

GCE



CCEA GCE AS  
Exemplifying Examination  
Performance  
**Religious Studies**

**AS 7: Foundations of Ethics with Special  
Reference to Issues in Medical Ethics**

This is an exemplification of candidates' performance in GCE AS examinations (Summer 2017) to support the teaching and learning of the Religious Studies specification.



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# EXEMPLIFYING EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE

## GCE Religious Studies

### Introduction

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Students' grade A responses are reproduced verbatim and are accompanied by commentaries written by senior examiners. The commentaries draw attention to the strengths of the students' responses and indicate, where appropriate, deficiencies and how improvements could be made.

It is intended that the materials should provide a benchmark of candidate performance and help teachers and students to raise standards.

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Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Finlay". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.

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## **GCE: AS Religious Studies**

**SRE71: Foundations of Ethics with Special  
Reference to Issues in Medical Ethics**

**Grade: A Exemplar**

## Section A

Answer **one** question from Section A.

**Q1a** “The Decalogue is morally binding on Christians.”

With reference to this statement, explain the importance of the Decalogue in addressing issues in medical ethics. [25]

### Student's response

*The decalogue as delivered by God to Moses, has been the basis of society for thousands of years. They provide the exact moral standard for the perfect Christian in the eyes of God, thus every Christian aims to follow these rules to avoid sin and reached the promised salvation they desire. It is also simple and easy to understand for all people, Drane comments ‘the decalogue us a simple set rules, as simple as each rule representing one finger! Thus we have no excuse for disregarding these rules as we understand them and their importance – thus they become morally binding as Christians.*

*The most arguably well known rule within the decalogue is ‘thou shall not kill’, a basic rule for a harmonious society. However this rule becomes a lot more complicated when coupled with medical ethics. Should we allow abortion? Euthanasia? Surgery that risks prematurely ending a life? Every day doctors may face this dilemma. Of the decalogue is binding then Christian doctors may not practice these without committing sin and condemmming themselves. Therefore I cannot agree that the decalogue is morally binding, especially when situation ethics is applied. There is no doubt ending a possible or painful life is the right thing to do when it is the most loving. With the bible that preaches love we must remain true to this within our actions and ‘thou shall not kill’ rule cannot be inforced.*

*Another rule of the decalogue states ‘thou shall not put false Gods before me’ however with doctors ‘playing God’ everyday altering genes, PGD, sex selection and of course saving lives that would otherwise be over, could it be possible they have become false Gods? Many people see doctors as both life giving and taking people but we are taught only God has this power. Furthermore medically trained staff can often be a sick persons greatest hope, far greater than God who arguably put them in the position to require medical assistance. Therefore I believe doctors have become these false Gods we have been warned against yet we worship and praise their power. Is this to say we must end doctors? Of course not, they may arguably break a commandment but they provide care for Christians and non Christians alike. If we must break a commandment that binds us then it must be acceptable in order to save lives or to create new life.*

*A further teaching of the decalogue is thou shall not steal. This can be applied to saviour sibling such as Adam Nash, born simply to provide stem cells to allow his sister to live. This is no doubt stealing as a baby cannot consent it's cells being taken however as it is saving as life it is not better to steal than to have a sick child suffer and eventually die. Again in a religion that preaches love for all this breach of the decalogue, I believe, can be excused.*

*In conclusion, while addressing medical ethics, the decalogue should not be binding as it could hinder progress which eventually can save or improve lives. It undoubtedly is a good basis to a moral life but as Singer comments 'a rule may be broken if the end result is happiness!'*

### **Examiner's comments**

The answer clearly aims to engage with the set task from the very opening paragraph with the candidate highlighting how the Decalogue can provide “the exact moral standards for the perfect Christian.” The candidate from the start is alert to the nuance in the question and makes explicit reference to the quotation that precedes the task. The response then proceeds to deal with three Commandments – all relevant to Medical Ethics – Thou shall not kill, Thou shall not put false Gods before me and Thou shall not steal. In looking at each Commandment, the candidate makes every attempt to make it relevant to issues in Medical Ethics and seeks to offer some discussion on the relevance as well. Some imagination and creativity are evident in the application of the latter two Commandments selected, to issues in Medical Ethics. Some attempt is also made to address the Decalogue as “morally binding.”

