Scheme of work

**Section A: The study of religions: beliefs and teachings – Buddhism (Short Course)**

**Introduction**

This SOW offers a route through the GCSE Religious Studies Short Course (8061). This is a sample scheme of work and is only one suggestion for how the delivery of the GCSE Religious Studies specification might be planned. It is not intended to be prescriptive or definitive and can be edited to suit your delivery model and the particular needs of your learners.

Teachers can use the ideas below to develop schemes which suit the arrangements and time allocations of their own schools and colleges.

Please remember that assessment is always based on the content of the [specification](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-short-course-8061/specification-at-a-glance).

You can find past assessment materials on [Centre Services](https://onlineservices.aqa.org.uk/).

**General timings**

The scheme of work is based on a total of 60 teaching hours. Of these 60 hours, we suggest that each of the religions studied should be covered in approximately 15 hours.

**Contents**

You can use the title links to jump directly to the different sections of this scheme of work (Use Ctrl and click to follow the link)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Section | Page |
| [The Buddha’s life and its significance](#buddhaslife) | 3 |
| [The Four Noble Truths](#fournobletruths) | 7 |
| [The Concept of Dhamma (Dharma)](#conceptdhamma) | 11 |
| [The Concept of dependent arising (Paticcasamupada](#Paticcasamupada)) | 12 |
| [The Three Marks of Existence](#threemarks) | 13 |
| [The Human Personality](#humanpersonality) | 14 |
| [Human destiny](#humandestiny) | 16 |
| [Buddhahood and the Pure Land](#buddhahood) | 17 |
| [Ethical teaching](#ethicalteaching) | 18 |
| [The five moral precepts (sila)](#fivemoral) | 20 |
| [The Six Perfections in the Mahayanan tradition](#sixperfections) | 22 |

Version 2.0

September 2023

Lesson 1

Topic title

[The Buddha’s life and its significance](#_Component_1:_The).

Specification content

The birth of the Buddha and his life of luxury.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the religious context into which the Buddha was born.
* Students will be able to describe how the Buddha was born and the regal life in to which he was born.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students might be asked to research the area into which the Buddha was born; for example, both the geographical and Sanātana Dharma (Hindu) religious context.
* Students could be given information on the various miracles that are said to have accompanied the Buddha’s birth.
* Working in small groups, students could consider the significance of these miracles for the role and status of the Buddha and share their findings with the class.

Differentiation and extension

Students could consider the reliability of the evidence for the Buddha’s birth.

Resources

* Access to the internet.
* A suitable textbook on Buddhism.
* Worksheets detailing the story of the Buddha’s birth.

Lesson 2

Topic title

The Buddha’s life and its significance.

Specification content

The Four Sights, illness, old age, death, holy man (Jataka 75).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to identify the Four Sights the Buddha experienced before leaving the Palace.
* Students will be able to explain the effects of these sights on the Buddha and his subsequent decision to leave the Palace.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students might read about the Four Sights from the Jataka Tales.
* Students could work in small groups on each of the Four Sights and deliver a presentation on the effect that the sight may have had on the Buddha.
* Students could discuss which of the Four Sights could have had most impact on the Buddha and his decision to leave the Palace.
* Students could complete an examination question on the effect of the Four Sights on the Buddha and his reasons for leaving the Palace.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could consider whether the Buddha’s decision to leave his family enables him to be considered a role-model for Buddhists today. This could be in the form of an evaluation question.

Resources

* Copies of texts from the Jataka Tales.
* Examination style questions on the effect of the four sights and for the extension task.
* Mark scheme.

Lesson 3

Topic title

The Buddha’s life and its significance.

Specification content

The Buddha’s ascetic life.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain why the Buddha initially chose an ascetic path.
* Students will be able to describe aspects of the Buddha’s ascetic life.
* Students will be able to explain why the Buddha turned away from the ascetic path.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could research examples to illustrate the Buddha’s ascetic life.
* Students could work in groups to highlight the advantages and disadvantages of the ascetic life as highlighted by the ascetics accompanying the Buddha. These ideas could then be presented to the group as the background to the Buddha’s decision to abandon the ascetic path.
* Students could be asked to consider why the Buddha turned away from the ascetic path.
* Students could be given information on the conversation between the milk-maid and the Buddha and how this marked the Buddha’s decision to abandon the ascetic path.

