

HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies Paper 1 (Ethics) Mock Paper (2027)

Model Answers, Mock Marking Scheme and Question-by-question Commentary

TUTORZONE EXAM PRACTICE · HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies — Paper 1 (Ethics) Mock Paper

ERS does not reward memorising definitions; it rewards a **clear standpoint defended by argument**. Paper 1 (Ethics) is worth **50%** of the subject and lasts **1 hour 45 minutes**: Part A carries 20 marks in compulsory short questions, Part B carries 40 marks where you answer two of four questions. This is TutorZone's original mock paper, written against the HKEAA assessment framework for the **2027 examination** — five Part A short questions, four Part B essay / guided-essay questions, model answers, a mock marking scheme, the mistakes that cost marks and a 105-minute time plan. You can sit it under timed conditions.

Direct answer: how is HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies examined?

In the **2027 HKDSE**, ERS has two papers, each worth **50%** of the subject and each lasting **1 hour 45 minutes**. There is **no School-based Assessment (SBA)** — the subject is assessed 100% by public examination. **Paper 1: Ethics** — Part A, Normative Ethics (20 marks): four to five short questions, **all compulsory**; Part B, Personal and Social Issues (40 marks): four questions of which you **answer two**, set as essay and guided-essay questions. **Paper 2: Religious Traditions** — you attempt **one of two modules**: Buddhism (no open-book arrangement; three questions in total, 20 marks each — one of two from Part 1 History of Buddhism and two of four from Part 2 Doctrines of Buddhism and Buddhist Practice) or Christianity (**open book**: you may bring one approved version of the Bible into the centre; three of five questions, 20 marks each). Everything on this page is TutorZone's original practice material, not HKEAA past-paper content.

Downloadable version: want to print it and sit the paper under timed conditions? [Download the PDF \(questions + answers + marking guidance\)](#).

The print dialogue opens automatically; choose “Save as PDF” if you prefer. The PDF above is the fastest route.



Paper 1 assesses argument, not recall — the examiner wants to see a standpoint, defined concepts and a serious reply to the strongest objection.

Paper 1 at a glance (2027 examination)

The framework below is taken from the HKEAA *Assessment Framework for 2027 HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies*, which is unchanged from the 2026 examination.

Paper / part	Weighting	Requirement	Duration
Paper 1: Ethics	50%	Part A + Part B (below)	1 hour 45 minutes
Part A: Normative Ethics	20 marks	Four to five short questions, all compulsory	
Part B: Personal and Social Issues	40 marks	Four questions, answer two ; set as essay and guided-essay questions	
Paper 2: Religious Traditions	50%	Attempt one module — Buddhism (three questions, 20 marks each; no open book) or Christianity (three of five questions, 20 marks each; open book , approved Bible allowed)	1 hour 45 minutes
School-based Assessment	None	The subject is assessed entirely by public examination	—

⚠ Three framework facts candidates get wrong

① **Every Part A question is compulsory** — the “choose two of four” freedom exists only in Part B, so you cannot skip a short question you dislike. ② **There is no SBA** in ERS; internal school marks do not count towards the DSE result. ③ The **open-book arrangement applies to Christianity only**; Buddhism candidates may not bring any reference material. In the Christianity module you may only underline or highlight in the Bible — any writing or added labels may lead to penalties or disqualification.

How this paper was designed (and copyright)

Every question here was **written originally by TutorZone**, following the proportion of question types published by the HKEAA for Paper 1 (compulsory short questions, then essay / guided-essay questions). No HKEAA question, candidate script or marking report is reproduced or paraphrased. The “mock marking scheme” and grade descriptors below are TutorZone's own, not official HKEAA documents. Curriculum scope follows the EDB *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4–6)*, updated 2024 and applicable from S4 in 2024/25: the compulsory Ethics component covers Unit 1 Normative Ethics and Unit 2 Personal and Social Issues (human rights; life and death; sex, partnership and the family; bioethics; environmental ethics; business and economic ethics; media ethics).

Part A: Normative Ethics (20 marks, all compulsory)

Instructions: answer all five questions, 4 marks each. A short question needs a definition, an application and one evaluative sentence — no long introduction.

1. “Euthanasia is immoral” and “most Hong Kong people oppose euthanasia” are different kinds of statement. Classify each and explain the difference. (4 marks)

Model answer (4 marks)

The first is a **normative statement**: it makes a value judgement about what ought or ought not to be done, and cannot be proved or refuted by observation alone. The second is a **descriptive statement**: it reports a state of affairs (public attitudes) that can be checked by survey evidence.

