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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RB0)
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1D: Buddhism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies B Paper 1D: Area of Study 1 – Study of Buddhism (Paper code: 1RB0/1D)

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of four questions and candidates must answer all 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.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Buddhism as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are four sections:

- Beliefs
- Marriage & the Family
- Living the Religious Life
- Matters of Life & Death

Candidates had studied Buddhism within the context of the wider British society.

Please note:

AO stands for 'Assessment Objective'

SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs. This section was one of the two candidates had Advanced Information for and so had been informed which bullet points would be in the examination.

Bullet point 1.8 Buddhist ethical teachings: divergent Buddhist understandings of the nature, purpose and importance of kamma, including Dhammapada 181–187 and the Khuddakapatha, merit and rebirth, karuna (compassion), metta (loving kindness), **pancha sila (the five precepts)** and the paramitas (six perfections); the divergent applications of each of these ethical teachings in Buddhist life today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about the Five Precepts'

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

Most candidates were awarded 3 marks. Many took the approach of giving individual teachings about the precepts. Others approached the question more broadly, focusing on how the precepts could be grouped together and their general function.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit. Candidates who answer using a list, which is not an outline, can only receive 1 mark according to the mark scheme. If any one element of a list were incorrect it would get 0 marks.

Question 1(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.4 Second Noble Truth: the nature of samudaya – the causes of suffering, including reference to Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, the Three Poisons; Buddhist teachings about the causes of suffering – Sermon at Benares, and how they are represented in the Wheel of Life; **divergent understandings of the Wheel of Life**, with reference to Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the Wheel of Life.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two beliefs are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the belief given and to the question asked.

Most candidates were able to show their understanding of the wheel of life and many students gained full marks. There were a range of approaches, which were generally valid. The majority of answers made specific reference to the three poisons.

Examiner advice: Candidates should be encouraged to be familiar with the requirements of the different styles of questions in order to make efficient use of their time in the exam.

Question 1(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.2 Dhamma: The nature and different meaning of dhamma – dependent origination/conditionality; the nature and importance of paticca-samuppada and the Three Marks of Existence, including reference to the Story of Nagasena and the Chariot in the Milinda Panha: suffering – dukkha, **anicca – no fixed self** and anatta – soul or essence; the implications of belief in dhamma for Buddhists today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why anicca is important to Buddhists.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase
- If examiners are unsure they will use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and the source
- If the source is attributed to the wrong person/source/ numerical reference it cannot be credited e.g. a Dali Lama quote attributed to the Buddha and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded
- Numerical or generic references on their own are not awarded. The candidate must use the reference correctly ie not just state the name of a sutta.

Most candidates were aware of reasons why anicca is considered important, describing impermanence and change. Many candidates were able to offer a source of wisdom, the most common being the story of Negasena and the Chariot.

Question 1(d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d) items.

The candidates are being assessed on AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO2 constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the validity of the arguments used / appraisal to gain the higher grades. Many candidates produced excellent answers giving reasons for and against but failed to evaluate the credibility of the argument. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting student's progression to the higher levels. Many candidates used words that implied appraisal, such as strong/weak argument, but were unable to follow this up with genuine evaluation.

Examiner advice: centres should refer to training materials online. Candidates require the religious understanding of the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against before they can begin to evaluate.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.5* Third Noble Truth including reference to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: **the nature of nirodha and the cessation of tanha; Buddhist teachings about the ending of desire**; the nature of the cycle of samsara; different understandings of nibbana and enlightenment and their importance for Buddhists today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was (d) "It is impossible to overcome desire."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

d) items are marked using levels and awarding is carried out using 'best fit' according to the level descriptors.

