Ethics

Mark scheme

Question Number	Answer
1	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates may refer to the following. • Natural Moral Law is a classical ethical theory based on observation of nature and the application of human reason. • It is a theory developed by Aquinas based on biblical principles and an understanding of human nature. • An important idea of Natural Moral Law is that it identifies five purposes of human existence and the precepts which enable humans to live by those purposes. • Humans have a telos or end goal to achieve and the moral law evident in nature will help them to realise it. • It is based on the important idea that there are universalisable principles which apply to all humans, and which provide the basis for a just society.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Question Number	Answer
2	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 If candidates refer to only one ethical approach, they cannot go beyond Level 2. AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. • Secular perspectives may include the view that keeping non-human animals in captivity can rarely be justified on conservation grounds since many would not be able to be released into the wild. • A religious perspective may incline towards anthropocentrism, based on the creation ordinance to humans to name the animals and permission given to eat flesh after the Flood. • Some religious perspectives reject the notion of an animal soul, selfawareness, and ability to think and reason, which may lead to a failure to recognise the importance of animal protection. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2. • A religious perspective may draw on biblical teachings which glorify all creation and recognise that non-human animals are valued by God, hence, humans are called to share with God in their care. • A secular perspective may observe that conservation of the environment must move away from an anthropocentric instrumental ideology towards an intrinsic-based perspective. • Religious approaches to environmental issues may appear to be archaic and therefore fail to take into account paradigm shifts in understanding of animal welfare. • Religious approaches draw on sacred texts, however some feel these need to be interpreted in the modern world, in the light of changing cultural perspectives. • Non-religious ethical perspectives recognise the value of animals as worthy of respect and protection. Candidates may refer to secular theories such as Deep Ecology or Gaia by way of contrast. • Secular ethical approaches may be unrealistic because they demand too much of humanity to lay aside economic and technological advances in favour of protecting animals for their own sake, whilst religious approaches may reflect a respect for the intrinsic value of animals as part of creation.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues are identified (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).
Level 2	4–6	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2)

Question Number	Answer
3	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. - Utilitarianism is based on the principle of utility and on the ideal of hedonism, which place the preferences and desires of the majority at the heart of moral decision making. - Utilitarianism has several forms, including Act, Rule, Preference and Negative Utilitarianism, which has allowed it to be adapted for popular use since the Eighteenth Century and giving it cultural and intellectual relevance. - The theory is self-consciously non-religious, and as such, favoured by social policy makers and political thinkers. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2 - Utilitarianism is based on perennial values of happiness and pleasure, which are universally highly regarded as legitimate goals, hence, this makes it continually valid in the moral world. - The pressure of the majority on moral agents to make reliable and popular moral decisions is reflected in social and political structures, as well as in personal/private moral situations, therefore Utilitarianism has perennial value as an intuitive means of making moral decisions. - Utilitarianism may be unsuccessful because it is a single factor theory which does not consider other valuable ethical approaches, such as concerns for duty, love or compassion which moral agents may feel should be of equal or higher consideration in moral decision making. - Utilitarianism emerged at a time when there was a great emphasis on the role of reason so it may overlook the value of intuition or religious morality. - Utilitarianism was devised as a way of dealing with large-scale moral issues, therefore it fails entirely to offer guidance in moral dilemmas, which essentially are of concern only to the individual, and yet it is frequently cited as a useful tool in such cases. - The moral teaching of sacred texts invariably promotes the centrality of key principles to a religious community, which supports the universal appeal of Utilitarianism. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues are identified (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).
Level 2	4–6	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2).

Question Number	Answer
4(a)	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates may refer to the following: The question requires reference to one significant figure. The specification refers to a range of significant figures such as Martin Luther King and Joni Eareckson Tada, although others may be used. If more than ONE campaigner for equality is offered then the material for only the best ONE identified can be credited. • Joni Eareckson Tada – diving accident in Chesapeake Bay on 30th July 1967 rendered her quadriplegic. • 1976 book <i>Joni</i> become an iconic story of a young woman's fight with quadriplegia and depression. Since written 48 books including <i>When is it right to die?</i> • 1979 – founded Joni and Friends, a Christian ministry focussing on disability advocacy. 8 extensive ministries run by Joni and Friends which outreach across the globe show how influential she has become. • Joni Eareckson Tada is widely regarded as the most influential Christian advocate for disability awareness, working directly from her own experience as a quadriplegic and from over 50 years in a wheelchair. • She has also been recognised as an influential advocate for the disabled in the secular world, reflected in her appointment to the US State Department committee.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Question Number	Answer
4(b)	5 marks AO1, 15 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1. • Religious teaching addresses issues of equality from a range of perspectives including gender equality, including issues concerning LGBTQ+, racial equality and disability equality. • Religious teachings invariably provide guidance on controversies concerning equality which are applied with varying degrees of strictness/leniency depending on religious culture or commitment. • Changing views on human nature, autonomy and the place of the individual in society may be thought to have an increasingly strong influence on controversies concerning equality. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2. • Religious teaching on equality are based on core principles which do not change, such as the intrinsic value of the individual as worthy of respect, and this shows that they can be helpful in resolving controversies concerning equality. • Religious teachings are valuable as a check on ethical progress and may thus attempt to work alongside it, for example, increasing openness towards issues of equality based on an understanding of the era and cultural relevancy of religious texts. • The Inclusive Church movement and Muslims for Progressive Values offer examples of religious approaches which avoid the exclusivism of traditional or perceived religious teaching, thus opening up stronger dialogue in matters of equality ethics. • Religious teachings on equality may be based on anachronistic cultural and social perceptions, therefore failing to offer relevant moral guidance. • Religious teachings based on sacred texts may need reappraising in the light of new understandings of their original setting and intention, thereby opening up a greater understanding of issues of quality in the modern world • Matters of equality are important as part of a religious understanding on the value of the individual and of the group in community and the inherent importance of respect for all

		humanity. However, some religious groups, such as the Westboro Baptist Church or quasi-religious White Supremacy movements set a contentious example and risk disenfranchising religion as a whole from having a coherent voice regarding equality.
Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–5	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues may be selected (AO2). • Makes basic connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generic arguments (AO2). • Judgements made with no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 2	6–10	• A limited range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, some of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues (AO2). • Makes connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements made with little or no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 3	11–15	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simple chain of reasoning (AO2). • Makes connections between many but not all of the elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 4	16–20	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2). • Reasoned judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2).