

Examiners' Report
June 2018

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 4A

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Introduction

This specification was examined for the first time this year.

The examination was in 3 sections. Section A consisted of 2 questions. Section B consisted of one two part question. Section C consisted of 1 question in which candidates were required to make synoptic links with other aspects of their course. Candidates were required to answer all questions.

Questions 1 and 3(a) awarded marks solely for AO1, whereas the other questions in the paper were designed to assess both AO1 and AO2.

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 1

This question asked candidates to explore the key teachings of Pure Land Buddhism. Most candidates were able to correctly identify what Pure Land Buddhism is. For some candidates this was the extent of the knowledge that they showed, or perhaps they relied on general teachings of Buddhism that are shared between different Buddhist schools. This question did focus the candidates' attention on the key ideas. As such the top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout. In this way they were able to use two emphases that may or may not be linked. Answers that reached the top level showed a depth and range of understanding.



In this response the candidate achieved Level 3.

It is evident throughout this answer that the candidate is able to use a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately and accurately, and this is sustained throughout. This candidate uses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs, some of which are distinctive Pure Land ideas and others which are linked to different aspects of Buddhism. This enable the candidate to evidence and show a depth of understanding of the key religious ideas.



The introduction to the location of Pure Land is not a key idea, and while interesting was not germane to the answer.

Pure Land Buddhism was founded by Honen, a Tendai Mahayana Monk in China. Its key foundational beliefs are in the Amida Buddha, a heavenly Buddha who created the Pure Land, a place to be reborn in which all negative Karma is purified and one can receive instruction from Amida Buddha himself. This is necessary as a result of *Mappo*, the doctrine that the ~~world~~ *world* is rotten with Karma and existing Buddhist teachings are corrupted and that there is too much evil in the world to overcome. Shinran, founder of True Pure Land Buddhism, claimed that the evil in man's heart is too great to conquer alone. Therefore the only way to enlightenment is admission to the Pure Land, which is reached by a repeated utterance of "namu Amida butsu", or "I put my faith in Amida Buddha" several times daily. Therefore, this brand of Buddhism has no focus on the *Pitakas* Theravada or Mahayana scriptures, nor on ethical conduct (*Sila*) nor even on wisdom (*Prajna*), as only the ~~utter~~ *repeated* utterance, known as "Nembutsu" can save us after death. This makes Pure Land the only major Buddhist school that permits monastic marriage and meditation can become a part of daily work due to its spoken simplicity in the *Nembutsu*.

(Total for Question 1 = 8 marks)



This candidate response achieved Level 3.

The candidate is able to focus the ideas surrounding Pure Land Buddhism around those that are not common to other schools of Buddhism. They are able to show the various aspects of a Level three answer very well:

- Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
- Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
- A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).



While the candidate uses supporting quotes this builds the overall impression of the level and it is very useful, but is not necessary to always achieve the highest level.

Question 2

This question asked candidates to assess the importance of the Three Poisons. 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. This question was answered in different ways including an assessment of the three individual poisons, or a focus on the importance of the idea of the Three Poisons. 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.

2 Assess the importance of the Three Poisons for Buddhists.

~~hated, ignorance, greed~~
~~hated - snake~~
~~greed - cock.~~ (12)

The ~~three poisons~~ Three Poisons are of fundamental importance for Buddhists and provide the foundation for the other teachings like the four noble truths, eight fold path and five moral precepts. Three marks of existence are shared. The three poisons are what the Buddha labelled - ~~unskillful~~ ~~poisons~~ which the 'akusala' or unskillful states, and consist of, hatred, ignorance and greed. All of the Buddha's teachings are shared around preventing the spread of these states, and are therefore extremely important.

One of the three poisons is hatred and it is represented by the snake in the wheel of samsara. Hatred is one of the Buddha's most maligned qualities as he stated that 'a person who is full of hate, is full of unskillful attributes'. The Buddha believed that hatred was contagious, and used the analogy of the elephant to help explain this. It states that the elephant's behaviour grew worse because it was surrounded by hateful characters, and that ~~therefore~~ ~~therefore~~ one's behaviour can become more filled with hate if they are surrounded by hateful figures.

Another part of the ~~three poisons~~ Three Poisons is ignorance, which is represented by a pig in the wheel of samsara.

ignorance can be applied to a number of things - no
being ignorant about the truths of suffering, Karma, fruitfulness
or the skillful states. Ignorance is a fundamental plane in
a person according to the Buddha, and ~~should be~~ ~~eradicated~~
is vital for achieving kamma.