(Band 4 – 17 marks)

**Q1b** Comment on the view that Natural Moral Law provides the best approach for guidance on ethical dilemmas. Justify your answer. [25]

### Student's response

*Natural Moral Law is a theory created by Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas believed that as humans we all have an inherent desire to do Good and avoid evil and therefore as God created us with this power we seek him in our every day life. Natural law is a deontological theory which is especially popular within the Christian Church but overall has a lot of relevance worldwide.*

*Natural law is based on 9 primary precepts, the right of life (protecting the innocent), reproduce, education, seeking God and living in community. Through these precepts it is then possible to create the secondary precepts – things we must do and must not do. An example for the first primary precept of right to life is medication is moral whereas killing is immoral. This is a great positive for this ethical theory as it can be applied to any situation and thus can be applied universally as all moral questions can be answered by all people.*

*There however can arise a problem due to the secondary precepts known as the double effect however this is easily received. As it is a deontological theory only the actions count. Thus you cannot be blamed for any negative repercussions as your initial actions was moral. Therefore Natural law can be seen as very positive as it deflects blame for negative consequences eg. not allowing a woman an abortion and therefore her becoming overly depressed. As it was the right action morally this side effect is of no concern to whoever did not allow the abortion. However some scholars believe this is dangerous as consequences can have a far greater long term effect than a one off action.*

*In his theory Aquinas speaks of interior and exterior acts. He comments 'God can see within your soul' and this is why the motive behind the action must be good not just by the action itself. However in a secular society this becomes void as unreligious people do not care for 'God' and whether there is proper motive or not. This highlights the lack of universalism within the theory as it requires religious faith and thus in an ever growing secular society it is possible not religious theories such as utilitarianism are more applicable.*

*Another key point within the natural moral law theory is apparent good. This describes misjudgement on whether an action is morally acceptable. Perhaps the most famous example being Hitler's holocaust in which millions of innocent people were killed due to Hitler's strong belief he was doing the right thing. This creates the greatest flaw in the natural law theory as it shows that an innate desire to do Good in humans cannot be universal or then these events could never have happened.*

*In conclusion I believe while the Natural moral law theory is flawed so is every theory and thus I agree with the statement this theory provides the best guidance, especially for Christians, through it's understanding of God's will and simple rules applicable to all situation.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The response demonstrates awareness of Natural Moral Theory from the very start though the initial thrust is to impart KU (knowledge and understanding) type material. The response does get to critical assessment by beginning to weigh up the "positives" of the theory. Insightful remarks are evident in highlighting the challenge of the use of Natural Moral Law in a secular society and mention is made, though fleeting, of competing ethical theory in the form of utilitarianism. The candidate continues to probe the merits of Natural Moral Law by looking at issues surrounding the distinction between real and apparent goods and makes effective use of the reference to Nazi Germany. While the answer offered does seek to engage with the task and does attempt to appraise the merits of the theory, it could have more consistently engaged with real critical assessment throughout the whole response with a wider range of perspectives offered on whether Natural Moral Law is the best approach for guidance on ethical dilemmas or not.

(Band 4 – 16 marks)

**Q2a** With particular reference to the nature of love, discuss the approach of Situation Ethics to moral decision making. [25]

### Student's response

*Situation Ethics is teleological therefore believes morality is based on consequences of ones actions. Developed by Joseph Fletcher in the 1960s a period of social change. Fletcher based this theory on agape love which is selfless love Christians aim for its seen in 1 Corinthis 13 'love is patient love is kind' this theory always relates to the Golden Rule of do onto others as you would have done to you. Fletcher founded the theory he recognised ones reason for moral decision making meaning the ability for one to direct and take responsibility for an action. This theory applies a situational approach were higher importance is given to the individual not the rules. Thus this establishes the theory's principle of 'the most loving thing to do.'*

