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# A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2A

Report on the Examination

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## **General comments**

This year, some scripts were outstanding, and some students achieved full marks. Most students were able to complete the paper in the time available. Many students chose to do the questions in a different order, often starting with the Dialogue questions, and this posed no problems where each question was numbered correctly. The most effective answers focused well on the exact focus of the question, whilst mid-range answers tended towards a more general treatment of the topic, and this was especially noticeable in AO1 answers.

The most effective AO2 answers discussed different views with well-chosen evidence, good reasoning, and effective critical analysis, while the less effective answers, addressed different viewpoints without any discussion or linking of opinions. Answers which summarised arguments for the view stated, followed by arguments against, without critical analysis, comment, or evaluation beyond choosing to 'agree' or 'disagree' could only be awarded a maximum of Level 3. Some students attempted evaluation of points by saying if the argument was strong or weak, for some of these students this approach was ineffective as there was limited or no reasoning to support this conclusion beyond the statement that it was weak or strong.

## **Section A: The study of Buddhism**

### **1.1**

Many of the most successful answers to this question focused on why there are different points of view about marriage and celibacy between different traditions of Buddhism, candidates explained differences in scripture, and cultural variations as part of this. Other candidates looked at the reasons for differences between the lay and monastic sangha, focusing on the different roles within the community and differences in spiritual pathways. Some students focused on the differing points of view rather than the reasons why there were differences, these responses were capped at level 2 as they did not directly respond to the question. The concepts of marriage and celibacy were clearly understood by most students as were the different Buddhist perspectives on these issues.

### **1.2**

There were a number of excellent responses to this question, which gained full marks. Many responses included different points of view and some critical analysis. The most successful responses used a range of the concepts from the specification such as Ahimsa, skilful means, and the importance of intention, which the candidates applied to the issue of weapons of mass destruction and were able to critically analyse these points. Some candidates simply included isolated points for and against the statement, which meant they were unable to move beyond level 3. A few candidates gave a one-sided argument, which capped their responses to level 2.

### **2.1**

There were a number of excellent responses to this question, which gained full marks. These responses gave a well explained and detailed account of the beliefs of Batchelor and Brazier about the nature of Buddhism. Some candidates were clearly more confident in writing about Batchelor and a number of candidates wrote a much more developed response for these beliefs than for Brazier's. A few candidates confused the names of Batchelor and Brazier in their responses, and some wrote about secular Buddhism in general instead of the beliefs of Batchelor and Brazier.

## 2.2

There were some excellent responses to this question, which used a range of evidence from the specification such as the differing ideas of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, the importance of Bodhisattvas as well as exploring the relative importance of the Buddha for the Monastic and Lay Sangha. Some students gave a one-sided response to this question, capping their responses to level 2. While others only gave the differing points of view in isolation 'for' and 'against' the statement, which meant they were only able to achieve level 3.

## Section B: The dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy

### 3.1

This was, by far, the more popular of the two questions. Many students were clearly well-informed and were able to explain different Buddhist and philosophical ideas about life after death and support these with various aspects from the specification including Descartes, Anatta and secular Buddhism. Many students were able to critically analyse these ideas, and this question was generally well answered.. The less successful responses showed a limited understanding of both Buddhism and philosophy, although in most cases the Buddhist element of the response was the strongest aspect. These responses tended to be more general rather than looking at specific philosophical or Buddhist theory about life after death.

### 4.1

Of the students who chose to answer this question, there were some excellent full mark responses. These responses tended to use verification and falsification principles to explore the validity of religions, giving examples of miracles as religious sources of authority to support their discussions. Many of these candidates structured their essays around the philosophical theories and used these as the basis for their discussion between philosophy and Buddhism. The responses also used a good range of Buddhist examples from the specification such as, Ashoka's Edict 12 and Nichiren Buddhism. Students were well informed about these and were able to discuss their ideas in detail. The less successful responses for this question tended to focus only on the Buddhist aspect of the question, without reference to Philosophy, this capped their responses at level 3.

## Section C: The dialogue between Buddhism and Ethics

### 5.1

This question was the most popular question for this section. There were some excellent responses which showed a particularly good understanding of both Buddhist ethics and Bentham. The most successful responses were well structured, both Buddhism and Bentham were clearly well understood, there was critical analysis throughout. Many students chose to structure their responses around Bentham's theory, comparing the differing elements with Buddhism, critically analysing these elements, and coming to a reasoned conclusion at the end. Some of the less

successful responses gave a general overview of Bentham and didn't move beyond a general explanation of the theory. These responses were often vague in terms of both Bentham and Buddhism.

### **6.1**

This question was less popular than the other question in this section. However, there were some excellent responses which showed a good understanding of both the Buddhist and Kantian approaches to lying. The most successful candidates used a clear structure, often using elements of Kant's theory and then making comparisons between this and Buddhist ethics, this approach was successful. Many students made effective use of the topics from the specification, including the parable of the Burning house, skilful means and the 5 precepts to support their points about Buddhism. The less successful responses were vague in their explanations of both Buddhist and Kantian ethics, for some there was a limited amount of discussion, and the students wrote brief descriptions about Kant and Buddhism and then a simple conclusion at the end.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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