The difference is that a descriptive statement answers “what is” , while a normative statement answers “what ought to be” . From “most people oppose it” you cannot infer “it is immoral” , because **ought cannot be derived from is** (Hume's is–ought gap) — a majority attitude may itself be mistaken.

Marking guidance: 2 marks for correctly classifying both statements; 2 marks for explaining that facts cannot by themselves establish a value judgement.

2. A school, in order to raise its overall results, requires its higher-achieving students to tutor weaker classmates after school without pay. Assess whether this arrangement is morally acceptable from the standpoint of utilitarianism, and identify one limitation of utilitarianism in this case. (4 marks)

Model answer (4 marks)

Utilitarianism judges acts by the greatest happiness of the greatest number (Bentham's hedonic calculus; Mill's distinction of quality as well as quantity). On act-utilitarian grounds, if the total benefit of the tutoring (improved results and confidence for the tutees, a stronger communal ethos) outweighs the cost (the tutors' lost study and rest time), the arrangement is morally acceptable; if not, it is not.

Limitation: welfare is hard to quantify and compare between persons (how do you add one student's fatigue to another's improvement?), and a purely aggregative standard ignores distribution — it can licence sacrificing a few students' interests for the "greater good", even when the burden falls on the same group every time.

Marking guidance: 2 marks for applying the utilitarian standard to the case; 2 marks for identifying and explaining one limitation (measurement, distribution or predicting consequences).

3. Would Kantian deontology support the same arrangement? Explain with reference to the categorical imperative. (4 marks)

Model answer (4 marks)

Kant does not judge by consequences but by whether the maxim of the act can pass the categorical imperative. Under the **formula of universal law**: if "a school may compel its high achievers to work without pay for institutional targets" were universalised, voluntary service would lose its meaning — the moral worth of service rests precisely on its being voluntary — so the maxim contradicts itself. Under the **formula of humanity**: we must treat persons as ends, never merely as means. If students are assigned this work without consent, they are being used as instruments of the school's objectives, which is impermissible.

The conclusion is therefore conditional: deontology does not object to the arrangement if it is genuinely voluntary, but rejects it if it is compulsory.

Marking guidance: 2 marks for correctly applying either formula; 2 marks for drawing the voluntary / compulsory distinction with it.

4. Distinguish intrinsic value from instrumental value, and give one example from school life of something that has both. (4 marks)

Model answer (4 marks)

Intrinsic value belongs to something worth pursuing for its own sake (honesty, knowledge, friendship).

Instrumental value belongs to something valuable because it brings about something else (a report card, a degree).

Example: reading beyond the syllabus. The knowledge and the pleasure of reading have intrinsic value — they would be worth having even with no examination attached — while reading skill also has instrumental value as a means to examination performance, further study and employment. The two are not mutually exclusive: one thing can carry both, and it also can carry value of one kind only.

Marking guidance: 2 marks for accurate definitions; 2 marks for an example that displays both kinds and explains them.

5. Some people claim that “without religious belief it is impossible to live a moral life” . Respond to this claim from the standpoints of divine command theory and of moral autonomy. (4 marks)

Model answer (4 marks)

Divine command theory: moral law comes from God's commands, so doing good means obeying God; religion is therefore the foundation of morality, and without belief there is no ultimate basis for it.

Moral autonomy (e.g. Kant): a rational agent legislates the moral law for itself; obligation derives from reason, so morality does not depend on religion. Believers and non-believers alike can tell right from wrong.

Evaluation: divine command theory faces the Euthyphro dilemma — if good is good only because God commands it, morality becomes arbitrary; if God commands it because it is already good, the standard of goodness does not come from God after all. The claim “no belief, no morality” therefore overstates the case: religion can supply motivation and community support, but it is not a **necessary** condition of moral life.

Marking guidance: 2 marks for accurately presenting the two positions; 2 marks for identifying a difficulty or reaching a reasoned judgement.

Part B: Personal and Social Issues (40 marks, answer two of four)

Instructions: choose two questions, 20 marks each. In guided-essay questions you must answer **both** parts and carry the same ethical framework through the whole answer.

