S4 Ethics and Religious Studies Practice Paper 1 | Utilitarian calculus, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics

Senior Secondary Ethics and Religious Studies

S4 Ethics and Religious Studies practice paper with answers: utilitarian calculus, Kantian ethics, virtue ethics, QALY allocation and carbon footprint.

1. Consequentialism and utilitarian calculus (16 marks)

Use happiness units and show the working.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
1	(a) Plan A raises 200 people by 3 happiness units each and lowers 50 people by 2 units each. Find the net happiness units of Plan A.	Answer: net benefit = 200 x 3 - 50 x 2 = 600 - 100 = 500 units.
2	(b) Plan B raises 120 people by 5 units each and lowers 20 people by 4 units each. Find the net happiness units of Plan B and state, on utilitarian grounds, which plan should be chosen.	Answer: Plan B net benefit = 120 x 5 - 20 x 4 = 600 - 80 = 520 units; 520 is greater than 500, so Plan B should be chosen, a difference of 20 units.
3	(c) Explain the difference between act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism, giving one example of each.	Answer: act utilitarianism calculates the net benefit of each individual act, comparing the net happiness of a particular lie; rule utilitarianism weighs the long-term benefit of following a general rule such as being honest in ordinary circumstances, and acts on that rule.
4	(d) State two major criticisms of using the total sum of happiness as the only moral standard.	Answer: first, it ignores distribution, so a plan that concentrates happiness in a few people is still accepted when the total is the same; second, it can sacrifice the basic rights of a minority whenever the majority gains a larger net sum, which conflicts with justice and human rights.

2. Kantian deontology and the universalisation test (18 marks)

Write out the test steps and the conclusion.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
5	(a) Explain the universalisation test of the categorical imperative and state how it differs from a hypothetical imperative.	Answer: the test asks whether a maxim could hold as a universal law for everyone without contradiction; a hypothetical imperative is conditional on a purpose, such as exercising if you want to be healthy, while a categorical imperative binds unconditionally.
6	(b) Apply the universalisation test step by step to the maxim of making a promise with no intention of keeping it in order to borrow money.	Answer: step one states the maxim as a universal law that anyone may make a false promise when in need; step two notes that universal practice destroys the credibility of promising and lending; step three concludes that the maxim destroys itself when universalised and is therefore impermissible.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
7	(c) An act gives 3 people 10 happiness units each while costing 1 person 40 units. Find the net benefit and explain why utilitarianism and deontology would judge the act on different grounds.	Answer: net benefit = 3 x 10 - 40 = -10 units, so utilitarianism rejects the act; deontology does not judge by the net sum but asks whether the person is used merely as a means and whether the maxim can be universalised.
8	(d) Identify the difficulty deontology faces in a moral conflict such as lying to save a life.	Answer: deontology treats the duty not to lie as unconditional, so when duties collide it offers no clear priority and may conclude that a death is preferable to a lie; defenders appeal to stricter and looser duties or to a distinction between lying and concealing, but the dispute remains open.

3. Virtue ethics and character judgement (16 marks)

Illustrate with specific virtues and their extremes.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
9	(a) Using courage as an example, explain Aristotle's doctrine of the mean.	Answer: courage lies between the extremes of recklessness and cowardice, fearing what should be feared and acting when action is due; the mean is not an arithmetic average but the appropriate degree settled by practical wisdom in the situation.
10	(b) Compare virtue ethics with consequentialism and deontology in terms of what each judges.	Answer: consequentialism judges the outcomes of acts, deontology judges whether an act accords with duty, and virtue ethics judges the character and motives of the agent, asking what a virtuous person would do.
11	(c) Explain the role of practical wisdom and role models in virtue ethics.	Answer: practical wisdom enables a person to discern the fitting action and degree in a concrete situation; role models supply observable examples of character that learners imitate and reflect on until the virtues become settled.
12	(d) State two weaknesses commonly raised against virtue ethics.	Answer: first, it gives little concrete guidance in disputes such as whether to disclose the truth; second, lists of virtues vary with culture and period, so it struggles to show which set of character standards is correct.