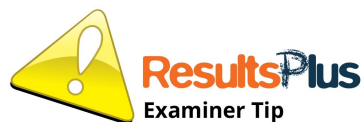
The last part of the Three Poisons is in greed, and
is represented by a rock. Greed for the Buddha is one
of the most fundamental planes in a person, so it can
lead to someone being ignorant or full of hate. The Buddha
stated ~~this~~ ^{this} as the 'I who craves for
~~existence~~ ^{existence}' is the ~~main~~ reason why people do not become
enlightened. The last greed is often referred to as craving.
~~and plays~~ a crucial role in the four noble truths, so
in order to attain the third stage of the four noble truths,
one must release their craving. This leads to another crucial
aspect of Buddhism, attachment, which the Buddha
states is essential to release in order to attain enlightenment. In
the twelve nidanas or the wheel of Samsara, the eighth is
craving, ~~and~~ ^{and} this is the craving of this helps to attain enlightenment
and escape the ~~rest~~ wheel.

Therefore, the Three Poisons are vital to Buddhists, as they are what
the Dhamma (teachings) aim to eradicate, and is what the other
teachers like the four noble truths aim to eradicate.



This response was awarded Level 3.

The candidate takes each of the Poisons in turn to explore the significance. It is important to note that the candidate would have been limited to Level 2 in this response had they not covered the three in their answer. The candidate is able to evidence various aspects of the level descriptor. They are able to critically deconstruct religious information leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, this in turn leads to coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements of the question.



Judgements are made throughout the answer which is a good way to address the demands of the question.

Question 3 (a)

This question utilised an extract from the anthology, asking candidates to clarify Buddhist teachings illustrated in this passage about the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

Candidates were able to correctly discuss various aspects of the Enlightenment utilising the source as a springboard. Candidates who only regurgitated the source were not able to achieve well, but these responses were few and far between. There were some candidates who focussed their answer on enlightenment generally which was not the focus of the question. The top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout. In this way they were able to use aspects of the source to develop into a wider discussion of the Enlightenment.

SECTION B

Answer ALL questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Read the following passage before answering the questions.

If there is any truth to the story that Gautama gained Enlightenment at Bodh Gaya in a single night, it could be that he acquired a sudden, absolute certainty that he really had discovered a method that would, if followed energetically, bring an earnest seeker to Nibbana. He had not made this up; it was not a new creation or an invention of his own. On the contrary, he always insisted that he had simply discovered 'a path of great antiquity, an ancient trail, travelled by human beings in a far-off, distant era'. The other Buddhas, his predecessors, had taught this path an immeasurably long time ago, but this ancient knowledge had faded over the years and had been entirely forgotten.

(Source: Extract adapted from 'Lives: Buddha' - Chapter 3, 'Enlightenment', Armstrong, K., Phoenix Press, 2002, Edexcel Anthology)

- 3 (a) Clarify Buddhist teachings illustrated in this passage about the Enlightenment of the Buddha.

You must refer to the passage in your response.

(10)

In the passage, Karen Armstrong discusses the different stories behind how the Buddha attained enlightenment. One of these stories is that it happened over night, yet another is that he sat under the 'Bodhi tree' and as he day moved, the shadow stayed over him. Through this he managed to ~~come~~ have to a sense of ultimate reality about the world, which ~~can~~ can only be explained as becoming enlightened. He was in which Armstrong describes this experience to its general attributes that are associated with someone gaining enlightenment. For instance, she says that the Buddha was on his own - relates to the non-proportional qualities and qualities of his experience, and that Buddhist experiences in general are against the idea of corporeal

~~Share~~ ~~experiences~~ 'shared experiences' with others and are therefore vital in explaining ~~how~~ ~~whether~~ ~~they~~ ~~are~~ ~~real~~ ~~these~~ experiences.

When ~~the~~ Armstrong states that the Buddha was discovered ~~the~~ 'a great part', ~~the~~ ~~one~~ ~~is~~ ~~discussing~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~how~~ the Buddha discovered the eight fold path, which aimed to ~~not~~ provide the right attributes in morality, ~~and~~ mindfulness and wisdom for people to follow in order to attain enlightenment. Armstrong mentions that there had been previous Buddhas, yet the ~~the~~ ~~why~~ ~~that~~ ~~separated~~ ~~the~~ ~~from~~ ~~others~~ ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~fact~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~stayed~~ ~~behind~~ 'out of love for others', as he ~~was~~ ~~own~~ ~~people~~ ~~at~~ ~~long~~ ~~in~~ ~~unskillful~~ ways and wanted to help them. This is why the Buddha is known as the Buddha of compassion, and Karuna (compassion) is an ~~an~~ ~~essential~~ ~~part~~ ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~his~~ ~~teachings~~.

