S6 Ethics and Religious Studies Practice Paper: Consequentialism and Deontology, Virtue Ethics and Moral Judgement, Euthanasia and End-of-Life Decisions, Sexual Ethics and Relationships, Religion, Science and Religious Experience, Environmental Ethics and Animal Rights

S6 | Ethics and Religious Studies | Time: 75 minutes | Total: 100 marks | 24 questions

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Part A - Consequentialism and Deontology (16 marks)

Show your computation and name the ethical theory you apply.

1. A community must choose one of three vaccination programmes. Programme A yields welfare units of 210, 150 and 90; Programme B yields 180, 180 and 60; Programme C yields 240, 120 and 30. Using classical utilitarianism, find the total welfare of each programme and state which one should be chosen. [4]

Answer: A = 210 + 150 + 90 = 450 units; B = 180 + 180 + 60 = 420 units; C = 240 + 120 + 30 = 390 units. Programme A has the highest total, so the greatest happiness principle selects A.

2. A donation of 320000 dollars can help 4000 people under Programme A, or 2000 people under Programme B where the cost is 200000 dollars. Find the cost per beneficiary of each programme, say how a utilitarian would choose, and state one criticism of that choice. [4]

Answer: Programme A costs 320000 / 4000 = 80 dollars per person; Programme B costs 200000 / 2000 = 100 dollars per person. A utilitarian picks A, which produces more welfare per dollar. Criticism: aggregation ignores distribution and may sacrifice a minority, and welfare is hard to measure objectively.

3. A policy benefits 48 out of 320 people. Find the proportion benefited. Someone argues that sacrificing the interests of those 48 people is acceptable whenever total welfare is higher. Respond using Kant formulation of humanity as an end. [4]

Answer: Proportion = 48 / 320 = 15%. Under the formula of humanity, persons must never be used merely as means but always at the same time as ends. Treating the 48 people purely as instruments of aggregate welfare denies their dignity, so the argument fails.

4. Explain how act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism differ on (1) the object of judgement and (2) the treatment of lying. State how rule utilitarianism avoids one major difficulty of act utilitarianism. [4]

Answer: (1) Act utilitarianism judges each individual act by its consequences; rule utilitarianism judges the consequences of adopting a rule. (2) An act utilitarian may lie whenever that act maximises welfare, while a rule utilitarian keeps a rule against lying because general reliance on lies destroys trust. (3) Rule utilitarianism answers the difficulty of endless case-by-case calculation and easy rationalisation of exceptions by appealing to stable rules that sustain cooperation.

Part B - Virtue Ethics and Moral Judgement (16 marks)

Name specific virtues and justify your judgement.

5. A care worker self-reports certain principles. In 24 moral judgement scenarios, 18 of the judgements match those principles. Find the consistency rate, and explain how virtue ethics accounts for the gap between knowing and acting. [4]

Answer: Consistency rate = 18 / 24 = 75%. Virtue ethics holds that virtues are stable dispositions formed by habit, so knowledge alone is not virtue; the gap shows a disposition not yet internalised, which is cultivated through practice and exemplars.

6. Aristotle explains virtue as a mean. Using courage, name the excess and the deficiency, and explain why the mean is not an arithmetic average. [4]

Answer: The excess of courage is recklessness and the deficiency is cowardice. The mean is not an average because practical wisdom fixes it relative to the situation, the object, the occasion and the degree; the same person may rightly act differently before different dangers. It is the mean relative to us, not a fixed number.

7. A school asks 5 reviewers to mark a moral decision report. Their marks are 6, 7, 8, 7, 7. Find the mean mark, and explain why virtue ethics values the character and practical experience of judges rather than marks alone. [4]

Answer: Mean = (6 + 7 + 8 + 7 + 7) / 5 = 7.0 marks. Virtue ethics holds that sound judgement requires practical wisdom and good character, so experienced judges grasp situational detail better; a mark records only the outcome, not the character and motive behind the judgement.

8. An experienced doctor makes a wrong judgement under peer pressure, then admits the error and improves the procedure. Assess this with consequentialism and with virtue ethics, and say which assessment better captures reform and repentance. [4]

Answer: Consequentialism weighs the harm caused against the net benefit of the improvement, focusing on measurable outcomes. Virtue ethics focuses on honesty, courage and practical wisdom: admitting fault shows honesty and courage, and revising the procedure shows growth in practical wisdom. Virtue ethics captures reform better because it tracks the formation and transformation of character, not only outcomes.

Part C - Euthanasia and End-of-Life Decisions (18 marks)

Show computations; present both sides for argumentative questions.