4. Medical ethics and resource allocation (18 marks)

Give QALYs to 1 decimal place and show the calculation.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
13	(a) List the four elements of informed consent.	Answer: one, the patient has decision-making capacity; two, adequate and accurate information is given; three, the patient actually understands it; four, consent is voluntary and free from coercion.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
14	(b) Three patients compete for one ventilator. Patient A expects 20 more years at a quality of life of 0.8; B expects 5 years at 0.9; C expects 10 years at 0.5. Find each QALY and rank them by the QALY criterion.	Answer: A = 20 x 0.8 = 16.0 QALYs; B = 5 x 0.9 = 4.5 QALYs; C = 10 x 0.5 = 5.0 QALYs; the order is A, then C, then B.
15	(c) Distinguish voluntary euthanasia from non-voluntary passive euthanasia and state the slippery-slope objection.	Answer: voluntary euthanasia is the ending of life at the patient's own request; non-voluntary passive euthanasia is withdrawing life-sustaining treatment when the patient cannot express a wish; the slippery-slope objection holds that permitting voluntary cases erodes the standard until the vulnerable are sacrificed.
16	(d) A patient refuses to let the family know his diagnosis although they live with him and provide care. Explain how the duty of confidentiality is weighed against risk to third parties.	Answer: confidentiality is a prima facie duty, but where carers face a real risk of infection or harm because they do not know, the doctor may disclose the minimum information needed for protection, having first tried to obtain the patient's consent.

5. Environmental ethics and intergenerational justice (16 marks)

Give emissions in kg and tonnes.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
17	(a) Distinguish anthropocentrism, biocentrism and ecocentrism.	Answer: anthropocentrism measures the value of nature only by human interests; biocentrism holds that each living individual has moral value in itself; ecocentrism locates value in the health and integrity of whole ecosystems.
18	(b) A household of four uses 5,000 kWh a year and each kWh emits 0.7 kg of carbon dioxide. Find the annual emissions in tonnes and the emissions per person in kg.	Answer: household emissions = 5,000 x 0.7 = 3,500 kg = 3.5 tonnes; per person = 3,500 / 4 = 875 kg.
19	(c) State the definition of sustainable development and explain its link with intergenerational justice.	Answer: sustainable development meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs; intergenerational justice requires that the present generation not exhaust resources or leave irreversible damage, which would shift costs onto future people.
20	(d) The household switches its lighting to LEDs and cuts electricity use by 20%. Find the annual saving in kWh and the emission reduction in kg.	Answer: electricity saved = 5,000 x 0.2 = 1,000 kWh; emissions avoided = 1,000 x 0.7 = 700 kg of carbon dioxide.

6. Religion and life: suffering and the ground of morality (16 marks)

Answer with the core concepts of each tradition.

#	Question	Answer and marking notes
21	(a) Outline the Christian understanding of creation, original sin and salvation.	Answer: the world is created good by God; humanity misuses freedom and sin enters the world as original sin; God saves humanity through the death and resurrection of Christ, and people respond in faith and love, with love of God and neighbour as the greatest commandment.
22	(b) Outline the Four Noble Truths and dependent origination in Buddhism.	Answer: the Four Noble Truths are suffering, its arising, its cessation and the path: suffering exists, craving causes it, it can cease, and the Noble Eightfold Path leads to cessation; dependent origination holds that all phenomena arise and cease by conditions, hence impermanence and no fixed self.
23	(c) Compare the Christian and Buddhist explanations of the origin of suffering.	Answer: Christianity traces suffering to sin and the misuse of free will and looks to redemption and final renewal; Buddhism traces it to ignorance and craving and looks to the ending of clinging and the realisation of nirvana, so the two differ over the role of God and of self-effort.
24	(d) Explain how divine command theory and the Euthyphro problem affect the claim that religion grounds morality.	Answer: divine command theory holds that right and wrong are fixed by God's commands; the Euthyphro problem objects that if good is good only because commanded, morality looks arbitrary, while if good is independent of command, morality is not grounded in God, and either horn limits the claim that religion is the sole basis of morality.