6. **(Human rights)** An epidemic breaks out in a territory. The government enacts a law requiring all residents to be vaccinated and requiring shopping malls and schools to check vaccination records; those who are not vaccinated may not enter indoor public premises.

(a) The government restricts individual rights on the ground of protecting public health. Drawing on the nature of rights and the idea of reasonable limits, explain under what conditions such a restriction would be reasonable. (8 marks)

(b) “To protect the health of the majority, individuals must accept compulsory vaccination.” Do you agree? Argue your case using one ethical theory. (12 marks)

Model-answer points (20 marks)

(a) Conditions for a reasonable restriction (8 marks)

Angle	Points
Nature of rights	Human rights are not absolute: exercising a right carries duties (my freedom must respect others' right not to be infected); rights conflict, so a society must establish priorities and limits
Reasonable limits	① a proper and specific aim (public health, not another purpose); ② proportionality — the least intrusive means (voluntary roll-out first, then restriction); ③ a legal basis with appeal or exemption mechanisms (e.g. exemption on medical grounds); ④ time limits and periodic review; ⑤ the accessibility and adequacy of the measures — accessible vaccination points and transparent information
Counter-limit	A measure permitting arbitrary discrimination (excluding people by nationality or occupation label) violates non-discrimination and human dignity, and is unacceptable

(b) Argumentative lines (12 marks — any defensible standpoint may score; the quality of argument decides)

Standpoint	Basis	Reply to the objection
Agree	Utilitarian: compulsory vaccination sharply reduces infection and death, so aggregate welfare rises; the individual's short-term inconvenience is outweighed	To "autonomy" : autonomy is not a right to impose risk on others, and exemptions protect genuine cases
Disagree	Deontology / autonomy: compulsory vaccination treats a person merely as a means to protect others, contrary to the formula of humanity; bodily integrity and informed consent come first	To "the consequences are too grave" : incentives, information and community mobilisation can achieve coverage; slippery-slope worry: accepting compelled bodily intervention for the common good opens the door to other compulsory measures

Common losses: saying "the government should" without naming the right concerned (privacy, personal freedom, religious freedom); in (b), using a theory without stating its premise (e.g. asserting "utilitarianism" while never explaining maximisation).

7. (Life and death: euthanasia) An adult with a terminal illness, in severe and prolonged pain, has repeatedly and clearly asked a doctor to help end his life.

(a) Assess whether voluntary euthanasia in this case is morally acceptable, from the standpoints of utilitarianism and of Kantian deontology. (12 marks)

(b) "If the law permits voluntary euthanasia, involuntary euthanasia will inevitably follow." Evaluate this slippery-slope argument. (8 marks)

Model-answer points (20 marks)

(a) 12 marks

Theory	Assessment	Conclusion
Utilitarianism	The patient's suffering and loss of dignity are the most direct disutility; ending irreversible suffering, without harm to others who accept the decision, increases net welfare	Morally acceptable in this case
Kantian deontology	The formula of humanity requires respect for autonomy and dignity: honouring the settled request of a competent adult respects that autonomy; but a doctor acting to preserve a self-image of "always saving life" would be using the patient as a means. Whether a maxim of self-chosen death can be universalised remains contested (Kant himself rejected it)	The decisive question is whether the patient's autonomy is genuinely respected, not whether a third party's purposes are served

(b) 8 marks For the slippery slope to stand, it must be shown that abuse would follow *necessarily* once a regime is opened, not merely that it might. Against it: institutional safeguards (multiple independent assessments, competence requirement, repeated confirmation, cooling-off periods, terminal and irreversible condition only, written advance consent) cut the main path from voluntary to involuntary cases; in jurisdictions that permit voluntary euthanasia (the Netherlands, Belgium, some US states), involuntary killing remains illegal and is prosecuted, so "inevitably" is too strong. For it: once a society accepts that life may end to relieve suffering, elderly people who feel a burden may experience implicit pressure — structural rather than legal permission. A good answer concludes that the slope is an empirical risk to be managed by institutional design, not a reason to refuse all legalisation.

Common losses: treating "voluntary" and "involuntary" as the same act; appealing only to religious authority ("life is sacred") without giving a reason others can weigh; ignoring the practical question of who determines that a condition is irreversible.

8. (Bioethics: gene editing) A laboratory has edited the genes of human embryos, claiming it can eliminate serious hereditary disease. It now proposes to use the technique to screen embryos for "enhanced" intelligence and height.

