



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)
Paper 4A: Buddhism

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Introduction

This specification was examined for the third time this year.

The examination was in 2 sections. Section A consisted of 3 questions. Section B consisted of a two-part question. Candidates were required to answer all questions.

Questions Q01 and Q04(a) awarded marks solely for AO1, whereas the other questions in the paper were designed to assess both AO1 and A02.

Some candidates displayed an excellent detailed knowledge and understanding of specific Buddhist teachings and practices and were able to look at other points of view objectively. At the same time, there were candidates who appeared to have only limited knowledge and understanding of the specification and did not directly address the specific topic in the question.

Question Q01

This question asked candidates to explore the key events in the life of the Buddha. Most candidates were able to correctly identify events in the life of the Buddha. Within the answering of this question some candidates focussed on two or three events and outlined these in depth. Others highlighted a number of events in less depth. In both approaches the top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout. Answers that reached the top level showed a depth and range of understanding.

Some candidates seemed to have spent a lot of time on this question as it covered an area of the specification with which they were familiar. This is an 8 mark question and as such candidates should consider the amount of time spent on each question.

Question Q02

This question asked candidates to assess the importance of the Five Precepts. This question was answered in different ways including a focus on the general principle of the Five Precepts, while others addressed the Precepts individually. Both approaches are equally valid and enabled candidates to access the higher levels. There is no need to look at both sides of the argument but most candidates did. The answers which were awarded the higher levels critically deconstructed the information they used leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, which in turn led to reasoned judgements of the question.

Some candidates drifted slightly in the answers as they drifted into over explanations without an attempt to assess. Candidates should always ensure that they assess rather than just explain.

Question Q03

This question asked candidates to assess the significance of the idea of the Three Vehicles. A small number of candidates were unable to answer this question- leaving it blank. Candidates should be aware of the need to revise the different aspects of the specification in preparation for the exam. Some

candidates focussed their answer on the assessment of one of the Three Vehicles; the demands of the question focussed on the 'idea' and while credit was given, these approaches tended to not explore the central focus of the question. There is no need to look at both sides of the argument but most candidates did. The answers which were awarded the higher levels critically deconstructed the information they used leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, which in turn led to reasoned judgements of the question.

Question Q04

This question asked candidates to explore key ideas of the Four Noble Truths. This question was answered very well by most candidates. They were able to utilise aspects of their knowledge to develop explanations of the key ideas of the Four Noble Truths. The top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout. Answers that reached the top level showed a depth and range of understanding. Some answers that gave a brief narration of each of the Truths were unable to show this depth of understanding necessary to reach level 3.

Part b asked candidates to analyse (the significance of the relationship of metta (love), karuna (compassion) and khanti (patience) to the Four Noble Truths. This question elicited diverse responses. It is important to note that this question asked candidates to address all three of the metta, karuna and khanti. They did not have to be given equal weighting but all three needed to be addressed to meet the full range of elements in the question demanded by level 4. Candidates engaged well with the question and were able to show understanding of the significance and lack of significance of the various aspects. Candidates were able to use specific examples from the teachings to show the significance to the Four Noble Truths. Sometimes this was done in exploring a rejection of certain ideas rather than an acceptance. Some answers were very short which seemed to suggest that candidates were running out of time in the examination and careful consideration should be given to this. There is a need to look at both sides of the argument in an evaluate question. The answers which were awarded the higher levels critically deconstructed the information they used leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, which in turn led to reasoned judgements of the question. This was all supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence. This involves a weighing of the value and success of the evidence being used.

Paper Summary

Following on from this report, it is possible to suggest a number of simple ways in which candidates can be helped to improve their performance:

- Candidates should read questions carefully to ensure they are answering the question set. This is reflected in the 'idea of the Three Vehicles' in question Q03 and the covering of the various beliefs in Q04(b).
- Candidates should allocate sufficient time for the answering of each question. An over focus on question Q01 may have led to candidates running out of time on question Q04.
- Candidates should prepare for the wide range of topics that are studied in the AS Level.

- Candidates should consider how they are appraising the evidence and arguments they are making in question Q04(b). A number of these answers failed to look at both sides and were restricted in the ability to show evidence of analysis.