9. Compare two end-of-life care arrangements using quality-adjusted life years. Arrangement A gives 2 extra years at a quality weight of 0.6; Arrangement B gives 5 extra years at 0.4. Find the QALY per patient and compare the total for 20 patients. [4]

Answer: A per patient = 2 x 0.6 = 1.2 QALY; B per patient = 5 x 0.4 = 2.0 QALY. For 20 patients: A = 1.2 x 20 = 24; B = 2.0 x 20 = 40; B exceeds A by 16 QALY.

10. A hospice has an annual budget of 1200000 dollars for 8 patients. Find the average resources per patient. If the hospice must decide whether to fund costly life-sustaining treatment for one patient, state the case for the resource-allocation argument and for the patient-autonomy argument. [4]

Answer: Average = 1200000 / 8 = 150000 dollars per patient. Resource allocation: resources are finite, and spending far above the average on one patient deprives others of care, so overall benefit and fairness matter. Autonomy: patients may decide what treatment they accept, and respecting that wish respects them as persons rather than pricing their lives.

11. Distinguish active euthanasia, passive euthanasia and withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment, and assess whether the claim that there is no moral difference between them holds. [5]

Answer: Active euthanasia administers a lethal agent; passive euthanasia withholds or stops treatment and lets the illness take its course; withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment is one form of the passive kind. The case for no moral difference: both aim to end suffering with the same result, differing only in the contingent form of act versus omission. The counter-case: active killing raises slippery-slope and trust concerns, while withdrawal respects the disease course and the rejection of futile treatment, with different legal and professional implications. Assessment: when intention and outcome coincide the formal distinction is weak, but slippery-slope and institutional-trust considerations still carry weight, so the claim of no difference at all is overstated.

12. A terminally ill patient refuses further treatment while the family demands resuscitation. Analyse the case with autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence, and state one practical difficulty in carrying it out. [5]

Answer: Autonomy: a patient with decision-making capacity may refuse treatment, and staff should respect that refusal. Beneficence: the family and clinicians intend to prolong life, but if treatment only prolongs suffering its benefit is limited. Non-maleficence: forced invasive resuscitation may inflict further suffering and should be avoided. On balance the patient wish comes first, with full explanation to the family and good palliative care. Difficulty: capacity may fluctuate and may be affected by depression or family pressure, so repeated assessment and communication are needed, which is slow and often contested in practice.

Part D - Sexual Ethics and Relationships (16 marks)

Ground your answer in a stated ethical basis rather than assertion alone.

13. A survey of 240 people finds that 96 consider informed consent the most important condition in sexual relationships. Find that proportion, and explain why a consent-centred ethic may still be criticised as insufficient. [4]

Answer: Proportion = 96 / 240 = 40%. Criticism: consent addresses procedure only and says nothing about power imbalance, exploitation or emotional responsibility; consent may also be formalised under pressure, age or economic dependence. Virtue and care ethics are therefore needed to supply trust, fidelity and respect.

14. A couple disagree about disclosing past relationships. Analyse the case with deontology and with an ethics of care, and identify the tension between the two approaches here. [4]

Answer: Deontology treats truthfulness as a duty that survives universalisation, since a general practice of concealment undermines trust, so it leans towards disclosure; yet it also respects a private sphere, so not every detail must be revealed. An ethics of care focuses on trust, security and the partner capacity to receive the information, judging with empathy when and how to speak. Tension: deontology stresses consistency of principle, care ethics stresses the particular relationship, so they may reach different conclusions on immediate full disclosure.

15. A discussion group proposes that effort in a relationship be divided in the ratio 3 to 7. Find each share as a percentage, and comment on whether a fixed ratio is an adequate measure of a relationship. [4]

Answer: Total parts = 3 + 7 = 10; one side = 3 / 10 = 30% and the other = 7 / 10 = 70%. Comment: a fixed ratio reduces a relationship to a calculable transaction, ignoring differences in capacity, health and caring duties as well as the nature of love and commitment. It is better to adjust contextually through communication so that fairness is felt.

16. Explain how gender-role expectations shape adolescents understanding of intimate relationships, and suggest two concrete ways to build respectful relationships. [4]

Answer: Gender-role expectations often tie assertiveness, toughness and emotional restraint to boys and compliance and caregiving to girls, so adolescents assume a fixed script for relationships, neglect communication and consent, and the pressured party finds it hard to seek help. Measures: (1) run school programmes on consent and boundaries using scenario discussion rather than lecturing; (2) provide trusted counselling channels and encourage peers to intervene respectfully, reducing a culture of shaming.