Differentiation and Extension

In groups, students could evaluate whether the Buddha was right to abandon the ascetics to pursue his path alone.

Resources

* Access to the internet.
* A worksheet on which the conversation between the Buddha and the milk-maid is detailed.
* A relevant textbook.

Lesson 4

Topic title

The Buddha’s life and its significance.

Specification content

The Buddha’s Enlightenment.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the stages of the Buddha’s enlightenment.
* Students will be able to explain the impact of the Buddha’s enlightenment on the life of the Buddha and those around him.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* In small groups, students could read the account of the Three Watches of the Night and make notes on what happened in each stage. Students could present their findings to consolidate understanding.
* Students could be asked to research what is said to have happened at the point of enlightenment in the natural world. Students could then compare these accounts to the story of the Buddha’s birth.
* Students could be given information about the Buddha’s initial reluctance to teach others about what he had discovered during the Three Watches and then how his teaching led to the start of the Buddhist community.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could be asked to research the elements of Sanātana Dharma (Hinduism) that can be seen within the stages of the Buddha’s Enlightenment.

Resources

* Worksheet detailing the Three Watches and the immediate aftermath of the enlightenment experience.
* Access to the internet.

Lesson 5

Topic title

The Four Noble Truths.

Specification content

* The First Noble Truth: suffering (dukkha) including different types of suffering.
* The Second Noble Truth: the causes of suffering (samudaya); the Three Poisons: ignorance, greed and hate.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the definition of suffering in its broadest sense.
* Students will be able to give examples of the various forms of suffering.
* Students will be able to describe how suffering is caused by ignorance, greed and hate.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be given information on the Buddha’s sermon at the Deer Park.
* Working in small groups, students could define what suffering means and how this can be illustrated with reference to the Buddha’s own life (for example, the Four Sights).
* Students could be shown an illustration of the Tibetan Wheel of Life with the pictorial representations of how suffering is caused; through ignorance, greed and hate.
* Students could discuss how ignorance, greed and hate can cause people to suffer.

Differentiation and Extension

* Students could consider which of the Three Poisons is the most likely to cause suffering.
* Students could answer an evaluation question on whether suffering is a truth of life.

Resources

* Text based material on the first sermon at the Deer Park or suitable textbook.
* A photograph/illustration of the Tibetan Wheel of Life.
* Evaluation questions on ‘Dukkha’.
* Mark scheme.

Lesson 6

Topic title

The Four Noble Truths.

Specification content

The Third Noble Truth: the end of craving (tanha) interpretations of nibbana (nirvana) and enlightenment.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain how enlightenment marks the end of craving.
* Students will be able to describe the various interpretations of nibbana.
* Students will be able to explain the importance and impact of nibbana for the Buddhist.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Working in small groups, students should consider what they already know about nibbana from the life of the Buddha and its importance for the Buddhist. Students can share their ideas.
* Using a guided worksheet, students could be given information on the various interpretations of nibbana. For instance, students could be given a list of adjectives which are often used to describe nibbana (often, negative terms to describe what nibbana is not rather than what it is) and they can form a suitable series of definitions.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could be asked to explain why nibbana should not be equated with ‘nothingness’ or with a place, such as ‘heaven.’

Resources

* Guided worksheet, detailing adjectives often associated with nibbana.
* A relevant textbook.

Lesson 7

Topic title

The Four Noble Truths.

Specification content

The Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path (magga) to nibbana/nirvana; the path as the Threefold Way: Ethics (sila), meditation (samadhi) and wisdom (panna).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain how the Eightfold Path provides Buddhists with a way of escaping from dukkha.
* Students will be able to explain the path of sila, providing examples of each aspect.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be presented with the Eightfold Path. Students could be split into small groups to research the implications of each aspect of sila; Right Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort.
* In small groups, students could then identify which types of action would not be permitted according to each of these aspects of sila.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could complete an evaluation question on whether it is more important for a Buddhist to act morally than to hold certain beliefs.