Let ~~let~~ what Armstrong is essentially referring to in this passage ~~is~~ ~~the~~ ~~to~~ ~~do~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~origin~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ Bodhisattva doctrine. As this is used as an example in the two main strains of Buddhism (Theravada and Mahayana) as a method of ~~attaining~~ ~~attaining~~ ~~enlightenment~~, and is heavily contextual in this form. Armstrong continues to talk about the ~~the~~ ~~rest~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~story~~ ~~of~~ ~~Buddha~~ ~~Gautama~~ in the rest of the passage, ~~about~~ ~~his~~ ~~teachings~~ and

Why he became an ~~etc~~ enlightened being. The ~~of~~ reason why he sat under the Bodhi tree was because he was so weak from his life as an ascetic for the last seven ~~years~~ years, where it was believed he lived on a grain of rice everyday. Therefore, the path would provide 'a middle way', of ~~moderate~~ moderation and ~~rejection~~ rejection of ~~over~~ overindulgence, that would draw a line between ~~excessive~~ asceticism and ~~the~~ the one of ~~extreme~~ extreme.

Ultimately, the idea of ~~the~~ ~~the~~ the passage expressed is one of ~~discovery~~ discovery of the origins of the Buddha and that of the bodhisattva doctrine, and ~~is~~ ~~is~~ fundamentally important when examining the importance of the enlightenment of the ~~first~~ ~~first~~ Buddha.

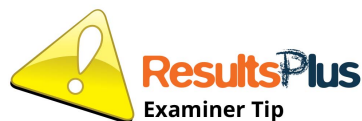


This response achieved Level 3.

The response is a clearly focussed answer that utilises the extract well. It utilises aspects of the extract in turn and is able to clarify the various points that are made. It is not necessary to cover every aspect of the extract - the candidates are able to choose to focus on a couple of aspects. This response is able to fully meet the requirements of the level descriptor.

- A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).
- Knowledge and understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs is detailed and fully developed (AO1).
- Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs and are fully linked to references from the extract (AO1).

The candidate is able to bring in their wider knowledge and focus the answer well.



There may be a worry about spending too much time on this question - candidates should be aware that this is worth 10 marks and an appropriate, rather than excessive, amount of time should be spent on it.

Question 3 (b)

This question asked candidates to analyse the extent to which the search for Enlightenment is significant for Buddhists. This question elicited some very interesting responses. Candidates engaged well with the question and were able to show understanding of the significance and lack of significance. Candidates were able to use specific examples to show the significance of the search for Enlightenment. Sometimes this was done in exploring and recognising the lack of significance for certain Buddhists. 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.

The search for enlightenment is what the entirety of Buddhism is based on. From the Buddha discovering the four Noble truths, and the journey the ^{Buddha} took, through renunciation and severe asceticism, to the realisation that depriving yourself completely would not help in the search for enlightenment, ~~in order to get there~~ To the practices that modern day Buddhists take part in, ~~All aspects of Buddhism~~ like Meditation, or chanting mantras, All aspects of Buddhism are centred around gaining enlightenment.

Different Buddhist groups do have different views on how enlightenment can and should be reached. Those in the Theravada tradition, or the lesser vehicle, who claims to follow the ways of the Buddha, believe that enlightenment can only be achieved through the middle way. No over indulging and no severe asceticism and one must sit in quiet meditation and reflection, in order to fully understand the true nature of reality.

Where as those who follow Mahayana, or the greater vehicle, such as Zen or Pure Land Buddhists believe that there are many different ways of reaching enlightenment. It is not always necessary to sit quietly to meditate. You

could rake the stone garden, create a sand mandala or perform a martial art. Or in the case of Zen, you could use everyday activities as a form of meditation. Zen monks wash and clean as a form of meditation. But in both Theravada and Mahayana the end goal is the same, enlightenment.

Some forms of Buddhism do place less ~~emphasis~~ emphasis on enlightenment, although it is still considered to be important. For example ~~Zen~~ Japanese or Chinese monks and nuns, who place ^{more} emphasis on the traditional values of their culture, than they do on the Buddhist ideals.* This shows that whilst enlightenment is one of the most important things in the ~~country~~ countries where Buddhism originated, in the countries where it has been introduced and has intergrated with society ^{so enlightenment is no longer the most} ~~it is not so important~~ important.

