

# Religious Studies Spec A

Answers and commentaries

**GCSE (8062)**

## **Paper 1: Catholic Christianity**

Marked answers from students from the June 2022 exams.  
Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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## Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the students.

### 4 mark questions

#### Question 1.3

Explain two ways in which belief in the Pure Land influences some Buddhists today.

[4 marks]

#### Mark scheme

Target: AO1:2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and societies.

##### **First way**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

##### **Second way**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

**To be a 'detailed explanation' the 'influence' of the way must be included.**

**Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:**

- Having faith in Amitabha (Amida Buddha) / gives hope to some Mahayana Buddhists / being reborn in the paradise where Amitabha lives / this is more important than actions or behaviour.
- They rely on Amitabha helping them / they will have an opportunity to be taught by Amitabha himself.
- They will have a much better chance of achieving buddhahood / becoming a Buddha.
- They will have no suffering / none of the problems that stop people in this world from attaining enlightenment.
- Amitabha's name / making praises and offering to Amitabha will enable them to enter the Pure Land on their death, giving more accessibility to enlightenment, etc.

## Student responses

### Response A

It teaches Buddhists to follow the Buddhists teachings in the hope they will be reborn in the Pure Land so they can become enlightened.

It teaches Buddhists to be selfless because of Bodhisatvas and their selflessness.

The first point refers to Buddhists being influenced **to follow the Buddhist teachings** and then develops the answer by writing *why* they may do this. The second point attains the influence mark as the answer explains that the Pure Land may influence Buddhists **to be selfless** however there is not sufficient explanation of this point to attain the fourth available mark.

**3 marks**

### Response B

Strengthen Buddhist's faith by chanting Amitabha Buddha's name and praying to him. They become more faithful to him, helping them achieve their goal of reaching pure land.

It helps Buddhists become more enlightened/at peace by believing Pure Land exists. A land where you can be taught by Amitabha Buddhist himself, helps Buddhists to become enlightened.

Two clear, detailed and developed points.

**4 marks**

## 5 mark question

### Question 2.4

Explain two reasons why believing in kamma (karma) is important for Buddhists today.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.

**[5 marks]**

### Mark scheme

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority.

#### **First reason**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

#### **Second reason**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching – 1 mark

**Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:**

- In Buddhism it is intentional actions that have consequences / because actions have consequences a Buddhist will be mindful on decisions they make / good kamma (karma) earned can reduce suffering.
- Understanding kamma (karma) is another manifestation of paticcasamuppada / repeated actions develop habits so if someone acts with anger on a regular basis they will generally become an angry person.
- Kamma (karma) shows that people are not really punished or rewarded for their actions but rather by their actions so Buddhists will be mindful of what they do in life.
- What Buddhists do in this life will impact on their rebirth so everything they do and say will sow the seeds for a future rebirth.
- Kamma (karma) is empowering because it can change the future through their own actions / if a Buddhist cultivates skilful mental states and actions, they can live a happier life and have a favourable rebirth.
- Good ethical behaviour is a major part of the Eightfold Path, so acting compassionately towards others, not harming animals, being patient and helping anyone in need in the community are all part of building up good kamma (karma), etc.

### Specific teachings might include:

- The Tibetan Wheel of Life suggests that the type of world Buddhists will be reborn into (for example a human, animal or heavenly being) is said to depend on the quality of their actions (kamma or karma) in their previous lives.
- Mind precedes all mental states. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.' Dhammapada verse 1.
- 'I am the owner of my karma. I inherit my karma. I am born of my karma. I am related to my karma. I live supported by my karma. Whatever karma I create, whether good or evil, that I shall inherit.' Anguttara Nikaya verse 57.

## Student responses

### Response A

Believing kamma is very important to Buddhists as it teaches Buddhists that their actions will affect them, and it is essential to escape the cycle of samsara and reach enlightenment, it encourages Buddhists to treat others with skillful actions only.

