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Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel AS Level
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 02: Religion and Ethics

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Overall Comments

Candidates appear to have enjoyed their learning in Religious Studies AS and were keen to display what they knew. Ethical theories clearly strike a chord and candidates enjoy employing them in a range of answers. In some cases, candidates worked to a high level, showing confidence across all the topics on the paper. However, others appeared to be less sure of themselves and were able to offer little extended discussion or evaluation. Centres are advised to consider carefully the expectations of their students at AS level since this sitting suggested that some are only able to tackle the basics of the topics on which they answered. Characteristics of the strongest answers are detailed in the notes which follow.

Question 1

Candidates were asked to explore the distinctive challenges raised by one area in environmental ethics. Responses suggested that candidates had little problem identifying key issues of dominion and stewardship and isolating areas of concern such as climate change or humanity's misuse of the natural world. Some reference was made to religious traditions, particularly the teaching gleaned from Genesis whilst some candidates were also able to refer to the ideas of key thinkers such as James Lovelock and Arne Naess. Where they were less successful was in being able to focus on the **distinctive challenges** of a problem in environmental ethics. Answers were more descriptive of the problem rather than the challenges – a subtle distinction maybe, but one which candidates need to be able to differentiate between these concepts to ensure they gain all the available marks.

Question 2

Candidates were able to identify a range of arguments for and against same-sex marriage including the lack of explicit condemnation in some sacred texts, the argument from silence in the teaching of Jesus, issues of equality and justice, the intention of marriage, differences between the teaching of individual churches, and ethical theoretical stances. Some candidates placed heavy emphasis on whether/how same-sex couples should/could have children and if the biological limitations on this rendered same-sex marriage invalid. This argument did not tend to consider the increasing possibility for same-sex couples to have a biologically related child. The best answers avoided clichés and showed an understanding of the more complex questions of human nature rather than focusing on whether same-sex attraction per se was forbidden or accepted within a religious tradition.

Question 3

Just war is always a popular topic and recent events in Ukraine gave candidates some relevant case study material to apply to their answers. It was interesting to see how candidate approaches to this topic appear to have evolved to take in to account a wider range of scholarship and

socio-political concerns. There was far less detail given of the three strands – declaration of war, conduct of war and declaring the end of war. This was an interesting shift of focus by centres, and although candidates appear better informed about contemporary warfare, their knowledge of the Just War Theory as a set of principles should not be undermined by this. The best answers are able to incorporate both approaches to the topic with confidence.

Question 4a

Candidates are always happy to write about Situation Ethics and show a range of knowledge of the theory including the work of J A T Robinson and Joseph Fletcher and the applicability of the theory to episodes in the ministry of Jesus. Whilst agape is central to theory, weaker answers did not venture much beyond a general consideration of what the most loving thing might be in a situation. Better answers explore the wider principles of Joseph Fletcher and/or alluded to the contribution of Robinson in the attempt to modernise the church's approach to ethics.

Question 4b

This question was not as well answered as expected as many candidates appeared to struggle to write an extended answer which befits a 20 mark question. Some depended on repetition from 4a whilst others were unable to access the scholarly detail necessary to produce a genuine analysis of the issue. The best answers maintained a substantial discussion and were able to draw on a range of arguments for and against the theory, including the work of William Barclay which can be accessed via the A2 Anthology.

Summary

- Allow time to write an extended answer for 4b
- Have access to a variety of material
- Make scholarly references to support arguments
- Extend understanding of the issues arising within topics