In response to this question candidates were aware of the discussion around the concept of desire, discussing ideas around the view that overcoming it is either impossible or rare but worthy and achievable. Stronger candidates made specific reference to tanha, whilst weaker candidates commented more generally. Many made reference to the Eightfold Path as a means of overcoming desire. There were attempts at appraisal, but often a suggestion of either strength or weakness was not supported with solid argument.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.1 The **importance and purpose of marriage in Buddhism**: divergent understandings of the significance of marriage in Buddhist life; divergent Buddhist teachings about marriage, including its importance, the Sigalovada Sutta, and the possible ideal of celibacy; divergent non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to the importance of marriage in society, including a lack of importance, cohabitation and the Buddhist responses to these attitudes (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist beliefs about the importance of marriage.'

a) items are point marked – Outline requires three outlined points.

This question was accessible, with approximately two thirds of candidates achieving full marks. Most highlighted that marriage provided an opportunity to show loving kindness. Many references were also made to marriage potentially being a distraction from the path to enlightenment.

Question 2(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.4 **Support for the family in the sangha**, including the role of the sangha as a refuge as taught in The Khuddakapatha 1: **how and why the community tries to support families**, including through worship, rites of passage, festivals and counselling; divergent understandings of the importance of this support for Buddhists today (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Explain two ways the sangha tries to support family life.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two ways are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the way given and to the question asked.

In some responses students were able to show an understanding of the sangha and link this to family life. Candidates who gained fewer marks tended to flip the question, describing how families support the sangha, or described how the sangha tries to support society but without reference to family life.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 2(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.8 **Buddhist teachings and attitudes about gender prejudice and discrimination** including the Soma Sutta: Buddhist opposition to gender prejudice and discrimination; examples of gender equality in action in Buddhism (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist teachings about gender discrimination.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two teachings are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. They must also correctly use a

source of wisdom in their answer which must be identifiable, relevant and linked to the teaching given in the answer.

Most candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about gender discrimination. Many candidates were able to use Sona's encounter with Mara as a source of wisdom and authority.

Examiner advice: Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 2(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.3 **Buddhist teaching about the purpose and importance of the family:** Buddhist teaching about the purpose of families, including the Sigalovada Sutta; Buddhist responses to the different types of family within 21st-century society (nuclear, single parent, same-sex parents, extended and blended families) (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was "All Buddhists should raise a family."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question engaged candidates of all abilities and produced a wide range of marks. All candidates should be encouraged to answer every question because every mark is important. Candidates who did well explored the debate between detachment and a clear focus on enlightenment or an opportunity to develop loving kindness. Many references were made to the Buddha leaving his own family to seek enlightenment. Some were able to expand answers with appraisal. Many candidates did not gain more than level two because they did not consider the value of the arguments given in answering the question.

Question 3(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.2: Chanting: **the nature, purpose and role of chanting in Buddhism as a devotional practice and to gain mental concentration**, including Dhammapada 1–2, confidence and joy; the divergent understandings of the importance of chanting in Buddhist life today with reference to Theravada Buddhism, including Tiratana:

Dhammapada 190, and Mahayana Buddhism, including Nam Myoho Renge Kyo (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist beliefs about chanting.'

Candidates answered this question confidently. Approximately 80% of candidates gained 3 marks.

Question 3(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.8: Festivals and retreats: the divergent nature, history, purpose and importance of festivals and retreats in Buddhism; divergent understandings the origins, **meaning and features of celebration of specific festivals** and retreats, including Wesak, Vassa/Rain Retreat and Kathina, with reference to the Anapanasati Sutta, and Uposatha days in Theravada Buddhism; Hanamatsuri and Obon (Japanese), **Parinibbana Day in Mahayana Buddhism**, and Lama Tsong Khapa Day in Tibet (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why some Buddhists celebrate Parinibbana Day.'

This was a good discriminating question. Some candidates were able to correctly identify the festival and its focus. Some struggled to articulate a second reason, leading to a loss of marks.

Examiner advice: Centres should unpick the bullet points with candidates to prepare them for the questions that may be set.

Question 3(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.6*: Puja: **The nature and purpose of puja** in the vihara and the home, including reference to Mangala Sutta; examples of the different types; when each type might be used and why; the importance of having different types of worship and their use in different Buddhist contexts (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why Buddhists perform puja.'

