

GCSE

Religious Studies (Short Course)

8061/1 Paper 1 Buddhism

Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were some well-prepared students for this short course exam with the best demonstrating a coherent and wide-ranging knowledge of the Buddhist faith and able to use specialist terminology to good effect. It was pleasing also to see quotations and sources of authority used by some students for the 1.4 responses to enable the 5th mark to be attained. Centres should remember that a source of authority must be cited though, where possible, for the 5th mark such as The Dhammapada or the Nikaya Sutta. Some of the evaluative responses for the 1.5 question were well articulated and even with weaker students they were able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding of the Buddhist religion in their responses even if these were not overly detailed or in depth. Most students attempted all the questions on the short course paper though 1.3 provided a stumbling block for some. This is a good reminder that all aspects of the specification should be taught to the same high level, even the more difficult Buddhist concepts. For many of the students, they were able to demonstrate a fair grasp of both Buddhist beliefs and practices and they also tried to build links between the different elements of the specification where appropriate. The Buddhist religion is rich in the use of Pali and Sanskrit terms, some of which are a feature of this specification and the more that students were able to grasp some of the Pali and Sanskrit terms, the stronger their responses tended to be for both assessment objectives.

1.1

The correct response to this question was **A** Karuna.

1.2

This question asked for two of the three poisons and some students referred correctly to the inner circle of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. Some responses mentioned the depictions of certain animals (pig, cockerel, and snake) in the centre of the Wheel, and these were perfectly acceptable. No student used the technical language of lobha (greed), dosa (hatred) or moha (ignorance) but any two of these would also have been acceptable. In the main, responses were accurate. Only a few students confused the three poisons with the three marks of existence and only a few students confused the three poisons with three of the five aggregates.

1.3

This proved to be the most difficult question on this paper for students. Those who did recall the arising of cause and effect and the consequences of this for Buddhist lives scored well but not all could see how paticcasamuppada influenced Buddhists today, either in their behaviour, attitude, or approach to life generally. Realisation that everything, in the view of Buddhism, is interconnected, interrelated and interdependent, whether mental or physical, would have scored well and could have been related to the three poisons of the previous question. As in previous years, the ‘influences’ issue with the 01.3 questions on this paper should be the focus of student responses.

1.4

This question specifically referred to the main concept of the Mahayana tradition in Buddhism and asked about beliefs. There are some very accessible sources of authority with the Bodhisattva topic area such as the vow to save all beings and to remove any obstacles in a Buddhist’s way that would stop them from achieving enlightenment. Equally any reference to Amitabha and the Pure Land as a form of Buddhism in

the Mahayana tradition would also have scored well. Some students responded very well with references to karuna (compassion) being elevated to the status of wisdom (prajna) embodied by the Bodhisattva. The Bodhisattva has wisdom to know what Buddhists require to achieve enlightenment and they have compassion to want to help them achieve enlightenment. This was a rich source of information for achieving full marks as was any reference to the paramitas or six perfections of the Bodhisattva way.

Students must remember that this is an ‘Explain’ question and when students provide little detail and depth in their responses but just state points, it is difficult to attain the higher marks.

1.5

Many students could write, with a well-informed mind, about meditation in the Eightfold Path. Many stated that because it is the central practice of the Buddhist faith, then of course it is the most important component of the Eightfold Path. Some of the higher-level responses noted that, in a Venn diagram type of way, all three trainings on the Eightfold Path should be treated equally in the sense that you cannot perfect one training without the other two. Equally, this would be true of all eight stages on the Eightfold Path. Some students were unsure as to which stages of the path belonged to which trainings so offered ‘Right Mindfulness’ as an alternative important stage of the Eightfold Path to meditation whereas ‘Right Mindfulness’ is part of the training of meditation.

There were several ways a student could approach this question and still achieve the full 12 marks; the response to this question could have taken the question holistically, for example, or could have considered each of the eight stages; both routes were credit worthy. There were some well-articulated arguments to suggest that nothing was more important in the modern world to a Buddhist than sila or morality and this would also impact on a Buddhist meditating. Some responses did all of this well and achieved the higher levels. Responses that did so were even more successful if they included a justified conclusion such as pointing out the interconnectedness of all three trainings on the Eightfold Path. However, a few students produced vague responses, some of which only considered the training of meditation with no depth or detail.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.