(a) Is the boundary between therapy and enhancement defensible in ethics? (8 marks)

(b) "A person must never be treated merely as a means to someone else's wishes." Discuss "designer babies" in the light of this principle. (12 marks)

Model-answer points (20 marks)

(a) **8 marks** In defence of the boundary: disease involves the loss of a normal function and can be identified by medical standards, so therapy restores function, whereas enhancement has no settled “normal” level — its standard shifts with social expectation, and once allowed, an endless competition follows. Against the boundary: it blurs in practice (congenital deafness, height as a medical criterion); the same technique carries the same risks whichever purpose it serves, so purpose alone may not hold the line. A workable compromise replaces the single therapy/enhancement dichotomy with three criteria: risk and reversibility, whether the beneficiary is the person edited, and whether inequality is widened.

(b) **12 marks** The formula of humanity forbids treating others as mere means. Designing a baby makes the unborn child a means to the parents' expectations, family prestige or competitive advantage — the conditions of the child's existence are fixed in advance; worse, those judged “not good enough” and not implanted have their dignity denied. The objection that parental expectation and education already shape children can be answered: influence is not determination — degree matters. Nor can “the child will be grateful” justify it, since another party is deciding for someone who cannot consent. Conclusion: while therapy for serious disease can be justified by a duty of care, selection by parental preference struggles to pass the formula of humanity.

9. (Environmental ethics) A government has approved reclamation of an ecologically sensitive shoreline for housing, in order to relieve a land shortage.

(a) Assess the reclamation from the standpoints of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. (10 marks)

(b) “The present generation has a duty to preserve environmental resources for those not yet born.” Can this duty be justified? (10 marks)

Model-answer points (20 marks)

Part	Points
(a) Anthropocentrism, 5 marks	Only human interests have intrinsic value; nature has instrumental value. If the housing and employment gains are substantial, and alternatives (brownfield sites, urban renewal) have been properly compared, the plan may be accepted; if damage to fisheries and coastal ecology rebounds on residents' livelihoods and health, the utilitarian balance turns negative
(a) Ecocentrism, 5 marks	The ecosystem as a whole has intrinsic value; species and habitats deserve protection for their own sake. Even where human benefit is real, irreversible species loss is unacceptable; procedurally, it must be shown that no alternative site exists and that full ecological compensation is in place
(b) 10 marks	For: intergenerational justice — the welfare of future generations belongs within moral consideration; sustainability; a Lockean proviso that enough and as good be left for others. Against: the unborn are not present parties and cannot express interests or claim rights (the non-identity problem); unknown future population and preferences make the duty's content indeterminate. Reply: shift from rights to responsibilities and institutions — the present generation bears concrete, enforceable obligations (emissions targets, protected areas, statutory constraints on development), which makes the duty workable

Length guidance: a 20-mark question in Paper 1 expects roughly 700–900 words. Structure: standpoint sentence → define the concepts → two or three layers of argument → the strongest opposing case → your reply → a concrete conclusion.

Other syllabus areas (examined in both papers)

Unit	Common angles	Useful theories
Sex, partnership and the family	Functions of marriage and modern pressures on it; how different forms of partnership illuminate one another; causes of and responses to prostitution	Deontology (autonomy, promise-keeping), utilitarianism (social cost), virtue ethics (fidelity, temperance)
Bioethics / medical ethics	Patients' rights, informed consent, the doctor–patient relationship, end-of-life care	Formula of humanity, autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence
Business and economic ethics	Profit maximisation versus corporate responsibility, wealth inequality, advertising and consumerism, the whistle-blower's dilemma	Utilitarianism (aggregate welfare), deontology (never merely a means), virtue ethics
Media ethics	Press freedom and privacy, fake news and fact-checking, the limits of sensational reporting, responsibility for online speech	Utilitarianism (net benefit of information flow), deontology (truthfulness, respect), conflicting rights and priorities
Life and death	Procreation and contraception, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia and suicide, palliative care	Utilitarianism, deontology, the sanctity-of-life principle

△ Coming next in this series

TutorZone will publish a **Paper 2: Religious Traditions** mock paper (Buddhism / Christianity) with model answers, plus further Paper 1 papers on the remaining issues. Follow the [Exam Practice Questions](#) category to catch them.

