



**L-Università
ta' Malta**

**MATSEC
Examinations Board**



Examiners' Report

SEC Ethics

Main Session 2025

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A. STATISTICAL INFORMATION

The total number of candidates who registered to sit for SEC Ethics was **824**.

Level	Number of Candidates
1	9
2	88
3	540
na	187
Total	824

Table 1: Distribution of Levels

B. GENERAL REMARKS

This report provides a thorough examination and evaluation of the SEC Ethics examinations, focusing on candidate performance and their responses to the various questions. The objective is to present a summative analysis of the candidates' performance, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, while also offering insights into their overall understanding and engagement with ethical and philosophical concepts.

C. COMMENTS ON CANDIDATES' PERFORMANCE**Paper 1-2-3**

Overall, candidates performed well in this paper. Most questions were answered with relevant and appropriate information that clearly linked to the content and requirements of each task. Responses generally reflected a good understanding of the subject matter, with many candidates demonstrating the ability to refer effectively to case study material (for questions where case studies were used), while also drawing from wider knowledge to support their answers. This indicates strong content grasp and sound preparation.

While many responses were focused and thoughtful, some candidates lacked the necessary attention to detail in shorter questions, particularly where concise yet specific explanations were required. Emphasising the importance of precision and clarity in such responses could help avoid the loss of marks.

In general, candidates were successful in keeping their answers aligned with the assessment criteria, avoiding irrelevant tangents and demonstrating good focus throughout. Their ability to maintain structure and relevance is commendable.

Question 1

- a. Most candidates were able to identify that Jessica represents a negative role model, recognising that she influences others by promoting harmful behaviours and unrealistic beauty standards. However, only a small number of candidates acknowledged the deeper issue: that she presents a

false sense of reality through edited images and misleading content. This is a crucial aspect of what constitutes a negative role model, particularly within the context of social media.

- b. This question was generally well-answered. Most candidates successfully identified the four positive character traits Jessica could have endorsed, demonstrating a good understanding of qualities such as authenticity, self-respect, responsibility, and empathy. This indicates that candidates can recognise constructive alternatives to the negative traits presented in the scenario.
- c. While most candidates were able to list key values such as honesty, confidence, and kindness, many responses lacked depth and explanation. There was a noticeable tendency to present answers in list form, with little discussion or development. Very few candidates provided real-life examples or explored how these values are conveyed or modelled through content.
- d. Candidates generally recognised that social media has the power to shape individual values by exposing users to different lifestyles, opinions, and cultural norms. However, responses often remained vague, with few candidates clearly articulating how this influence occurs.

Question 2

- a. Candidates were generally able to recognise and identify examples of unsafe practices described in the texts. However, many responses did not make an explicit link between these practices and their potential to cause physical or mental harm.
- b. Responses to this question indicated that most candidates understood the idea that unsafe workplace practices are wrong, but answers were frequently too brief or underdeveloped. Few candidates referred to the violation of moral or ethical responsibilities, such as an employer's duty of care or the collective responsibility to maintain a safe environment.
- c. While candidates often identified and described unsafe practices, many responses lacked a direct link to business ethics. Few examined how such practices violate ethical values or professional standards that underpin responsible business conduct.

Question 3

- a. Most candidates were able to grasp the general idea of voicelessness, particularly recognising limitations such as language barriers. However, responses often lacked depth and did not explore the full extent of what it means to be voiceless.
- b. Candidates generally demonstrated some understanding of vulnerability, with many referencing legal status or language difficulties. However, most responses did not mention Maria's inability to access social services. In many cases, answers lacked the level of specificity required.

- c. A number of candidates provided appropriate examples, including the elderly and individuals with disabilities. However, a significant proportion repeated the example of migrants, despite the instruction to offer a different case. Additionally, some candidates struggled to articulate why the individuals or groups they identified are considered voiceless, often omitting discussion of the barriers that prevent them from speaking up or being heard.
- d. Majority of answers obtained a below average mark and only a few responses were outstanding. Considering that this is a higher order type of question this indicates that most candidates found it challenging to move beyond recall.