*This theory has many principles that must be applied to moral decision making if includes. The four working principles. These involve around love. They include love is pragmatism this means love is practical and is evaluted in moral decision making. Love is personalism meaning love is personal to each individual, love is relativism meaning love is relative flexible and lastly love is positivism meaning love is a positive thing. These working principles are considered and evaluated in moral decision making such as abortion or IVF. IVF is considered to be moral if the child is more into a loving relationship says Fletcher.*

*The working principle aren't the only ones consider when situation ethics evaluates a moral action. They too consider six fundemental principles. Love is the only thing intrintrisally good meaning love is the only this which is good from the core throughout. Love is the only ruling norm. This means love is the only rule which overseas or is applied to all situations. Love and justice are the same, this highlights that love is fair and objective. Love wills the neighbours good this implies love is what feeds the communities good deeds. Love justifies the means. This implies the action is considered moral of the consequence brings love. Seen when Fletcher comments IVF and surrogacy 'if a child is born into a loving relationship then it is moral' and the action of how the child was concieved can be forgotten or overlooked. Finally love is placed situationaly not perscriptiely thus meaning love is given in some circumstanes not all.*

*Evaluating SF in moral decision making can be a balanced approach.*

*Firstly this theory is benefical to moral decision making as it is practical and useful, it accepts the most loving thing to do is moral and suits modern society which is always changing next to morality.*

*McCay add this theory allows personal authority which allows the individual to have the finally say: this therefore brings about the most loving thing. Finally, This theory has clear principles working and fundamental therefore can be applied and used practically, thus making it universal and However this theory too has its negatives.*

*It ignore how agape love is rarely achieved. Humans have a natural instinct to be jealous and selfish.*

*Barclay adds this personal autonomy places too much power in the hands of the individual therefore it could be abused. For example a woman could have an abortion cause she doesn't want to look fat. Therefore its not really necessary to carry out. This forms the problem of slippery slope.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate engages with the set task from the start with explicit reference to the nature of love in Situation Ethics with reference to the type of love envisaged – “agape love.” Reasonable use is made of the Four Working Principles in relation to the love ethic. The Six Fundamental Principles are used quite effectively to clarify how the application of the love principle is envisaged and some exemplification provided from Medical Ethics. The response concludes with an evaluation of Situation Ethics and while not required, still adheres to the focus on love and offers some insightful comment e.g. how agape love is rarely achieved. Overall, the strength of the response is the consistent focus on the ruling norm of love in Situation Ethics with some relevant exemplification offered in relation to moral decision making though this part could have been stronger with perhaps, some reference made to some of the case studies mentioned by Fletcher. The candidate is also aware of the teleological and situational character of the theory.

(Band 4 – 20 marks)

**Q2b** Assess the claim that teleological ethics are dangerous and unchristian. Justify your answer. [25]

### Student's response

*Teleological ethics can be seen as dangerous and unchristian due to the lines of utilitarianism. This theory promotes looking at each situation separately, so therefore what constitutes as a moral action at one time may not be another time. This is negated with natural moral law which focuses on moral absolutes as a deontological theory, leaving no grey areas.*

*Act utilitarianism as proposed by Jeremy Bentham can be dangerous as it could allow for the oppressions of minority groups. Take the example from Tyler of prison guards beating on prisoners. The beating leads to the most happiness for the largest amount, the prison guards. Therefore great tragedies can be justified through act utilitarianism.*

*Rule utilitarianism is a safer option, a theory by John Stuart Mills. The theory expands on act utilitarianism by adding certain actions which are immoral such as lying. However, there are two ways in which lying is justifiable, which the truth would lead to harm, or what the lie would spare a dying patient from psychological/physical harm. For example, as given by Bowie, if a man went in to rob a store and hold the cashier at gunpoint, lying about say how many people and how much money there actually is could be seen as moral. This theory may not be as dangerous but it is in fact unchristian. The ethics is based on secular theories and possesses no religious support.*

