OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Qualification
Accredited

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H573

For first teaching in 2016

H573/02 Autumn 2020 series

Introduction

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

> (i) Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

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. 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.

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%). This was understandably a very different exam series from a typical summer session. There were a very small number on entries and the candidates were probably not typical or representative of a larger cohort. Hence comments made on the performance of these candidates may not be generalisable.

The standard of responses seemed good on the whole. Compared to a typical session there seemed to be relatively fewer weaker scripts. Some candidates produced quite different marks on each of their answers which may suggest that they had stronger and weaker topics. Candidates generally managed their time well although a few candidates had left insufficient time to answer their third question as well as the first two.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	*Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:*
- focused directly on the specific question being asked - deployed a range of material and ideas of key thinkers to advance their position - focused more on the argument; the structure of their essays was often AO2 driven - used the introduction and conclusions of essays to show what was being argued.	- wrote about the general on occasions using what felt like pre-prepared formulaic answers - spent too long on AO1 often at the start of the essay which limited the time and proportion of the essay spent developing the argument - had at least one response that was significantly weaker than the others due to lack of knowledge and/or poor time management.

Themes in candidate responses

Question 1

This question on situation ethics and sexual ethics was popular and was answered fairly well, although not always as well as it could have been. Some candidates focused on 'love' without really unpacking the meaning of 'agape'. In some responses the relative weakness in understanding of situation ethics meant that other theories dominated, and the mention of situation ethics was very brief. Some of the better answers looked at Fletcher's principles and presuppositions.

Question 2

This was popular and was answered reasonably well. Most candidates felt that natural law had more weaknesses than strengths although this was on occasion due to misconceptions or generalisations about natural law. Some stronger answers recognised the subtlety in Aquinas' version of natural law, such as the potential flexibility of secondary precepts and the deontological and teleological aspects of the theory.

Question 3

This question on emotivism was less popular. Broadly the responses fell into two groups: those who really focused on emotivism and used other metaethical theories as comparisons, and those who just wrote everything they knew about metaethics. From some, there was very good knowledge and understanding of thinkers such as Ayer, Hume and Foot. There were good discussions of relativism and the issues that might arise if all moral judgements are subjective.

Question 4

This question on Kant was popular although some candidates who left this until last seemed to run out of time. Most responses showed good or better understanding of Kant's ideas although not all candidates picked up on the specific focus of the question as to whether Kant's ideas helped with practical decision making. There was some good discussion of issues such as abortion, euthanasia and business ethics. Some candidates made use of Kant's own examples on lying to potential murderers, and the honest shopkeeper. Points on conflicting duties usually involving breaking speed limits to get sick people to hospital were among several well-made points

Common misconceptions

In Question 1 there seems to be some confusion about whether situation ethics is a religious or secular theory.

There are some significant misconceptions and oversimplifications with regards to natural law. Natural law as described in some answers is a caricature of the theory which is more based on legalistic interpretations by the Catholic church. While this is not entirely incorrect, it means that some candidates have quite a narrow view of the theory.

Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

Where a question uses the word 'best' as in Question 1 and Question 3, it is appropriate for candidates to compare and bring in other ideas. However, in doing so it is essential that they do not lose sight of the main theory that they are meant to be assessing. For instance, in Question 1, a brief reference to situation ethics before moving on to an essay where another idea forms the bulk of the answer is unlikely to access higher levels.

Natural law can at times be oversimplified. It may be worth spending time exploring the more eudaimonistic ideas of Aristotle which is a root of the theory as well as distinguishing between Aquinas' views and the overly legalistic interpretation of those views.

Although use of original sources is challenging, candidates' understanding of some topics such as emotivism might be improved with carefully selected short extracts from original sources.

Guidance on using this paper as a mock

This paper as a whole or any of the questions from it would be appropriate to use for mock examinations. A broad range of responses in terms of possible content could be credited and any student who had revised topics thoroughly should be able to do reasonably well. Each of the questions also has a specific focus, e.g. 'best' in Question 1 or 'practical' in Question 4 which would provide a valuable lesson in terms of focus on the precise question asked.

Supporting you

Review of results

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our review of results services. For full information about the options available visit the OCR website. If university places are at stake you may wish to consider priority service 2 reviews of marking which have an earlier deadline to ensure your reviews are processed in time for university applications.

Supporting you through 2020-2021

Our priority is supporting you and your students this autumn and to support you as you prepare for summer 2021 exams. We'll update our website information regularly with resources, guidance and key information.

Take a look at our support for:

- Teachers
- Students
- Exams officers
- Assessment specialists

Keep up-to-date

We are sending a weekly roundup 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 CPD courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. All our courses for the academic year 2020-2021 are being delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses on the relevant subject page on our website or visit OCR professional development.

Signed up for Exambuilder?

ExamBuilder is the question builder platform for a range of our GCSE, A Level, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals and Functional Skills qualifications. See the full list of available qualifications in the sign up form.

ExamBuilder is **free for all OCR centres** with an Interchange account and gives you unlimited users per centre. We need an Interchange username to validate the identity of your centre's first user account for ExamBuilder.

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.

General qualifications
01223 553998
general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

Vocational qualifications
02476 851509
vocational.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

For more information visit
📖 **ocr.org.uk/i-want-to/find-resources/**
▣ **ocr.org.uk**
f **/ocrexams**
🐦 **/ocrexams**
in **/company/ocr**
▶ **/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**

Cambridge Assessment

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.

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.