

Candidate 1

‘Of all the issues relating to organ donation, presumed consent is the most important.’ To what extent do you agree?

There is currently moves being made in Scotland to move from a system of informed consent (or ‘opt-in’), which means that organs will not be taken from people who do not sign up to donate their organs. (K) The proposed system of presumed consent (or ‘opt-out’), like the system in Wales, would mean that everyone will be placed on the organ donor register unless they express their wish to be removed. (K) Many people are in favour of changing to a system of presumed consent due to the belief that this would lead to more organs being available for transplant, and more lives would be saved through organ donation. (A) However, others argue that the government should not have ownership over our bodies after we die and should not be allowed to take our organs without our permission. This is a moral issue because we cannot be sure that someone does want to donate their organs after death. (A)

Most non-religious people are in favour of organ donation and many are in favour of presumed consent because there is an organ shortage and many people are in favour of organ donation but do not sign up or speak to family members about it. (K) Non-religious people may argue that it is our moral responsibility to help others after our death if we can due to the fact that we only have one life and we do not need our organs after we die. (A) Furthermore, presumed consent doesn’t force anyone to donate their organs, but encourages people to talk about their wishes:

“...Under a system of presumed consent, individuals are far more likely to have discussed their views with their families and to have made their views on organ donation before death.” (K)

This non-religious viewpoint from the British Medical Association suggests the need to change the system to protect patients who do not want to donate, as presumed consent will force people to talk about organ donation - they can make it clear that they do not wish to donate their organs. (A) I agree with the statement above for this reason, because presumed consent ensures everyone has a voice. We rely on family members to make decisions about organ donation while they are grieving and they may regret their decision later,(E) especially if they choose not to donate due to uncertainty about what their relative wanted. At least with presumed consent, some good can come out of death and family members will not be expected to make stressful and difficult decisions. (E)

However there are other very important moral issues arising from organ donation. Beating heart donation involves removing organs before the heart has stopped beating, the donor will die after their organs are removed. (K) This moral issue comes from the question when do we consider someone as dead? In order for organs to be viable there must be a flow of blood and oxygen right up until they are removed, meaning the person’s heart has to continue beating until the organ is taken out. (A) This is a very important moral issue for people because the

person donating the organ could be seen as still alive when their organ is removed. This could be considered equal to murder and so is a very important moral issue to consider. I would especially be concerned that doctors might not do enough to try to save the life of someone who has viable organs which could be used to save three other people. (E)

A final important moral issue to consider is the use of living donors. Living donors are people, who donate their organs while still alive, they will not die after transplant but will have pain, discomfort, risk infection and may face other serious health consequences as well as numerous psychological consequences. (K) The moral concern here comes from the issue of whether it is acceptable to operate on a perfectly healthy person, with all the risks this involves, in order to save the life of another person. (A) Of all the moral issues surrounding organ donation, I believe this one is the least important. Living donors make their choices freely, and we should respect peoples' rights to make decisions about their own lives. Allowing a loved one to die because you don't wish to donate an organ could have greater long-term consequences on a person than any health implications relating to organ donation. (E)

In conclusion, I do agree that presumed consent is the most important moral issue relating to organ donation. This is because thousands of people die each year waiting for an organ, while at the same time thousands of organs go to waste due to people not carry an organ donor card. (K) I believe we should all want to help others after our deaths, and so it is morally right to move to a system of presumed consent.

Candidate 2

'Of all the issues relating to marriage, divorce is the most important.' To what extent do you agree?

There are many issues surrounding marriage. One religion that has many opinions on the subject of marriage is Christianity.

Many Christians believe that the purpose of marriage is to procreate. Procreation means having children and many Christians believe that the moral way to start a family is to be in a loving and committed relationship ✓K.

Many Christians believe that if marriage is performed in the eyes of God, it is a lifelong union and many Christians would say that divorce isn't an issue as people are married for life especially if children are involved. ✓A

Traditional marriage where a man marries a woman carries less moral issues than that of forced or arranged marriage. However, there are many people who would have an issue with a younger man marrying a much older woman and vice versa. People would also say that those who marry for money or for fame is much more of an issue than divorce.