Resources

* Appropriate textbook which lists the Eightfold Path.
* Access to the internet for research.

.

Lesson 8

Topic title

The Four Noble Truths.

Specification content

* The Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path.
* Dhammapada 190-191.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the paths of meditation and wisdom.
* Students will be able to explain the connection between the three aspects of the path.
* Students will be able to explain from Dhammapada 190-191 the importance of the Four Noble Truths in Buddhism.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* In small groups, students could research the implications of the aspects of the Eightfold Path which relate to Wisdom – Right View, Intention and then discuss the impact of each aspect on the life of the Buddhist.
* Students could consider the importance of meditation in the life of the Buddha; in particular during the Buddha’s quest for enlightenment.
* In small groups, students could investigate the impact of Right Effort and how one can reduce negative thoughts. They could also discuss the impact of the practice of such behaviour for a community.
* Students could research Right Mindfulness, and what it means to be aware of the moment. Students could discuss the impact of being aware of the views/circumstances of others.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research the relationship between the Wisdom, Morality and Meditation aspects of the Eightfold Path.

Resources

* Access to the internet for research.
* A relevant textbook.

Lesson 9

Topic title

The Concept of Dhamma (Dharma).

Specification content

Dhamma (Dharma).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the importance of the Dhamma (Dharma) to the Buddhist path and how this is reflected in different Buddhist groups.
* Students will be able to explain key features of the Dhamma.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be given a series of quotations from Theravadan and Mahayanan sources on the definition of Dhamma – from the basic understanding of Dhamma as referring to the teaching of the Buddha to that which entails the natural order of things.
* Students could be shown a video clip of Buddhists chanting the Three Refuge Formula and students could discuss what it might mean to take refuge in the Dhamma.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research the way in which other Buddhist groups (or sub groups within Mahayana Buddhism) view the Dhamma.

Resources

* Worksheet detailing quotations on various interpretations of the Dhamma or appropriate textbook.
* Appropriate clip of Buddhists chanting the Three Refuge Formula.

Lesson 10

Topic title

The Concept of dependent arising (paticcasamupada).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the concept of dependent arising.
* Students will be able to provide examples from the natural world to illustrate the belief.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* In small groups, students should study the Tibetan Wheel of Life diagram and how the pictorial representations on the rim of the diagram reflect the links between stages of one’s life.
* Using a textbook/internet resource, students could label their own version of the diagram and explain how each picture represents the conditioned links which generate one complete life-cycle.
* As a group, students could explain examples from their own lives and the world around them to illustrate each of the conditioned links.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could look up the term ‘paticcasamupada’ in an internet search engine and find out how this belief links to other Buddhist beliefs such as dukkha and kamma.

Resources

* Pictorial representation of the Wheel of Life (copies for students).
* Access to the internet/appropriate textbook resource.

Lesson 11

Topic title

The Three Marks of Existence.

Specification content

* Impermanence (anicca).
* No fixed self (anatta).
* Unsatisfactoriness of life, suffering (dukkha).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the beliefs of anicca, anatta and dukkha.
* Students will be able to explain the relationships between the three beliefs.
* Students will be able to illustrate each belief with reference to the natural world.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be introduced to the Three Marks of Existence through key quotations and, thereby, deducing what the beliefs are. For example, using the Buddha’s last words to Ananda; “Impermanent are all created things. Strive on mindfully.” They could discuss examples from the natural world to illustrate this belief.
* Students could, in small groups, consider what they feel makes up them as a unique individual. They could then discuss whether there are any aspects of this description which could be considered fixed. This could lead to an outline of the term ‘anatta.’
* In discussion, students could discuss what they remember from previous lessons about the belief in dukkha.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could consider the links between the three beliefs and how they may be considered interdependent.