Believing kamma is very important to Buddhists as without kamma Buddhists can not understand how their actions affect others.

No reference to a named scripture or source of authority and not enough depth or detail in the second point to achieve an improved mark.

**3 marks**

### Response B

1. One reason why karma is important for Buddhists is because it influences them on how to live their life as they don't want to be reborn into an animal shown through the Tibetan wheel of life which shows how they will be reborn.
2. The kamma helps them give a means to life and motivates the Buddhists to behave and follow the moral precepts as you will get something out of it in your next life, pass on good merits.

A good answer and reference to the Tibetan Wheel of Life as a source of Buddhist belief and teaching means that the fifth mark is awarded.

**5 marks**

## 12 mark question

### Question 2.5

'Rituals associated with death have little importance to Buddhists'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Buddhist teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

**[12 marks]**

### Mark scheme

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence.

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. <b>References to religion applied to the issue.</b>	10-12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. <b>Clear reference to religion.</b>	7-9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. <b>Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.</b>	4-6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1-3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

**Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:**

### **Arguments in support**

- When a Buddhist dies, karmic energy leaves the body and is reborn into a new one so rituals associated with mourning and death are pointless.
- Death is not seen as the end but a transition between this life and the next.
- There are so many different funeral practices in different Buddhist countries, rituals have become more culturally based rather than Buddhist.
- Little money is spent on Buddhist funerals which may say something about their worth (particularly in the Theravada tradition).
- Deceased may be cremated or buried in Buddhism, there is no one important ritual.
- Death is a natural part of life for Buddhists so there is greater acceptance of what is happening rather than marking the occasion with a lavish funeral.

### **Arguments in support of other views**

- The Tibetan 'sky' burial is a very well known and traditional way in which the body is left on a high place as a gift to the vultures, so is an important ritual in this tradition.
- Giving away one's body in a special ritual is considered both a practical and generous act / revered teachers have always been cremated and their remains placed in a chorten (Tibet) or stupa (Theravada and Mahayana) to become a site of worship or pilgrimage and this could place greater emphasis on a death ritual and a greater understanding of the Buddhist faith
- Death rituals often involve prayers and offerings and are made every seven days for a set period of forty nine days in total.
- In Japan, the coffin is always placed with the head facing west / chanting takes place and reading from the Lotus Sutra / relations gather after the cremation and pick out the bones from the ashes, using chopsticks.
- A shrine may be set up with a picture or portrait of the deceased and offerings are made; all of which would not happen if the death rituals were not that important.
- Sermons are given by senior monks / donations are made to worthy causes.
- Mourning rituals give the family and friends the opportunity to reflect on the teaching of impermanence and the chance to send good thoughts to the mourners.
- Some Buddhists believe it is possible to transfer the kamma (karma) created by a person's own good actions and deeds to someone else, etc.



## Student responses

### Response A

Many Buddhists would disagree with this statement because they believe rituals are very important in Buddhism. In Tibet, dead bodies are placed in a high area as a gift to vultures. This is a very traditional way of mourning death. As the bodies are a gift to vultures, it shows compassion (karuna) and is very important to a Buddhism. Also, many Buddhists would disagree with the statement because death symbolises the cycle of samsara and is an important part of Buddhism. Death shows that a Buddhist is now going to change into something else. Rituals associated with death are a celebration of a persons life and needs to be appreciated and acknowledged.

However lots of Buddhists may agree with the statement because they do not think rituals associated with death are very important. They believe a Buddhists should focus on more important things such as meditating to become closer to the Buddha and deepen your understandings. Also they believe a Buddhists focus should not be on death, instead it should be on rebirth as this is more important because when a Buddha is reborn into a human, they have a chance to become enlightened and exit the cycle of samsara. This is important because you can overcome suffering.

In conclusion, I strongly disagree with the statement. Although they are important as they show love, they should not be a Buddhists main priority as there are many other ways of showing compassion.

