



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES A

8062/11: Buddhism

Report on the Examination

8062

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01.1

Just over 85% gave the correct response of 'Ignorance' which was response B for **not** being one of the Five Aggregates (Skandhas). This is very pleasing and shows the importance of learning the technical vocabulary.

01.2

It is pleasing to note that many students achieved full marks on this 2 mark response question. Most suggested that the main reason why Siddhartha Gautama rejected his life in the Palace was the Four Sights that he saw. Alongside this response, some students mentioned how Siddhartha was fulfilling the prophecy as well as wanting to find a solution to suffering.

01.3

This was an 'influences' question so to respond with information or a basic list of teachings from Pure Land Buddhism, however accurate, would not elicit many marks. Students needed to be aware of how a belief in the Pure Land might influence Buddhists today such as chanting Amitabha (Amida) Buddha's name, funeral arrangements linked to the Pure Land, following the five types of religious practice including specifically recitation, having faith that followers will be one step away from enlightenment and a place where there is no suffering to endure which Pure Land Buddhists can also pray for.

01.4

There was a wide selection of responses to this question about two temptations Buddha experienced immediately before he became enlightened. The word 'immediately' was included in the question to allow students to see where in the Buddha's life the question was pitched. Many included any two from Mara sending his daughters to seduce the Buddha; sending his armies to attack the Buddha; offering the Buddha control of his kingdom and Mara physically attacking the Buddha himself. Many went on to offer detail required to achieve the marks such as the Buddha ignoring the daughters of Mara to when the arrows being directed at him turned into flowers before they could hit him. Students were less able to identify relevant sacred writings or teachings such as 'let only my sin, sinews and bone remain..... but not until I attain the supreme Enlightenment will I give up this seat of meditation' which is perhaps the most popular quotation from the Jataka tales on the Enlightenment. One or two used quotations about or referred to the three poisons and specifically greed as well as the Five Moral Precepts. When set in context, these were relevant too.

01.5

This question produced many interesting answers showing excellent evaluative skills of some of the issues surrounding the concept of craving and whether or not it is the main cause of suffering. Examiners noted the breadth and depth in students' responses such as explanations of dukkha and linking the question to the three marks of existence. In some wide ranging responses, some students were able to weave in the three poisons as well as The Wheel of Life featured with

comprehensive mention of the three main types of tanha; craving things that please the senses; craving to become something that you are not and craving to stop something from happening any more. Others mentioned the Four Passing Sights the Buddha encountered and many students were also able to provide good support from their knowledge and understanding of aspects of the Second Noble Truth whilst exploring the varied origins of suffering. Desire and attachment were regular, accurate features of many evaluative responses to 01.5. Some students did note that craving was deeply rooted in ignorance so perhaps ignorance requires acknowledgement on a level footing with craving in terms of the main causes of suffering. Students who responded in this way were able to give some solid, justified conclusions mentioning that ignorance goes deep and is about people, the world and the nature of reality in Buddhism, not just not knowing something.

02.1

Just over 70% ticked the correct box of C - 'Vipassana' meaning insight meditation. So, whilst it is very pleasing to see good knowledge of specific technical language in the Buddhist faith, more students than on 01.1 identified a response incorrectly to this question.

02.2

This question concerning items on a Buddhist shrine was accessible to almost every student who took this exam. Responses ranged from incense to flowers to a Buddharupa alongside a whole host of other credit worthy responses.

02.3

Students were able to give two contrasting ways Buddhists might show karuna rather than repeating their first one. Some students drew on other aspects of the paper in terms of mentioning the sky burial procedure possibly as part of their response to 02.5 and there were some excellent references to compassion shown by Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition. Some students used a very good example of the Tibetan word 'rokpa' which means 'help' or 'friend' and is an international charity set up in 1980 based on the premise of showing compassion to others. Very few suggested that compassion is one of the four sublime states and were qualities that the Buddha taught which might have given a lead in to say how Buddhists should act towards others and themselves. There were one or two generalised and vague responses to this question but many offered specific detail on Bodhisattvas and the way lay people can show compassion to monks too.

02.4

This question proved to be entirely accessible to many students and was generally answered well with some students including a great deal of specific detail on samsara, skilful actions and wholesome thoughts as well as the concept of rebirth, reincarnation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition alongside the more obvious responses of earning good and bad kamma (karma) in this life which the next life depends upon. A number of students linked the Five Moral Precepts to this question as a way, if followed as guidelines by Buddhists, that they might achieve a favourable rebirth because it is a way of attaining good kamma (karma). Reference to a sacred writing or another source of Buddhist belief and practice was not always forthcoming so the fifth mark was not always reached, even by those students who responded well to this question.

02.5

This question proved to be very successful even compared with the good responses to 1.5. Sometimes there are time issues as this is the last question on the paper but this year, students knew about rituals in Buddhism associated with death and mourning particularly well and seemed to time their exam accurately. Some of the more effective responses were fulsome in their arguments and very well balanced with a justified conclusion alongside a good degree of knowledge and understanding to substantiate their evaluative comments. Many students referred in depth to Tibetan sky burials, rituals in Japan as well as Pure Land and Theravadan Buddhist funeral practices. It was not uncommon to see this information set into context alongside some Buddhist teachings such as anicca, anatta, samsara, karma and rebirth. Some students had clear knowledge and understanding of when a Buddhist dies, their kammic energy leaves their body and is reborn in a new one and they also linked this concept to the five skandhas too. Death therefore is seen as a transition rather than the end and this formulated a solid argument in their evaluative responses. Some students did get confused with aspects of reincarnation which, whilst it could be more relevant to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition than any other, often resulted in a Hindu approach to death and rebirth. They may also have mixed up Theravadan rituals of donating to a worthy cause and the transference of merit to the deceased with funeral customs of other Buddhist traditions. Some of the more interesting responses highlighted the question of whether Buddhists would always mourn the passing of a loved one as it is a human emotion and despite all the teachings on non – attachment etc would naturally want to grieve. Equally, there were some nicely perceptive arguments about the importance of death rituals because of the time and symbolism connected to them whilst acknowledging that this approach by Buddhists may well have little or no impact on an afterlife. A good number of students managed to make some connections between various parts of the Buddhism course - all credit worthy and often leading to some very balanced responses.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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