Resources

* Worksheet detailing key quotations relating to the three beliefs.
* A relevant textbook.

Lesson 12

Topic title

The Human Personality.

Specification content

In the Theravadan tradition: The Five Aggregates (skandhas) of form, sensation, perception, mental formations, consciousness.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the Five Aggregates.
* Students will be able to describe how the Five Aggregates form the human personality.
* Students will be able to relate the belief to Buddhist beliefs in anicca and anatta.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be referred back to the previous discussion on what they believed made up a human being. In discussion, students could consider if their views about what makes up a human being can be classified into groups; eg mental processes, physical processes etc. Students could then be presented with a summary of the five skandhas. Students could then compare and contrast their views with that of Buddhists.
* In groups, students could discuss how this belief relates to Buddhist beliefs in anicca and anatta.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research the belief in kamma and how this is important in the joining of skandhas at the start of a new life.

Resources

* Worksheet summary of the five skandhas.
* A relevant textbook.
* Internet for research.

Lesson 13

Topic title

The Human Personality.

Specification content

In the Mahayana tradition: sunyata, the possibility of attaining Buddhahood and Buddha-nature.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to define ‘sunyata’, ‘Buddhahood’ and ‘Buddha-nature’.
* Students will be able to explain the importance of these concepts for the Mahayana tradition.
* Students will be able to identify the key differences between Theravada and Mahayana beliefs about the human personality.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could research the meanings of sunyata, Buddhahood and Buddha-nature.
* In small groups, students could discuss the differences between each belief and how they relate, in their own way, to Buddhist ideals.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research how Theravadan Buddhists have responded to the Mahayana beliefs in sunyata, Buddhahood and Buddha-nature.

Resources

* Internet for research.
* A relevant textbook.

Lesson 14

Topic title

Human destiny.

Specification content

Different ideals in Theravada and Mahyana traditions: A ‘perfected person’ (Arhat) and Bodhisattva ideals, Buddhahood and the Pure Land.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to understand the difference between Arhats and Bodhisattvas.
* Students will be able to explain the Bodhisattva path and the importance of the Bodhisattva for the individual and for the Buddhist community.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be given information on Arhats, Bodhisattvas and Buddhahood. Students could be asked to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the differences between all terms.
* Students could be asked to research the Bodhisattva path and to present their findings to the rest of the class.

Differentiation and Extension

* Students could consider why a Bodhisattva might be considered a symbol of compassion and a role-model for the community.
* Students could research various forms of a Bodhisattva; using the Dalai-Lama as an earthly example.

Resources

* Worksheet detailing information on Arhats, Bodhisattvas and Buddhahood.
* Internet/appropriate textbook for research.
* Video clip on the life of the Dalai-Lama.

Lesson 15

Topic title

Buddhahood and the Pure Land.

Specification content

Buddhahood and its relation to Pure Land Buddhism.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to explain the importance of Buddhahood for Pure Land Buddhism.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be given an outline of the story of Amitabha.
* Students could research the difference between the two main branches of the Pure Land School of Honen and the True Pure Land School of Shinran.
* Students could be given information on the lives of Avolekitesvara and Manjusri and how they obtained pure lands after attaining Buddhahood.

Differentiation and Extension

* Students could research the main practices of a Pure Land Buddhist.
* Students could compare and contrast Pure Land Buddhism with what they know of a Theravadan school of Buddhism.

Resources

* Information on the story of Amitabha, Avolekitesvara and Manjusri.
* Internet for research.

Lesson 16

Topic title

Ethical teaching.

Specification content

Kamma (karma) and rebirth.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain Buddhist beliefs in kamma and rebirth.
* Students will be able to explain the importance of these beliefs for the Buddhist way of life.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students should discuss, in small groups, what they already know about the Buddhist belief in kamma and rebirth. For instance, they could refer back to their work relating to the Tibetan Wheel of Life as to how dependent origination represents the beliefs.
* Students could then consider the impact of these beliefs on how Buddhists might live their lives. They could discuss their ideas with the rest of the group, drawing out examples as appropriate.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could answer an examination question on how the belief in kamma/rebirth affects the way in which Buddhists treat each other.

