



A-LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2A: Study of Religion and Dialogues: Buddhism
Report on the Examination

7062
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Introduction

There were many excellent scripts and some were outstanding. There were maximum-mark answers to each part of each question. In most cases, there was clear evidence of very thorough preparation by both teachers and students. Many answers directly responded to the questions set and targeted their information and arguments appropriately. There was no sign that anyone struggled with time allocation and the scripts were legible and, on the whole, answers were well-organised. Most AO2 answers were very well-structured and had clear evidence to present the strengths and weaknesses of the view presented; however, even in some very well-informed answers, there was limited critical analysis and in some cases, it was missing altogether.

Students were clearly well prepared for the dialogues responses. The most successful responses often had plans at the beginning that were clearly informing the argument and structure throughout. Some students chose to give a brief overview of key issues for discussion at the beginning of the dialogues questions but, although this is a valid way of responding to the question, it sometimes lead to lengthy responses with significant repetition. Where this approach was most successful, the students gave a general overview and then used details in order to help them in the analysis later on in the essay.

Section A: Buddhism

Question 1

Part 01.1

Many of the more effective answers focused on the issues identified in the specification, such as the challenges to religious truths and moral values from science and secular culture. Such answers were often illustrated with reference to teachings and gave evidence and examples of issues related to materialism and wealth. Many responses also referred to the impact of western values in Thailand. Material about religion moving from the public sphere to the private sphere was often the least developed, but with science and secularisation being well developed as a point. Some students focused specifically on one element of secularisation, which on occasion led them to losing focus on what the question was asking. Some responses gave a generic response to how secularisation may impact religion; while students showed a good understanding of secularisation, these responses were not specifically linked with Buddhism and lacked examples and evidence.

Part 01.2

There were some excellent answers to this question that considered what constituted a defence and the different approaches taken by groups of Buddhists. These responses matched the evidence from both sides of the debate. Many students discussed what was meant by the term defence and considered why there could be a difference of opinion within Buddhism about what constituted a defence. The most successful examples of this used Buddhism to justify these conclusions. Students often looked at the Amaravati and the Forest Tradition, as well as Triratna and secular Buddhism as defences and then discussed their relevant merit. Many students compared the ideas of Bachelor and Brazier about the nature of Buddhism. Often responses questioned the nature of Buddhism as a religion, exploring if a defence was required due to varied beliefs held by different groups within Buddhism, and if this in itself was in fact a defence. A few responses to this question were generic, lacking specific detail in relation to Buddhism. Some students said that as Buddhism was not a religion it did not require a defence, but gave little evidence to support this point.

Question 2

Part 02.1

There were some excellent, well informed responses to this question. These responses showed a clear understanding of the elements on the specification in relation to how the changing role of the Sangha reflects the broader changes in Thai society: for example, moving from rural to urban life; the changing role in relation to education; the Sangha being brought into a state-imposed structure; and how the Wat Phra Dhammakaya may reflect the changing role within society. Some students responded to this question with views relating only to the changing role of women in the Sangha; although this is relevant and was credited, these responses sometimes felt like they were responding to a different question and lacked the focus required to reach the top levels. Some students responded to this question as an A02 discussion, debating the issue. Such answers lacked focus.

Part 02.2

There were some very well informed answers to this question. In most answers, there were references to the situation in Myanmar to support the discussion; where this was most successful, the students had evaluated this and discussed if this situation was a fair reflection of Buddhist belief. The most successful responses showed good knowledge of Edict 12 of Ashoka and Nicheiren Buddhism, with some students discussing these in exceptional detail. Many students were able to analyse critically these responses to other faiths. Others offered a 'for and against' approach only and these responses had little or no critical analysis. Some responses lacked detail, with a number of students simply arguing that since Buddhism has a peaceful nature, it must have a positive attitude to other faiths.

Section B: The Dialogue between Buddhism and Philosophy

Question 3

This was, by far, the more popular of the two questions. Many students were clearly well-informed and were able to explain the key ideas about the three bodies of the Buddha. Some students chose to respond to this using some of the terminology from Question 4 and included some in-depth discussion about the cognitive/non-cognitive nature of the Trikaya and how this could be considered reasonable or unreasonable. The falsification and verification principles were used to support their responses. Some of the most effective responses used the 3 bodies to structure their essays, analysing each element in turn. The less successful responses showed a limited understanding of both Buddhism and Philosophy. Some students muddled the names of the different concepts and were only able to apply a broad understanding of philosophy to the question. These students often focused exclusively on the burden of proof and based a limited argument around this.

Question 4

There were some very good responses to this question, which were clearly informed about different understandings of religious language and were able to apply this knowledge to the Buddhist statements about the Trikaya. In most answers, the verification and falsification principles were used to argue that the language appeared to be cognitive but were in fact not, and also mentioned Hick's idea of eschatological verification. Some students developed these ideas fully and were able to offer evaluation points from other philosophers in support of their line of argument. Many students referred to Hare and Wittgenstein in their responses, but in some

responses this was briefly mention and not fully developed. However, in a number of responses these philosophers were clearly well understood and students were able to use their reasoning in their own line of argument. The most effective responses to this question used the evaluations they have studied for the philosophy element and applied them to this question to further develop their line of argument. Not all answers appeared to have a firm grasp of the meaning of 'non-cognitive'.

Section C: The Dialogue between Buddhism and Ethics

Question 5

This was by far the more popular of the two questions in this section. Students often showed a good understanding of teachings of Buddhism and were able to analyse how they linked with ethical theories. Many students discussed non character based theories and evaluated how these might better link with Buddhist teachings, in order to come to a reasoned conclusion. In the less successful responses, students gave a general overview of character based ethics and Buddhism. These responses often followed a 'for' and 'against' structure with limited analysis and often lacked specific detail about character based theories or Buddhist ethical principles

Question 6

Some answers were poorly structured and therefore difficult to follow. Students often gave generic responses about the beliefs held by Buddhists in relation to genetic engineering. There were also a number of responses which showed a limited understanding of virtue ethics, and in places a number of students confused it with situation ethics. There were, however, some excellent responses to this question. The most effective examples were from students who had structured the essay according to the debate about genetic engineering and analysed these from both perspectives, coming to a reasoned conclusion in relation to the question at the end of each of these issues.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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