

Teacher Resource Bank

GCE Religious Studies

Candidate Exemplar Work

Unit A *Religion and Ethics 1*

Candidate's Response to *Utilitarianism* (AO2)



CANDIDATE EXEMPLAR WORK

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY



RELIGIOUS STUDIES UNIT A RELIGION AND ETHICS 1

RSS01

EXAMPLE OF CANDIDATE'S RESPONSE

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 15 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book.
The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is **RSS01**.
- Answer **two** questions.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 90.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- In each question, part (a) tests your knowledge and understanding, while part (b) tests your skills of reasoning and evaluation.
- You will be marked on your ability to use English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

RSS01: Religion and Ethics 1 – Utilitarianism

- 1 (a) *An action that maximises happiness will always be the right action.*

How far can a religious believer accept this view?

(15 marks) AO2

Candidate Response

The answer to this question depends on the meaning of 'happiness'. Bentham thought of physical happiness, pleasure. Religion would not see this type of happiness as worthwhile. 'Pleasures of the flesh' are not as important as 'pleasures of the spirit' so for example increasing the number of prostitutes would not be seen as a good thing even if it made more people happy.

If the happiness was caused by actions which broke God's law this would not be seen as a right action. Torturing and killing a baby might make a sadist happy but religion could never approve of it. Lying, stealing and cheating would be wrong even if they made some people happy because they have been forbidden by God in the ten commandments.

However, if the type of happiness is of high quality the argument is different. Mill said "To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality" which repeats the teaching of Jesus. Jesus worked to end suffering, even breaking the religious law when necessary to do this, he fed people when they were hungry and healed sick people. Christians are expected to do this also, not to leave people suffering but to increase happiness when they can. Their happiness includes the happiness of knowing that they are doing God's will, they won't do anything wrong because that leads to pain and suffering so they can agree with the view stated.

Commentary

This is of a reasonable length in the time available and it is focused on the question. The arguments against the stated view are quite effective – especially in the second paragraph. The arguments in support were in danger of going into a different question – at the very least the key words 'always right' in the given statement were being ignored. However, the relevant argument concerns what counts as happiness for Christians and although the idea may be rather simply expressed it is perfectly valid.

The answer meets the criteria for Level 6. The different views are quite clearly explained and there is reasoning supporting a partial conclusion. It is nearer to Level 7 than Level 5 so 13 out of 15 marks are awarded.

Level 6 (13 marks)