The concept of enlightenment is the insight into the ~~true~~ true nature of reality, in order to break out of the cycle of Samsara, which is the cycle of rebirths. The Buddha gave many example of the three virtues needed to gain enlightenment in his sermons. For example in one village there was a feared murderer that nobody would befriend, but the Buddha accepted him and treated him with kindness and compassion. The ~~recounting~~ recounting of the

Buddha's sermons in the Pali canon is how the
Theravada tradition shows the three virtues, ^{whereas} some
Mahayana traditions use beings, such as Avalokiteshvara,
who ~~seep~~ represents compassion.

All of this shows that ^{enlightenment} Buddhism is of great importance
to ~~a~~ ^{the} vast amount of Buddhists, and that even if different
groups stress different ways of reaching it, it is what they
are all aiming for in the end. Although some may
argue that the way we act in life is more important
than what we get out of it. We should not practice
Buddhism * Just because we want enlightenment, we
should practice it because we want to live a good life.
For this reason some say that the 5 precepts are
the most important part. For example Ahimsa, which is
the first precept, should be practiced by all Buddhists, ~~no~~
no Buddhist should cause harm to any living being. There
is also Karma which is compassion, which is essential
for ~~a~~ living a good life.

* Emphasis is also placed on the countries own
traditional religions, Taoism and Confucianism, which
affect the ~~a~~ way in which Buddhism is taught and
practiced in those countries.



This candidate achieved Level 5.

This response is detailed in meeting the requirements of a Level 5 answer. There is a good balance between AO1 and AO2. The candidate is able to meet the demands of Level 5:

- A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).
- Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).
- Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2).
- Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question, which are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2).

This candidate is able to tie the aspects which they exploring to the question at different points. This is key in ensuring that the answer is focussed around the demands of the question. They are able to utilise aspects of Buddhism to the search for Enlightenment which was credited and showed the adeptness of the candidate.



Ensure that both sides are explored and that appraisal of evidence is undertaken.

Question 4

This question was worth 30 marks and asked candidates to evaluate the status of the Tipitaka as the foundation of Buddhist belief and practice. This also included the added requirement to include links to Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Ethics, or New Testament Studies.

It should be noted that references to other religions do not count as a synoptic link as it is impossible to study two religions. Where a candidate referenced aspects of Christianity care was taken to ensure that this linked to the New Testament Studies part of the course rather than Christianity as a World Religion.

This question was answered in a mixed way. Some candidates just gave a description of the Tipitaka, whereas others engaged with all of the demands of the question. This could have been because of a lack of time, but the responses which achieved lower levels suggested that candidates did not really understand or address the demands of the question rather than time constraints.

SECTION C

teachings
analysis
Vinaya

4 Evaluate the status of the Tipitaka as the foundation of Buddhist belief and practice.

In your response to this question, you must include how developments in Buddhism have been influenced by **one** of the following:

- Philosophy of Religion
- Religion and Ethics
- New Testament Studies.

- ① Source of wisdom but → modified, but
 - ② Needed for the Sangha
 - ③ Not as important → less teachings
- ↑
Tiratna Titikata → pure land

gender
→ majority
↓
teachings

(30)

The Tipitaka is a collection of Buddhist scriptures made by ~~the~~ the monastic community, and contain the Sutta-Pitaka (the Buddha's teachings), the Abhidharma-Pitaka (the analysis of his teachings) and the Vinaya-Pitaka (the monastic code). It could be argued that the Tipitaka is the foundation of the ~~traditional schools~~ Theravada and Mahayana orthodox Theravadin schools, but has a less important role in Mahayanen schools, which are founded upon other beliefs and practices.

For Theravadin Buddhists, the Tipitaka is crucial as it is the foundation of the Buddhist beliefs and practices. This is because the Sutta-Pitaka contains the words of the Buddha Siddhartha Gautama, who is the central figure of Theravada Buddhism. After his death, his teachings were written and formed the Tipitaka, which therefore symbolised the Buddha's teachings, which led to the sustaining of the religion, making the Tipitaka vital as it contains the Buddha's words which make it a source of wisdom and authority. Its strength, making it a strong foundation of Buddhist beliefs and practice.* Its strength as

The foundation is furthered by the fact that the Buddha taught the Dhamma, evidenced when he said: 'He who sees me, sees the Dhamma', which shows that his teachings were of the Dhamma (the universal truth) only, ~~not~~. This ~~is seen as~~ ~~is seen as~~ It could be argued that the Dhamma is instead the foundation of Buddhism as it is the eternal truth or reality and is what the Buddha taught, but it would be inaccessible to un-enlightened beings and was made accessible by the Buddha, and would have been forgotten had his teachings not been ~~not~~ written ~~down~~ down in the form of the Tipitaka, making it the ~~the~~ foundation of Buddhist beliefs and practices.