Mock marking descriptors (how essay answers are banded)

Level	Knowledge and understanding	Application and critical thinking	Communication
Level 5	Uses ethical concepts and theories precisely, and recognises their internal limits	Analyses the specific case; raises and answers the strongest opposing argument	Clear structure, consistent standpoint, consistent use of terms
Level 4	Applies the main theories correctly and understands the basic arguments	Some application and evaluation, but the opposing case is handled thinly	Standpoint stated and paragraphs organised, with repetition
Level 3	Can describe theories but confuses them in use	Argues from common sense, seldom from a theoretical framework	Unclear standpoint; narrative rather than argument
Level 2 or below	Concepts wrong or misattributed	Opinion and emotion only, with no reasoning	Disorganised and hard to follow

This banding is TutorZone's **mock** descriptor for self-review only; it is not an official HKEAA marking standard.

105-minute time plan and exam technique

Minutes	What to do	Time
0–5	Scan the whole paper and circle the two Part B questions you know best — do not start writing yet	5
5–35	Part A: five short questions at 5–6 minutes each — definition, application, one evaluative sentence	30
35–70	Part B question one (essay): standpoint → concepts → two layers of argument → objection → reply → conclusion	35
70–100	Part B question two, same structure — do not overrun	30
100–105	Check: have you answered both (a) and (b), and named the theories you used?	5

Technique: open every essay with a standpoint sentence (e.g. “Provided exemptions are genuinely available, I regard the measure as morally justified”), then argue. Nothing loses marks faster than a page of “on the one hand ... on the other hand” with no position in sight.

Where candidates lose marks

1. **A standpoint that does not match the theory:** opening with utilitarianism and concluding “because every person has dignity” without explaining the switch.

2. **Asserting “should / should not” without reasons:** a 20-mark essay with no theoretical support cannot rise above Level 3.
3. **Ignoring the case details:** the question says the patient is competent, terminally ill and acting voluntarily; a general essay on euthanasia misses the point.
4. **Answering only half of a guided essay:** part (b) usually carries more marks than (a), yet often gets two or three sentences.
5. **Misattributing theories:** calling Kant a utilitarian, or treating virtue ethics as rule-following.
6. **Stopping at religious authority:** “the Bible teaches so” is not yet an argument until it is translated into reasons others can weigh (dignity of life, protection of the vulnerable).

Frequently asked questions

Q1: How many papers does HKDSE ERS have, and how are they weighted?

Two papers, each worth 50% of the subject and lasting 1 hour 45 minutes: Paper 1 Ethics and Paper 2 Religious Traditions (Buddhism or Christianity, one to be chosen). There is no School-based Assessment; the subject is assessed 100% by public examination.

Q2: How many questions must I answer in Paper 1?

Part A (Normative Ethics, 20 marks) sets four to five short questions and all are compulsory. Part B (Personal and Social Issues, 40 marks) sets four questions and you answer two, as essay or guided-essay questions.

Q3: Buddhism or Christianity in Paper 2 — and is it open book?

You attempt one module only. Christianity is open book: you may bring one approved version of the whole Bible, with underlining or highlighting allowed but no writing or added labels. Buddhism has no open-book arrangement and no reference material may be brought in. Schools presenting candidates for the Buddhism module in English must apply to the HKEAA two years in advance; otherwise that module is available in Chinese only.

Q4: How does this mock paper relate to HKEAA past papers?

It does not. The questions are original TutorZone material written to the published question types and mark proportions; no HKEAA question is reproduced or paraphrased, and the mock marking scheme and grade descriptors are not official documents.

Q5: Is there a word limit for essay answers?

The HKEAA sets no strict minimum, but a 20-mark answer normally needs 700–900 words to complete argument, objection and reply. Allow about 35 minutes per essay question and keep five minutes for the conclusion.

Official sources and further reading

- [HKEAA: Assessment Framework for 2027 HKDSE Ethics and Religious Studies \(PDF\)](#) — the authoritative source for papers, weightings, question types and the open-book rules.
- [EDB: Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide \(S4–6\), 2024 update](#) — learning focuses for Unit 1 Normative Ethics and Unit 2 Personal and Social Issues.
- [HKEAA: ERS subject information page](#) — sample papers, exam reports and candidate performance.
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ERS is not a subject you can pass by memorising: short questions demand precise definitions, and essay questions demand tight argument. If you want a tutor who knows how Paper 1 and Paper 2 are marked to go through your answers line by line — especially the objection-and-reply section — TutorZone can match you with serving teachers and high-scoring recent candidates.

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