Most candidates were able to access marks on this question, describing why Buddhists perform puja. However, many candidates did not try to access the mark for a source of wisdom and authority, instead focusing on their reasons and developments.

Examiner advice: Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 3(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.4: Features of Buddhist places of worship: the divergent nature, history and design of Buddhist places of worship including temples, gompas, viharas, shrines in Theravada, Mahayana and Triratna Buddhism; how and why the places of worship are used, including reference to the shrine room, shrine facing east, and the library, showing the importance learning, including reference to the Kimsila Sutta

The question asked was: "Viharas are the most important places of worship."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates who did well knew about a range of settings for worship and the distinctive aspects of these different settings, and were able to expand answers with evaluation.

Examiner advice: Candidates who understand the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against different practices are those best placed to evaluate.

Question 4(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.8 Buddhist responses to issues in the natural world: Buddhist teachings and responses to threats to the world, including pollution, global warming and **the use of natural resources**, including Dhammapada 270 and The Buddhist Declaration on Nature (Assisi 1986); divergent Buddhist responses to animal rights, including animal experimentation and the use of animals for food, including the application of ethical theories such as utilitarianism (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Outline three Buddhist beliefs about the use of natural resources.'

This question worked well and it showed candidates understood how Buddhist beliefs impact how an individual may interact with the natural world. Several weaker candidates were less familiar with the term 'natural resources', which impacted their ability to respond effectively.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.

Question 4(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.7 Implications of Buddhist teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of euthanasia: Buddhist teachings about the nature and use of euthanasia including Vakkali Sutta; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, **and Buddhist responses to them including support for hospice care, including the Buddhist Hospice Trust** (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why Buddhists may support hospice care.'

In this question candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about hospice care. A noticeable proportion of candidates were less familiar with the term 'hospice'. This really impacted their ability to respond effectively and resulted in them giving more general answers.

Examiner advice: Centres are advised to ensure candidates are able to recognise subject specific vocabulary so that students are not confused if subject specific terms are used in questions.

Question 4(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.7 **Buddhist responses to non-religious arguments against life after death:** why Buddhists reject arguments against belief in life after death (including as a source of comfort, lack of evidence, fraudulent accounts, social control), including Brahmajala Sutta 4 (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: Explain two Buddhist responses to non-religious arguments against life after death.

This question worked well. Candidates were prepared to deal with a 'responses to non-religious arguments' question and showed Buddhists beliefs about life after death. However, many candidates did not try to access the mark for a source of wisdom and authority, instead focusing on their reasons and developments.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 4(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.4 Implications of the Buddhist teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of abortion: **divergent Buddhist teachings about the nature and use of abortion**, including the First Precept and New York Times Interview with the Dalai Lama Sunday, December 5, 1993; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use, including **the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Buddhist responses to them** (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: "The use of abortion is wrong."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- refer to relevant ethical arguments
- reach a justified conclusion.

d) questions are good discriminators of achievement in RS. Candidates who did well explored the differing views on abortion. The majority included relevant ethical arguments. Many references were made to the Dalai Lama's comments about abortion being permissible under certain circumstances. Some were able to expand answers with appraisal.

Key advice from the examiner.

- Centres must teach to the specification, making sure candidates are prepared for all parts of the bullet points in preparation for the questions
- When tackling a) questions, candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.
- The explain questions require two developed points, however, students should also be prepared to describe where indicated on the specification.
- The (d) items need an understanding of religion and belief, as well as the ability to evaluate the arguments in order to reach a conclusion. Centres may wish to consider the differentiation of teaching to enable some students of different abilities to concentrate on learning the information needed before embarking on the evaluation.
- Candidates should be directed to read the bullet points in the (d) question and understand that they guide them to which viewpoints they should be providing. Centres may wish to consider identifying on the specification the different traditions/viewpoints within Buddhism identified that could be used to answer these

questions. The diversity within the religion is the key factor in appraising the arguments. Why do they not all agree?