Divorce is when a couple are legally separated which costs £550 in court fees but costs can be more depending on legal fees and lawyer involvement ✓K. Getting a divorce involves lawyers and also means that any assets they have are split up and arrangements are made with custody of any children ✓K. Many religious people would disagree with divorce but divorce can also be a good thing as the marriage may have been harmful to both parties involved and also the children ✓K. Divorce has become less of a taboo subject in society due to the amount of marriages that breakdown, it is said that 42% of marriages end in divorce ✓K. This shows that marriage isn't as valuable as what it once was and as it is very easy to obtain a divorce, it could be seen as the easiest and best way out of a bad situation ✓A. I don't think that divorce is the most important moral issue surrounding marriage because it has become a more accessible way out for couples with less stigma and judgement surrounding. Divorce is part of our society and many celebrities regularly divorce therefore showing to the rest of the world that it is ok ✓E

Many would say that arranged marriages cause more moral issues than divorce. Arranged marriages make up 55% of the world's marriages ✓K and it's an arrangement where traditionally the bride and groom are selected to be married by their families ✓K. Only 6% of arranged marriages end in divorce ✓K. This tells us that in fact arranged marriages are successful due to the low divorce rate especially in comparison to the UK divorce rate of 42% ✓A.

Candidate 3

'Living according to the Gurus presents too many challenges to Sikhs.' To what extent do you agree?

I agree to some extent that living according to the Gurus presents too many challenges to Sikhs. The Gurus were prophets sent by God, to provide a direct link to God. The words spoken by the Gurus were God's words, which means that Sikhs should listen to and follow the words and actions of the Gurus. (K) However, some of the teachings of the Gurus would be very difficult for Sikhs to live by today, especially Sikhs living in the Western world.

One reason why I disagree with the statement is that the Gurus taught that it was important to develop basic virtues such as compassion and selflessness, and they modelled these virtues themselves. (K) This has a positive impact on Sikhs because they will help a Sikh to overcome barriers to reunion such as maya (attachment) and haumai (selfishness). (A) Living according to the Gurus is not too challenging because the Gurus gave clear examples of how to develop these virtues, meaning that Sikhs can develop them too. For example, Guru Nanak set up langar, which is a free community kitchen that serves food in every gurdwara. (K) Langar is always vegetarian to make sure that people of all faiths/dietary laws can have it, and everyone sits on the floor to eat in order to show that everyone is equal. (K) This helps Sikhs to practice compassion and selflessness, by practising respect for all people, regardless of their religion or social class. (A) Today many gurdwaras also take langar out to help feed the homeless on the streets and at foodbanks. (E) Therefore it is easy for Sikhs to live according to the Gurus as they have provided specific examples of positive practices. (E)

However, I also think that living according to the Gurus can be challenging. Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa, an order of baptised Sikhs who are supposed to act as saint-soldiers and be a positive role model to other Sikhs. Khalsa Sikhs follow a strict code of conduct and observe five outward signs of their faith. (K) One of these outward signs of faith is the kirpan, a small dagger that baptised Sikhs must carry on them at all times. (K) The kirpan represents Sikhs' readiness to fight for truth and justice and to protect the weak and oppressed. (A) However, this can prove challenging for Sikhs living in the Western world as many people may view the kirpan as a sign of aggression. There are also strict knife laws in many countries, and carrying a kirpan may have consequences for someone travelling, or even in getting a job if employers do not understand the importance of the kirpan for Sikhs. (E)