Furthermore, the most important Buddhist practice is arguably the maintenance of the Sangha, which ~~could be said to be~~ ~~a part of the~~ ~~religion's~~ Buddhism's foundation as it is the monastic community it embodies the Buddha's teachings and by following the Noble Eightfold Path and supporting the laity by offering guidance and giving Dhamma, but most vitally, they keep the religion alive by sustaining the Buddha's teachings and are responsible for ~~the~~ ^{their} spread, making the foundation of Buddhism as ~~the~~ ~~top~~ the monastic community, the laity and the religion's survival depend on its existence.

However, it is possible that the Sangha would not be ~~it~~ alive today if the Vinaya - Pitaka was not written as it contains the monastic code, which keeps the Sangha in harmony as it ~~is~~ ~~is~~ contains the

without good and orderly behaviour ~~the~~ ^{we} ~~will~~ ^{cannot} have it. Therefore, it may be argued that while the Sangha is indeed vital to the religion, the Vinaya-pitaka is its foundation, strengthening strengthening the ~~the~~ argument that the ~~Tripitaka~~ ^{Tripitaka} is the foundation of Buddhist beliefs and practices.

* This is akin to the New Testament studies, which contain the teachings and parables of Jesus, making them a source of wisdom and authority, and possibly the foundation of ~~Christianity~~ Christianity as it contains they express his teachings, which have sustained the religion.

Philosopher Antony Flew would use his ^{strong} 'Falsification ^{principle}' to argue against the ~~the~~ view that the Tripitaka is the foundation of Buddhism as he stated that a statement is meaningful if we can falsify it, but one cannot falsify the statements of the Tripitaka, rendering it as meaningless.

Lastly, it cannot be said that the Tripitaka is ~~the~~ the foundation of ~~of~~ all Buddhist schools. In Buddhism focuses on meditation and de-emphasises the logical thoughts of the Tripitaka, evidenced in the rason-debbying 'koans' used, which show the meaninglessness ~~and~~ of logic, undermining the significance of the ~~the~~ Tripitaka's logical analysis, particularly in the abhidharma-pitaka. In addition, Pure Land Buddhism puts forth one suttas and the

teachings of the Buddha Siddhārtha Gautama, and instead relies on visualization chanting to please Amitayus Buddha, who ~~is~~ is not a central figure in the Tipitaka. Tibetan Buddhism places greater emphasis on visualisations and clerics, ~~see~~ which contrast ~~to~~ practices relating to the Tipitaka. For these reasons these schools of ~~Bud~~ The Tipitaka is evidently not the foundation of these schools, undermining its significance.

In conclusion, ~~the~~ ~~is~~ ~~for~~ for Theravadin Buddhists, the Tipitaka can be seen as the foundation of beliefs and practices as it is a source of wisdom as it contains the dhammas, which is what the ~~Buddha~~ Buddha taught and is ultimately what ~~form~~ led to the founding of the religion. In addition, the Vinaya can be seen as the foundation of the Sangha as it ~~may be~~ ~~do~~ could have ~~been~~ without the organisation ~~it~~ ~~created~~ in the Sangha that it created, making the ~~the~~ Tipitaka its foundation. However, not all schools were founded upon the ~~the~~ Tipitaka, so it is not the foundation of all Buddhist beliefs and practices.



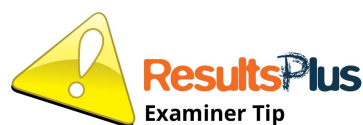
This candidate achieved Level 5.

This response is able to evidence aspects of the level 5 descriptor.

- A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1).
- Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2).
- Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2).
- Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2).
- Reasoned judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2).

While the candidate is able to use information well they are slightly let down by the conclusion which may not be a full and logical drawing together of justified ideas (AO2).

There are two paragraphs on the third page that show links to other aspects of the course- only one was required but the candidate has signposted them. The candidate has also linked them well with the argument being made. These links do not guarantee a Level 5 mark but open up the possibility for such.



Ensure that the depth of certain aspects of the content goes beyond the surface

Paper Summary

Candidates should:

- Prepare for the wide range of topics that are studied in the AS Level and ensure they have revised the whole specification.
- Be prepared to make links to other components (papers) they have studied for Question 4. Indicating in their answer that they are doing this is helpful.
- Read questions carefully to ensure they are answering the question set.
- Allocate sufficient time for all sections. There is no requirement to begin at Question 1 and work through the paper. Some candidates very obviously began with Section C. Whatever works best for the candidate is permissible.
- Ensure that the source is referred to but not regurgitated in 3(a).
- Consider how they are appraising the evidence and arguments they are making in Questions 3(b) and 4.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