Resources

* Examination question on kamma/rebirth.
* Mark scheme.

Lesson 17

Topic title

Ethical teaching.

Specification content

* Compassion (karuna).
* Loving kindness (metta).

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the meanings of compassion (karuna) and loving kindness (metta).
* Students will be able to explain the importance of compassion and loving kindness for the Buddhist way of life.
* Students will be able to provide examples of compassion and loving kindness from the Buddha’s life and the Eightfold Path.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could watch a video on the Dalai Lama speaking about the importance of loving compassion.
* Students could research and find out the definitions of the terms karuna and metta; providing examples of how Buddhists show these in their daily lives (perhaps from the Eightfold Path and from the Buddha’s own life).
* In small groups, students could discuss the importance of karuna and metta on the life of the Buddha and their kammic accumulation.

Differentiation and Extension

* Students could investigate how Buddhists put into action their teaching on karuna and metta eg by examining the work of the Karuna Trust.
* Students could research into Metta Bhavana meditation and the relationship between this practice and the beliefs studied during the lesson.

Resources

* Video with the Dalai Lama speaking on loving compassion.
* Internet/textbook for research.

Lesson 18

Topic title

The five moral precepts (sila).

Specification content

Do not take life; do not take what is not given; do not misuse the senses; do not speak falsehoods; do not take intoxicants that cloud the mind.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the importance of the five moral precepts to the Buddhist path of sila.
* Students will be able to describe the importance of the first two precepts: do not take life, do not take what is not given.
* Students will be able to explain the importance of these ethical principles for the Buddhist way of life.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could be given a worksheet presenting the five precepts as an illustration of the sila aspect of the Eightfold Path.
* In small groups, students could consider the first and second precepts and what these would mean to Buddhists in their daily life. For example, not taking life also relates to the importance of treating people with compassion. Not taking what is not freely given also relates to the importance of generosity. Students could share their findings/results of their discussion with the rest of the group.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research the concept of non-harming (ahimsa) (the first precept) and how some Buddhists reflect this in their daily lives (for instance sweeping away insects before stepping on them, straining water before drinking etc).

Resources

* Worksheet detailing the Five Precepts.
* Internet/textbook for research.

Lesson 19

Topic title

The five moral precepts (sila).

Specification content

Do not misuse the senses; do not speak falsehoods; do not take intoxicants that cloud the mind.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to describe the last three precepts: do not misuse the senses; do not speak falsehoods; do not take intoxicants that cloud the mind.
* Students will be able to explain the importance of these ethical principles for the Buddhist path.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* Students could, in small groups, research the meanings and implications of the last three precepts: what it means to misuse the senses, to not speak falsehoods and to not take intoxicants. Students should provide examples to illustrate each of these precepts and how they would impact on the daily life of the Buddhist.
* In small groups, students could discuss why Buddhists would follow each of these precepts and how they relate to other beliefs they have studied.

Differentiation and Extension

Students could research the nature of other precepts followed by members of the monastic community.

Resources

Internet/appropriate textbook for research.

Lesson 20

Topic title

The Six Perfections in the Mahayanan tradition.

Specification content

Generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation and wisdom, including how the individual develops these perfections within themselves.

Learning outcomes

* Students will be able to explain the meaning of the perfections and their importance to the Buddhist path.
* Students will be able to explain how Buddhists are able to develop the perfections within themselves.

Possible teaching and learning activities

* In small groups, students should consider what key characteristics they would want to improve in order to improve their kamma.
* Students should then be given a list of the six perfections. They should then compare their list with that of the six perfections.
* Students could use the internet/textbook to extend their understanding of each of the six perfections and their importance.

Differentiation and Extension

Students should complete research into the Buddhist group the six perfections are mostly associated with and find examples of how key Bodhisattvas have personified these characteristics.

Resources

* Worksheet detailing the six perfections.
* Internet/textbook for research.