*Peter Singer's ethical theory relies a lot on helping communities as a whole and ignoring your own needs in order to benefit others. For example, Peter Singer donates 20% of his earnings to Oxfam to help those in poverty. He believes that we must help those less fortunate than ourselves, he states that sitting by and not doing anything is similar to pulling the trigger. Also, he is an advocate for environmental protection and animal safety, as expressed through his ethical theory. While this theory is secular, there is room for argument that it holds Christian viewpoints, it advocates selfless behaviour and treating everyone equal, the way Jesus believed to be the way of life.*

*There are also arguments for natural moral law being dangerous and unchristian. Many Protestant denominations oppose it mainly because it gives people separate value from God; and these denominations follow the Luther style of thinking when it comes to morality.*

*Also, while act utilitarianism can justify horrible acts of human kind, such as Hitler's genocide of the Jews during World War 2 where his followers were brainwashed into hating the Jews. Situation ethics us an teleological ethical theory which is Christian as it follows Jesus' teaching of agape love. This theory showcases how human caused catastrophes could never be justified.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate engages directly with the set task from the start and refers to utilitarianism as an example of teleological ethics yet contrasts this with the nature of Natural Moral Law as a deontological theory. The candidate pursues this assessment of utilitarianism by probing Act Utilitarianism and Rule Utilitarianism and offering an assessment of one against the other in relation to the thrust of the question. The response then addresses the possible positives in the views of Peter Singer, a contemporary utilitarian moral philosopher contending that while his theory is secular it reflects Christian teaching e.g. "selfless behaviour." Some creative thinking is demonstrated in the evaluation of Natural Moral Law in the reference to how some Christians view it. An astute remark is offered in relation to Situation Ethics in the comment that it too is a teleological theory yet is Christian. Overall, the response is a very good attempt at critical analysis from start to finish. It engages consistently with the task throughout (keeping an eye on the two key words "dangerous" and "unchristian") and ensures that balance is reflected in the range of competing perspectives offered. Perhaps, some of the problems associated with Situation Ethics as a teleological ethic could have been probed e.g. how while it rejects antinomianism, could itself be guilty of it.

(Band 4 – 20 marks)

## Section B

Answer **one** question from Section B.

**Q3a** Explain how the acts/omissions doctrine is central to the debate on Euthanasia. [25]

### Student's response

*The of doctrine is central to the debate on Euthanasia as it is the Law in Britain. However there are many other points that contribute significantly to the debate on Euthanasia.*

*Voluntary Euthanasia is when you make the decision that you want your life to end. Involuntary euthanasia is when someone else determines your quality of life to be too poor to live and Non-voluntary euthanasia is when someone else decides to end your life as you aren't in a state to decide. For example an infant baby.*

*The law in Britain is that Euthanasia is illegal and you will be persecuted for it or helping another person. The acts doctrine which is not applied in the Netherlands allows people to fly to Netherlands and have euthanasia. As the law is against this prevents euthanasia happening here and is central to why euthanasia happens in the minority.*

*Another reason that is central to euthanasia debate is doctor-patient trust. One scholar states "doctor shouldn't get used to ? their patients". This would hamper the trust and put doubts in a doctors mind that they have to do everything to save their patient.*

*A valid reason for euthanasia is personal autonomy. One scholar states "Highest principle in medical ethics is personal autonomy". Euthanasia allows the person to die with personal autonomy intact with loved ones not having to go through watching someone they love in pain. It also increases human dignity. One scholar states "Having control over my body would increase my dignity". Allowing a person the freedom to live and die.*

*However as a christian you may be opposed to euthanasia as you believe that "life is sacred" and "only God can give life and take it away." Another argument would be that Jesus suffered before dying so we might do the same thing. One scholar quotes "suffering can have a positive effect on those around you."*

*Another point which is central to the debate on Euthanasia is the slippery slope argument. One scholar states "Once we assist with euthanasia... no one can prevent people eventually just using it as a wish to die". They believe that people will abuse the practice as simply a nice way to die.*