Question 4

- a. A considerable number of candidates did not correctly identify capital punishment as the end-of-life action referenced.
- b. Responses often lacked depth and did not articulate a clear rationale for the necessity of legal regulation. While candidates appeared to recognise that actions ending human life are serious and consequential, few explained the importance of laws in safeguarding human rights, ensuring justice and preventing abuse or misuse of power.
- c. This question was generally well answered. Most candidates correctly identified abortion and euthanasia as actions that result in the ending of human life.
- d. This question proved challenging for most candidates. Many answers were vague or incorrect, with few addressing the ethical implications of advancing biotechnologies.
- e. This question posed difficulty for many candidates. It was evident that there was a limited understanding of the doctrine of double effect.
- f. While most candidates were able to describe murder and self-defence as acts resulting in the end of life, many struggled to discuss the ethical distinctions between the two.

Paper 1-2

The following table shows the distribution of grades for Paper 1-2.

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER 1-2	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	14	13	24	56

Table 2: Distribution of Grades Paper 1-2

The overall performance of students in this Ethics examination was varied, with most demonstrating a reasonable level of engagement with the questions and an ability to relate ethical concepts to real-world examples. Many students were able to identify and apply moral themes, especially in relation

to contemporary issues such as cyberbullying and personal responsibility. However, the depth of reasoning and conceptual precision was inconsistent. A notable strength across the board was the use of examples, which candidates often employed to support their answers.

Nevertheless, a consistent weakness was the lack of clear definitions and structured ethical reasoning. While candidates showed an intuitive grasp of many ethical themes, they frequently assumed that the reader would infer their intended meaning rather than explicitly stating it. This led to the loss of marks, particularly in questions where precise terminology was required. Conceptual topics such as the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value were especially challenging, with many candidates either leaving the question unanswered or offering vague or incorrect explanations.

Another observation was the uneven quality of written expression. Some responses were well-developed, logically structured, and effectively communicated, while others were fragmented, repetitive, or too brief to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding. Where candidates performed well, it was often because they balanced examples with ethical explanation and maintained coherence in their argument. In contrast, weaker responses either listed points without elaboration or repeated ideas using different phrasing. This inconsistency was particularly evident in multi-part questions, where candidates often answered only part of the question or did not link their points back to the ethical framework in question.

There was a generally good level of engagement with the questions related to cyberbullying, self-care, and positive contribution to others. Candidates responded to these topics with empathy and, in some cases, strong personal insight. These areas appear to resonate with candidates and allow them to draw from personal experience, which enhances their responses. However, more abstract or philosophical questions—such as those concerning the nature of life, moral duties, or ethical voting—proved to be more challenging. Here, candidates were less confident, and their answers reflected either a superficial understanding or uncertainty in applying ethical principles to less tangible situations.

Paper 2-3

The following table shows the distribution of grades for Paper 2-3.

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	U	ABS	TOTAL
PAPER 2-3	78	97	126	124	87	73	73	-	42	68	768

Table 3: Distribution of Grades Paper 2-3

Section A

Question 1

Candidate responses generally remained at a surface level, with several of them incorrectly focusing on the distinction between open and closed communities rather than addressing the characteristics of a community itself.

Question 2

This question was generally well answered. Candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of what constitutes an open community, often highlighting aspects such as inclusivity, diversity, and freedom of expression. However, a number of candidates incorrectly asserted that open communities operate without regulation, which indicates a misunderstanding of the balance between openness and the rule of law.

Question 3

Responses to this question reflected a superficial understanding. While most candidates were able to define extremism in general terms, there was limited exploration of how specific forms of extremism (such as religious, political, or ideological) can incite individuals to commit acts of violence. A deeper analysis of the radicalisation process and motivating factors behind violent behaviour was often missing.

Question 4

A significant number of candidates left the response blank, and those who attempted the question frequently veered off-topic, instead listing general ethical values or misinterpreting the concept of instrumental value as being materialistic. Additionally, many responses only addressed one of the two key concepts.