Another reason that living according to the Gurus can be challenging is that the Gurus taught equality, and the importance of religious, gender and social equality. This means that everyone is equal regardless of their religion, because all religions are on a path to the one God. (A) This can be challenging for Sikhs because there is so much intolerance within other religions, and other religions might not want to engage with Sikhs in dialogue. Gender equality is important because God is neither male nor female, and the Gurus taught that women should be given equal respect to men. (K) However, this can be challenging as

there is a lot of sexism in Asian culture, and men often take lead roles in the running of the gurdwara, while women end up preparing and serving food in the langar, which is wrong because both men and women should take on these roles. (E) Finally, social equality is also important, and the Gurus spoke out against the caste system in India. Although it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the grounds of caste this still goes on, especially in rural areas. (K) This can be challenging to Sikhs because discrimination still exists and this can be very difficult for Sikhs to speak out against, especially as it is based on a culture which is hundreds of years old. (E) Furthermore, Sikhs should welcome anyone into the gurdwara, and offer them langar, but they cannot invite homeless people in, as they may be intoxicated or be carrying tobacco, which is not allowed in the gurdwara. This can be seen as discrimination. (E)

In conclusion, I agree with the statement to some extent, as developing the positive virtues that the Gurus taught is not easy, due to the five evils, which are the negative aspects of human nature and act as barriers. However, the Gurus' words are Shabad, which means the word of God, and the Gurus have been sent by God to help humans to achieve reunion, the final goal of existence. (K) Living according to the Gurus cannot be too challenging, as God is all-loving, and wants Sikhs to develop these virtues and achieve reunion. (E)

Candidate 4

'Living according to the Commandments presents too many challenges for Jews.' To what extent do you agree?

Living according to the Commandments could present many challenges for Jewish people for various reasons. For the purpose of this essay, I plan to look some of the commandments that are found in the Torah and evaluate the extent to which they may present a challenge for Jews.

One commandment that is found in the Torah,

'Thou shall not commit adultery' (Exodus) ✓KU

The purpose of this commandment is to identify a practical way to ensure ethical living for Jewish couples and suggests that a man or a woman who are married are not allowed to have a sexual relationship with anyone other than their partner ✓A. Some people suggest that this could prove to be a challenging commandment for Jewish people to follow especially in modern Western society due to the way that many people now view marriage as no longer a lifelong commitment and that having an affair is very common amongst adults ✓A. I would disagree that this commandment is challenging for Jews because many Jewish people are brought up in a faith where they are taught to value marriage and value the family unit therefore, they would ensure that they pick their partner carefully and enter into marriage knowing that it is for life ✓E.

Another commandment that Jews follow is,

'Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy' (Exodus) ✓KU

This is the most said commandment in the Torah therefore emphasising its importance to the Jewish way of life ✓KU. The purpose of this commandment is to take time off from work and rest like the way God did on the 7th day of creation ✓A. The Sabbath for Jews falls on a Friday and lasts until the Saturday and it is a time where Jews will do no work and spend time with family and friends whilst at the same time keeping their religion and traditions alive ✓KU. Some may suggest that this is a challenging commandment for Jews to follow due to the pressures of modern society and again living in the Western world where it is not the way of life to rest on a Friday through to Saturday. However, I don't think that Jews would find this challenging as I believe that if they have been brought up in a family that has observed Shabbat on a weekly basis they will be able to continue that way of life regardless of where they live as it is part of how they live their life as a Jew. Jews living in community wouldn't find this a challenge at all as everyone in that community would be observing Shabbat and would be able to help each other out. Modern technology also makes it easier to ensure no work is done that day, e.g. timed lights, automatic elevators in hotels and that the rules of Shabbat can be fully observed therefore not making it a challenge at all ✓E.

A third commandment that Jewish people follow,

Thou shall not murder (Exodus) ✓KU

The purpose of this specific commandment is to show Jews that taking a life intentionally is not permitted and clearly frowned upon by God. This suggests that no Jewish person has the right to take another's life and only God has the power to create and take away life ✓A. I disagree that living according to this commandment would be challenging as there are millions of people, Jewish or not, who follow this commandment/rule every day as very few people actually set out to intentionally murder another person. Jewish people are no different. This commandment is not only a rule to follow that God has set, it is also a law that society has and if you break that law, you most certainly will go to prison ✓E. Therefore, I strongly disagree that Jews would find this a challenge to live according to as not only do they not want to disobey God, they also don't want to find themselves in jail and destroying their relationship with their family and friends ✓E.