*Another point central to the debate is misdiagnosis. The person may have been diagnosed with a terminal disease and been allowed to die only for family to find out that he was misdiagnosed.*

*Overall, I agree that the act doctrine is central to the debate on euthanasia but there are also many other valid points as well.*

### **Examiner's comments**

The candidate does demonstrate a reasonable degree of KU of the broad debate on Euthanasia covering types, the law and aspects of the debate including the Christian perspective. While the response does not engage directly with the set focus of the question – the acts/omissions doctrine, the candidate quite cleverly sought to draw attention to what they believed to be other central concerns in the debate such as the Doctor/Patient relationship, the issue of personal autonomy, the slippery slope argument and patient misdiagnosis – and is quite good on these. For a higher mark, the response could have made more explicit reference to the acts/omissions doctrine and as to how it is crucial in the euthanasia debate (noting its widespread acceptance) in establishing the distinction between passive and active euthanasia.

(Band 3 – 15 marks)

**Q3b** “An ethical system without absolutes is not ethics at all.”

With reference to other aspects of human experience, evaluate the truth of this claim. Justify your answer. [25]

### Student's response

*I agree with the statement that “an ethical system without absolutes is not ethics at all”, I will give you three reasons with reference to human experience agreeing and two points disagreeing.*

*My first point agreeing with the statement is that there would be social chaos within society. In London 2011 there were riots because people weren't happy on a few rules. Imagine what would happen if there wasn't any? London as a city halted to work for a couple of days and I imagine that it would stop working as a city altogether if there was no ethical absolutes.*

*My second point agreeing is that without official absolutes there would be no justice system. Clear murderers would be able to twist their point of view and because there are no absolutes they would get away with it. People would dispute any laws and it would eventually lead to social chaos inside the justice system.*

*My third point agreeing with the statement is that everyone agrees there should be moral absolutes for children to keep them safe. There are 40 million children living in the streets of America and that is with an absolute ethic system in order to protect them. Imagine how many would be vulnerable or living on the streets if their wasn't an ethical system with absolute?*

*My first point of disagreeing with the statement is what happens to these absolute ethics once a disaster strikes. Hurricane Katrina left people starving and thirsty so people broke into shops to prevent themselves and others from dying. Surely you couldn't prosecute these people afterwards? With a ethical absolute system you would have to prosecute and place charges on these people.*

*My second point disagreeing with the statement is that what if the law isn't right? What if you are a christian in China and the ethical system says that you aren't allowed to believe in Jesus. Or if you were a Jew during the reign of Hitler in Germany. It is not fair to let these people die and go to prison because there were clear ethical systems without absolutes in their country? Just because there is a clear system doesn't mean it is right 100% of the time.*

*Overall I believe that an ethical system without absolutes is not ethics at all. However in some special circumstances for example disaster there is a need for absolutes to be broken and that is still fair ethics.*

## Examiner's comments

The response offered does seek to offer meaningful critical assessment with a range of arguments stated in a balanced way. There is also good engagement with other aspects of human experience and uses the examples employed to illustrate the point being made, avoiding narrative. A line of enquiry is sustained, and the candidate does endeavor to respond to the set task from the initial paragraph. Some very pertinent remarks are offered in terms of implications for the justice system, the protection of innocents (children) and what happens if a law is not right. Overall, a very good attempt at critical analysis is offered though the quality of critical assessment could have been more consistent throughout with more effective use made of some of the points raised.

(Band 4 – 20 marks)

**Q4a** In what ways do different views on the status of the embryo inform developments in bioethics? [25]

### Student's response

*Bioethics is a largely debated topic within society, as Christians and other faiths or non beliefs we continuously ask ourselves what we believe is morally just. Nonemore so than in the topic of embryos and the discussions that surrounded them.*

