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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 2D Study of Buddhism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies

Religious Studies A Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Religion Option 2D – Buddhism

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The assessment consists of two questions; candidates must answer both questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

1RA0_2D_Q01a

The question asked was:

'Outline **three** of the Four Sights.'

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Some candidates performed less well as simply listed three of the sights. An outline requires more than that. A list – usually one or two words per belief - can reach a maximum of one mark, as these are not outlines.

Generic information about lists/sentences:

Using this example:

Outline 3 of the Four Sights:

- Sick man, old man, dead man (1 mark for list).
- Seeing a sick man showed Siddhartha that all people suffer (1 mark for a sentence identifying one correct piece of information).
- Sick man, old man, lotus (0 marks as all three parts of a list have to be correct to gain the mark).

Examiner tips:

- Centres should encourage candidates to write in full sentences in order to ensure that their response is an outline and not a list.
- Centres need to encourage candidates to be sure they are clear about the different 'numerical' teachings within Buddhism - for example the difference between the content of the Four Sights and the Four Noble Truths. Failure to do so, or confusion, can mean the loss of marks.
- It is good idea to separate each outline by starting it in a new line.

1RA0_2D_Q01b

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why the Eightfold Path is important.'

Candidates who performed less well on this question were generally unable to develop answers, but this question was well-answered by the majority of candidates.

Furthermore, the question was about how the Eightfold Path is important to Buddhists. Answers which were simply a description of elements of the Path were not credited.

Examiner tips:

- Centres should encourage candidates to make sure that, in a developed response, both parts of their answer are able, to stand on their own. One way to check this is to see if both parts of the reason – the statement and development – both make sense when read on their own. If they do the reason is likely to be developed.
- Centres need to make sure candidates realise rewording a reason does not count as development.
- Centres should encourage candidates not to rely on transferring material from other sections of the same question in order to try to gain marks.
- Candidates need to accurately understand, when relevant to the question, both the original term and its English translation.

1RA0_2D_Q01c

This question asked was:

‘Explain **two** reasons why metta is important for Buddhists.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.’

Some candidates focused on discussing metta bhavana – a different concept from a different section of the specification. However, as the two things are linked, most candidates were able to provide some relevant information. It is important that centres make clear that similar sounding terms can be two different things. Furthermore, centres need to develop ways to help students with the difficulties of religious terminology in a different language. Whilst many candidates were able to provide a source of wisdom for this question, some merely added it at the end, almost as a footnote or afterthought. The source of wisdom not only needs to be relevant, but also needs to be integrated into the body of the response/one of the reasons.

Examiner tips:

- Centres should be certain that the source of wisdom is genuine.
- Two sources of wisdom will not gain two marks as the question paper specifically states ‘a source’ of wisdom.
- Separating the two reasons into two paragraphs not only makes it easier to distinguish those reasons but can also help clarify the thinking of the candidate.
- Centres need to encourage candidates to pay particular attention to the wording of the question and respond accurately to ‘reasons’/‘ways’/‘teachings’ rather than, as happened with a minority of candidates, simply giving a description of metta.

1RA0_2D_Q01d

The question asked was:

“Becoming an arahant should be the aim for all Buddhists.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- refer to different Buddhist points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.’

Most of responses were clear on the difference between arahant and bodhisattva but limited potential marks by describing the two ideas rather than appraising them.

Others provided 'for and against' for the quotation and then provided a personal opinion. This does not constitute appraisal and so limited the marks available.

In (d) questions, candidates must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. Candidates will also be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and belief when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors. Simply providing a for and against set of reasons and a personal conclusion does not really begin to appraise the statement, and centres need to encourage candidates to write in a well formulated and discursive style.

This question also has 3 marks for SPaG. To gain these marks the candidate needs to:

- spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy.
- use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall.
- use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.

Examiner tip:

Centres should encourage candidates to go beyond for and against arguments with a conclusion as this is likely to limit them to Level 2 marks.

1RA0_2D_Q02a

The question asked was:

'Outline **three** features of puja.'

Some candidates listed places where puja could take place and without linking these to the features no mark could be given.

Examiner tips:

- It is important for centres to stress the importance of the wording of the question.
- Candidates should be encouraged to highlight the key words to keep the demands of the question in focus.
- Writing in sentences, even if using bullet points, can help to guarantee that the result is an outline rather than a list.

1RA0_2D_Q02b

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why vipassana meditation is important for some Buddhists.'

This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. However, some candidates gave a description of vipassana without showing how or why it was important. This unfortunately limited the marks they could receive for this question.

Examiner tips:

- In a question that asks for two reasons, give two reasons (not three) as the third reason will not be credited
- Whilst some candidates directly quoted Buddhist teachings to develop their answer, paraphrases would be equally acceptable if relevant and recognisable.

1RA0_2D_Q02c

The question asked was:

‘Explain **two** reasons why chanting is important for Theravada Buddhists. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.’

Descriptions of types or ways of chanting were not able to be credited unless they were integrated into the reasons given for its importance.

Examiner tips:

- If in doubt about suitable sources of wisdom, use a search engine to find specific Buddhist teachings.
- For accurate Buddhist teachings there are many excellent Buddhist centres which have informative and accurate teachings available online.
- Paraphrases of sources of wisdom are acceptable if they are accurate, relate to the question, and are from genuine Buddhist teachings. Accurate references - i.e. chapter/verse - are not necessary as long as the reference is generally stated.

1RA0_1D_Q02d

The question asked was:

“Death rituals should be the same for all Buddhists.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- refer to different Buddhist points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.’

As stated for Q1d, responses in (d) questions must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. Candidates will be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and belief when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors.

Some candidates concentrated on one part of the answer and they did not address all the bullet points. If not all bullet points for (d) questions are addressed, response can only reach the top of Level 2. There was also the danger that some candidates resorted to descriptions of the types of burial rather than evaluating the reasons for different death rituals. This restricted the marks available.

SPaG is not assessed in Q2(d).

Examiner tip:

Centres need to encourage candidates to look carefully at the stimulus quotation. It will give a clear indication of what is being looked for. All of the bullet points need to be addressed. It might be a good idea for candidates to cross through each bullet point as they respond to it.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Do not attach extra sheets to your examination paper, write within the scannable pages using the blank spaces.
- When answering the (a) items use three full sentences.
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in (c) items must be relevant to the question and support the reason given. They do not have to be learnt by rote, but can be paraphrased. Accurate chapter and verse references are not needed.
- The (d) items ask for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given are 'considered' or appraised for their value.
- On (d) items the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer.
- Candidates should read the questions carefully, and answer the question asked fully.