#### **This is a Level 3 response**

Middle of Level 3 as some areas of the response are a little underdeveloped. Though this answer includes some reasonable critical analysis it becomes a little muddled on where the author actually stand on the issue. Perhaps not entirely Buddhist views at the end of the response either.

**8 marks + 3 SPaG**

## Response B

Some Buddhists may agree with this statement as they believe that there are more important rituals, such as meditations that can actually help those who are still living. They might believe that rituals with death don't teach the living anything whereas Vipassana meditation helps them understand the nature of reality and Samatha meditation helps calm the mind and develop deeper concentration. This may help them avoid the Three Poisons, understand and conform to the Eight Moral Precepts, and understand the Four Noble Truths, all of which are necessary to reach enlightenment. Enlightenment is the main goal for Buddhists.

Some Buddhists might disagree with this statement as they are Theravada Buddhists or Tibetan Buddhists. In Tibetan Buddhism, little money is spent on the funeral so the family make a donation to a worthy charity on behalf of the dead person. This good kammatic energy is transferred to the deceased and aids them in their re-birth with the hope that it will be a step closer to enlightenment (main aim of Buddhists). In Tibetan Buddhism, the body is placed in a high place as a gift for the vultures. This helps Buddhists understand the Three Marks of Existence (anicca, anatta and dukkha). They witness the impermanence of life and the never-ending cycle of birth, unless you achieve enlightenment.

In conclusion, I think the death rites are important for Buddhists as it allows them to understand the Three Marks of Existence which will help them on their journey to enlightenment. However, other parts of Buddhism such as meditation and praying are equally as important as they allow Buddhists to connect with the Buddha and understand the world around us.

### **This is a Level 4 response**

This student appears to see the question almost as a 'what could be more important in Buddhism when compared to rituals' type of question, such as meditation. 12 mark questions are not meant to be simply an either / or but there is some effective reasoning so bottom of Level 4 overall.

**10 marks + 3 SPaG**

## Response C

Tibetan Buddhists may disagree with this statement as they believe that funerals are important. Tibetan Buddhists have sky burials in which the dead body is placed at a high point as a gift for the vultures to eat. They believe that this speeds up the process of rebirth and transfers the good merit of giving the vultures a gift to the next life of the dead person which is important. Furthermore, a common ritual at Buddhist funerals is to spend little money on the funeral but instead donate money to a worthy charity. Buddhists believe that the good merit received from donating money is transferred to the dead persons new life after rebirth, this means that many Buddhists would disagree with this statement. Moreover at Theravada Buddhist funerals, a common ritual is to donate and give offerings to monks at monasteries to make new gowns, this has much importance as it once again transfers the good merit to the dead person but also gives a chance for the grieving family to thank the monks who attended the funeral. Also, many Buddhists would also disagree with the statement as most grieving Buddhist families have a ritual in which, for 49 days after the death, on the seventh day they make chants and meditate by the remains to help grieve the dead, which is important. Moreover, if the funeral belongs to an important Buddha or Bodhisattva then the remains of the body can be put in a stupa to act as a focus of meditation or to thank the person for their devotion so this also helps other people which is important.

On the other hand, the teaching of annica, impermanence, teaches that nothing lasts forever and is impermanent and so some people might believe that funeral rituals shouldn't be important for Buddhists as they are aware that everyone dies eventually, as the Buddha found out in the four sights.

In conclusion, I disagree with the statement as I think rituals associated with death are important for Buddhists as they hold a lot of tradition.

### **This is a Level 4 response**

Full marks; very expressive and a clear understanding of the relevant info for a balanced argument and justified conclusion. This answer highlights that the arguments on either side of the statement don't have to carry equal weight or equal longevity to achieve full marks. The answer also includes a brief conclusion, although throughout the entire response, there is a justified argument running throughout anyway.

**12 marks + 3 SPaG**

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You can talk directly to the Religious Studies subject team

E: [religiousstudies@aqa.org.uk](mailto:religiousstudies@aqa.org.uk)

T: 0161 957 3881

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