



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE
Religious Studies

Advanced Subsidiary

PAPER 4: Study of Religion

Option 4A: Buddhism

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2022

Publications Code 8RS0_4A_2206_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2022

Introduction

This paper enabled candidates to respond to their in-depth study of Buddhism. They were able to explain the beliefs, values and teachings, sources of wisdom and authority, and the practices that shape and express religious identity within Buddhism. A number of responses showed that candidates were able to write well. There was clear evidence of knowledge and understanding (AO1) of Buddhism, demonstrating a thorough study of the of the key ideas from the specification. Most candidates were able to assess and analyse (AO2) the concepts that were examined, some candidates showing an outstanding level of scholarship. Most candidates managed their time well which is most encouraging. Where candidates did not perform so well, their responses were less detailed and the AO2 questions contained more AO1 skills than AO2.

Q1 Explore the purpose of meditation in Buddhism. (8)

The majority of responses to this question scored well as they illustrated a sound understanding of meditation. Many candidates focused on the objective of meditation and the importance of it in the life of Buddhists, thus addressing the questions about the purpose of meditation. The most effective responses displayed a wide range of knowledge, especially about the possible impacts of meditation on a Buddhist's life, and these were developed effectively. Some candidates wrote about the links between meditation and the Noble Eightfold Path and made this relevant to the question.

Weaker responses tended to describe meditation briefly, providing a narrow range of knowledge and understanding rather than delivering the breadth or depth of knowledge and understanding required by the question.

Q2 Assess the significance of metta for Buddhists. (9)

Most candidates were able to access this question and recognised the importance of Metta for Buddhists. Some candidates answered with reference to Metta as an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path and specifically as part of the principle of Right Action and others focused on the practice of Metta as part of a Buddhist lifestyle. Most candidates presented an item of knowledge and understanding (AO1) before analysing it (AO2) and continued to do so throughout the response. Some candidates began with a paragraph of content and description, illustrating AO1 and then used the rest of the response to assess and provide counter arguments. Both approaches are legitimate, but the best answers were those that integrated their AO2 material throughout their AO1 right from the start of their essay, thus achieving the focus on AO2 required. Many candidates provided knowledge and understanding based on the concept that Metta leads to all other beneficial Buddhist attitudes and underpins all Buddhist beliefs, giving examples of these. They then countered it with opposing arguments that Metta is not so much a teaching as an attitude, or that it is not specifically Buddhist, or comparing it with other ethical concepts of Karuna and Khanti. Sadly a few candidates offered responses which indicated a lack of understanding as to what Metta was, confusing it with compassion, Karuna.

Q3 Assess the significance of the Buddha as a place of refuge. (9)

Candidates responded extremely well to this question, and it led naturally to AO2 as candidates compared the importance of the Buddha as a place of refuge to the other refuges of Dharma and Sangha. There were secure and detailed responses that considered the strength or otherwise of the various refuges. Responses often discussed what going for refuge meant and the interconnectivity of the three.

Weak responses simply discussed why the Buddha is a significant figure for Buddhists without assessing this concept or spent too much time detailing the three refuges without making judgements or deconstructing their content.

Q4 (a) Explore key beliefs about nibbana. (8)

There were many strong responses to this question. Candidates frequently began with an explanation of what Nibbana is, and demonstrated a clear understanding of what Buddhists mean by Nibbana and the differing views that Buddhists have about its attainment. The best responses showed a wide range of knowledge with good development usually referring to scriptural teachings.

Candidates with weaker knowledge and understanding usually ran out of information so their answer was very brief showing a narrow range of knowledge and unable to achieve more than Level 1.

Q4 (b) Analyse the meaning and purpose of life for Buddhists. (20)

This question was a wonderful discriminator of candidate's religious skills. It allowed candidates to approach the concept of the purpose of life in any way they wished. The majority however focused on the achievement of enlightenment and how to attain it. Answers often discussed the Noble Eightfold Path or the life of the Buddha and developed them with relevance to Buddhist practice. Candidates accurately used specialist language and terminology; terms such as Noble Eightfold Path, Four Noble Truths, enlightenment, Bodhisattva, and Arahant were all used. The strongest responses considered a number of 'purposes' and contrasted their value and relevance to life.

Weaker responses simply discussed enlightenment and how to achieve it with little use of AO2 skills.

Summary

Based on the performance on this paper students should:

- Apply material specifically to the question asked.
- Write concisely and use evidence to support arguments
- Learn and use specialist language and terminology
- Ensure that answers requiring AO2 limit the amount of AO1 material given.
- Remember that contrasting arguments to an idea is an effective way to show AO2 skills
- Be familiar with the requirements of the specification
- Practice answering exam questions in the time given