Question 5

Most candidates successfully identified the right to life as a fundamental human right. However, many did not articulate the broader implications of this right, particularly in terms of illustrating its importance in legal, ethical, and societal contexts. There was a noticeable gap between recognition of the concept and the ability to express its significance in writing.

Section B

Question 6

a. Candidates generally performed well in this question, with many demonstrating a sound understanding of the emotional and psychological impacts of cyberbullying. These included anxiety, depression, and loss of self-esteem. However, fewer responses addressed the social consequences, such as isolation and reputational harm, or the potential long-term effects. More advanced answers

recognised that cyberbullying can have harmful consequences, not only for the victim but also for the perpetrator, whose behaviour may stem from or lead to further psychological and social issues.

b. Most candidates were able to identify practical methods of supporting victims, such as offering emotional support, encouraging the reporting of incidents, and seeking help from trusted adults or authorities. However, very few responses linked these actions to ethical or societal responsibilities, such as the moral duty to protect vulnerable individuals or the role of communities in fostering safe online environments.

c. While many candidates demonstrated a basic understanding of the difference, namely that cyberbullying occurs online, there was limited depth in the comparison. More developed responses highlighted key distinctions, such as the potential anonymity of perpetrators, the persistence of online abuse beyond school hours, and the wide digital audience involved.

d. There was a mixed level of performance on this question. Many candidates referenced the “golden rule”, but few elaborated on the underlying ethical frameworks that justify the value of respect. Some responses demonstrated a superficial or instrumental view of respect, such as respecting others solely to maintain one’s own reputation or because it is culturally expected (e.g., towards elders). Stronger responses should aim to develop an understanding of respect as an ethical principle grounded in the recognition of human dignity and moral equality.

Question 7

a. Candidate responses were varied in quality. The most commonly cited example was the act of forgoing food to help the homeless, which generally demonstrated an understanding of personal sacrifice. However, some examples did not clearly illustrate genuine self-sacrifice. A few candidates misinterpreted the question entirely, confusing self-sacrifice with a lack of self-respect, including references to coerced behaviours that were inappropriate in context. Stronger responses successfully identified situations that involved meaningful personal cost for the benefit of others and articulated the ethical motivation behind such actions.

b. Most candidates grasped the central concept of the relationship between happiness and material wealth. However, only the more proficient responses engaged with both sides of the debate, thereby acknowledging that while material comfort can contribute to happiness, true fulfilment often depends on non-material aspects such as relationships, purpose, and mental wellbeing.

c. While most candidates were able to describe what self-care entails, few explored its ethical dimension or considered it as a moral undertaking aimed at personal development. Many responses lacked a connection to the idea of responsibility towards oneself as a rational and moral agent. Stronger responses touched on the notion of self-care as a continuous ethical project, rooted in self-respect and the pursuit of wellbeing for both the individual and the wider community.

d. Many candidates effectively discussed the importance of balance and moderation, with some referencing Aristotle's concept of the "golden mean" to support their arguments. However, several responses focused narrowly on physical aspects such as food and drink, without linking these behaviours to broader ethical reasoning. Stronger responses connected the avoidance of excess to the development of discipline, self-respect, and long-term wellbeing.

Question 8

a. Candidate responses generally included relevant and thoughtful examples of positive actions, such as volunteering, helping those in need, and supporting friends and family. However, many answers lacked a clear connection to underlying ethical values such as altruism, compassion, or social responsibility.

b. Responses were generally weak, with very few candidates offering clear examples to illustrate the moral duty involved in conserving human life. Many answers strayed off-topic or confused the question with unrelated ethical issues. Where attempts were made, they often lacked depth and clarity.

c. Candidates displayed a good factual understanding of the various ways in which animals are used by humans, including in food production, medical research, and entertainment. However, most responses took the form of a descriptive list rather than engaging in ethical analysis. Few candidates evaluated the justification for such use or discussed ethical frameworks such as that of animal rights.

d. Most candidates identified relevant considerations such as voting age, family influence, and the importance of being informed when making electoral choices. However, very few responses framed voting as an ethical duty or explored the moral significance of democratic participation. The concept of civic responsibility and the ethical obligation to contribute to a just and representative society were largely absent.

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