Part E - Religion, Science and Religious Experience (18 marks)

Show the arithmetic for data questions; state premises and conclusions for arguments.

17. A survey of religious attitudes interviews 500 randomly selected people. Estimating sampling error as one over the square root of the sample size, find the error in percentage points to one decimal place, and explain why this figure alone cannot establish reliability. [4]

Answer: Error is about 1 / sqrt(500) = 0.0447, that is roughly 4.5 percentage points. This alone does not establish reliability: it captures random sampling variation only, not non-response bias, leading question wording, social desirability or sampling-frame bias, and representativeness must still be checked.

18. A believer records 40 prayer episodes and reports a sense of being answered in 32 of them. Find the proportion, and explain why such personal testimony cannot by itself establish the veracity of religious experience. [4]

Answer: Proportion = 32 / 40 = 80%. Such testimony is a subjective report, open to confirmation bias (only answered cases are remembered), selective recording and retrospective interpretation, and there is no control condition excluding coincidence. It is data for study, but needs repeatable observation and independent checks.

19. Assess the claim that science and religion must conflict. First distinguish two senses of conflict, then assess each. [5]

Answer: The first sense is propositional conflict: incompatible claims about the same fact, such as the age of the universe. The second is methodological conflict: science rests on empirical evidence and revisable theory, religion on revelation, tradition and faith, addressing different questions. Assessment: propositional clashes have occurred historically, as with geocentrism, yet many dissolve through reinterpretation; treating religion as a scientific hypothesis to be tested is a category mistake. The claim of necessary conflict is therefore too strong: local conflict with overall dialogue is more defensible, while both sides may overstep their bounds.

20. Compare the evidential strength of the argument from religious experience with psychological explanations of such experience, and identify one problem neither side resolves. [5]

Answer: The experiential argument appeals to widespread, profound and transformative experience as pointing to a transcendent reality; it matches believers lived sense but is subjective, not publicly testable, and experiences across religions conflict. Psychological explanation accounts for the occurrence of experience through brain activity, suggestion, group contagion and cognitive bias; it is testable and predictive, but explaining a cause does not disprove the object. Shared problem: neither side has a neutral criterion for adjudicating reliability without presupposing naturalism or supernaturalism.

Part F - Environmental Ethics and Animal Rights (16 marks)

Show the computation and state the units.

21. Two people fly 5500 km, with aviation emissions of about 0.15 kg per passenger-kilometre; rail emits about 0.03 kg per passenger-kilometre. Find the total emissions of each mode and the percentage reduction from taking the train. [4]

Answer: Per person by air = 5500 x 0.15 = 825 kg; for two = 825 x 2 = 1650 kg. Per person by rail = 5500 x 0.03 = 165 kg; for two = 165 x 2 = 330 kg. Saving = 1650 - 330 = 1320 kg, that is 80%.

22. A housing estate has 320 households using 1200 kWh a year each, with 0.55 kg of carbon dioxide per kWh. Find the annual total emissions in tonnes, and comment on the claim that individual action is pointless and only policy works. [4]

Answer: Total electricity = 320 x 1200 = 384000 kWh; emissions = 384000 x 0.55 = 211200 kg = 211.2 tonnes. Comment: individual action alone is limited and institutions and infrastructure are decisive, but personal choices aggregate into market signals and social norms and underpin support for policy, so the two are complementary and calling individual action pointless is too strong.

23. Producing 1 kg of meat requires about 12 kg of feed. Find the feed conversion ratio, and comment on industrial farming from utilitarianism and from animal rights theory. [4]

Answer: Feed conversion ratio = 12 / 1 = 12, that is about 12 kg of feed per kg of meat. Utilitarianism: if farming causes extensive animal suffering for modest human benefit the total may be negative, though alternatives must be compared. Animal rights theory: animals hold an intrinsic right not to be harmed, so even a favourable total cannot justify using them as mere means, and industrial farming is therefore unjustified.

24. Explain the different grounds that anthropocentrism and ecocentrism give for protecting endangered species, and state a difficulty for each. [4]

Answer: Anthropocentrism grounds protection in value to humans, such as medicinal potential, ecosystem services, cultural and aesthetic worth and duties to future generations. Difficulty: a species with no apparent human use has a weak case, so protection tracks human preference. Ecocentrism holds that ecosystems have intrinsic value and species are parts of that whole, so they deserve protection regardless of usefulness. Difficulty: holistic value is hard to define and compare, individuals may be sacrificed to the whole, and it resists operational policy criteria.