*Firstly the Christian faith teaches that life begins the moment of conception. In other words as soon as sperm and egg meets a person is alive and they have full rights as would any living person. Thus this may halter many developments in bioethics as there are limitations on what should be done. The example of embryo screening is prohibited by the church as this may lead to abortion, an act of killing an innocent child. Stem cell research is also prohibited as this is a life – not being given it's full potential to live a full life. In summary of this point the catholic church takes the stand that many advancements in bioethics are immoral in the eyes if God as they require 'playing God' instead of letting a person live the way God intended. However others believe this is a ridiculous nation and that the embryo at conception is nothing but a 'ball of cells' thus this is not yet life. Drew comments 'it so an unfathomable nation to assume life begins at conception'. It must also be stated to that over half fertilised embryos fail to implant f make it to the age of viability (24 weeks) as they never develop in to foetuses. This is a more secular view on the status of the embryo but within the relm of bioethics it is favourable as it is not limited to 'absured religious nations! This therefore means that bioethics can advance as they can test on cells of embryos to create new treatments, arguably creating better chances for future embryos as they can be studied e.g. to prevent future miscarriages by understanding their causes.*

*In conclusion I believe that the status of embryo has a large impact on the development of bioethics.*

### Examiner's comments

The response seeks to address the specific question asked by dealing with the three aspects of the task (i) the status of the embryo, (ii) different views and (iii) implications for developments in bioethics. The candidate is able to focus on issues surrounding the status of the embryo, competing views on the status of the embryo and how these can either limit developments or enable advancements in bioethics. References are made to specific examples of developments in bioethics. For a higher mark, the candidate could have been stronger on specifics e.g. the issue of personhood, relevant principles such as the Sacredness of Human Life, reference to ethical theory, differing Christian views.

(Band 4 – 16 marks)

**Q4b** With reference to other aspects of human experience, assess the view that new reproductive technologies undermine the equal dignity of individuals. Justify your answer. [25]

### Student's response

*Human dignity is a God given right. Within Genesis we are told that God created us each in his image and furthermore created us superior to the animals. "God blew his breath of life into Adam's nostrils" this only occurred to Adam not the animals. However this dignity can come under attack as new reproductive technologies undermine the equal dignity of individuals.*

*New reproductive technologies have created the ability to select certain traits for a baby including sex selection famously rumoured to have been chosen by Victoria Beckham but has also allowed for more minute changes such as eye colour, hair colour, even whether a child will be susceptible to freckles. Undoubtedly this raises moral issues as 'unwanted traits' are removed. This creates divides in society as traits are deemed 'ugly' and therefore undesirable, presenting the impression that some are superior to others simply due to their exterior aesthetics.*

*Furthermore those with more serious conditions such as disabilities e.g. down syndrome can also be screened and thus their embryos thrown away due to their unwanted traits. We are no longer all equal as God created us but instead become divided as a society where some are innately better simply due to their genetic makeup.*

*Adam Nash, a saviour sibling, was born for the sole purpose of saving his sister. This creates the issue of human life becoming a commodity over a gift from God. It can be argued his dignity is lost as he cannot live for himself but instead is given the purpose of becoming a medicine battle for another. Saviour siblings often are brought in to a life of trials with limited rights to their own body, undoubtedly this is an attack on their dignity.*

*Unicef states there are 60 million orphaned children worldwide with no parents and often no chance of ever receiving some. However, IVF treatment is available on the NHS, and has become more medically advanced every year without signs of stopping. It is an possible argument that this directly attacks the dignity of the 60 million children without a home as they are seen as undesirable.*

## Examiner's comments

The response engages with meaningful critical assessment and considers a range of examples from other aspects of human experience without resorting to narrative. The answer does seek to address the set task with its focus on the undermining the “equal dignity of individuals.” In doing so the candidate considers issues relating to dignity and equality with regard to sex selection and the designer child, Down Syndrome children, saviour siblings and the impact of developments in bioethics on children already orphaned. The response is well sustained with very pertinent and insightful comments offered. Perhaps, the response could have given more prominence to the benefits afforded by new reproductive technologies as well as consideration of all the individuals involved e.g. the child, parents, donors, the medical professionals involved. Overall, the answer does represent a very good attempt at critical assessment.

(Band 4 – 16 marks)



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