
A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7062/2A Study of religion and dialogues: Buddhism
Report on the Examination

7062/2A
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General comments:

As with previous series, the paper this year drew a wide range of marks from students. However, unlike previous years, the Summer 2023 series saw a considerable rise in AO2 level 2 responses, where students had only considered one side of the argument.

- There were several descriptive or narrative responses to AO1 questions that did not engage fully with the trigger word 'examine' in the stem of the question.
- There was a lack of focus on what the question asked, or a misreading of the specific demands of the question, particularly for 1.1, which asked why there were different ideas about Ahimsa, and 2.1, which asked about materialistic secular values.

1.1: Examine why there are different views about the application of ahimsa.

Whilst there were some excellent and well-focused responses, a considerable number of students appeared to misread the question. They failed to tackle why there are different views about the application of ahimsa. These students wrote about different views, missing the focus of the question that was asking why there were differences in the application of ahimsa.

The concept of ahimsa was generally understood by most students; however, many responses were general and lacked detail. The best answers gave examples to their responses about why ahimsa may be applied differently. These students often referred to ethical issues from the specification to support their ideas.

1.2: There is little agreement in Buddhism on concepts of Buddha.

There were some excellent responses to this question, which included detailed understanding of concepts of the Buddha. These students were able to compare and contrast these ideas, critically analysing and evaluating each concept.

However, many students focused on the 'little agreement' and did not offer an argument against the statement. This meant that many students were in the level 2 band because they presented a one-sided argument.

2.1: Examine how Buddhism responds to materialistic secular values.

For many students, this proved to be a very straightforward question. There were a number of excellent responses. The most successful responses gave clear and accurate examinations of Buddhist responses to materialistic secular values, giving explanations of differing Buddhist groups from the specification, such as the Wat Phra Dhammakaya. These students explained how different groups of Buddhists have responded to materialistic values.

There were a number of students who misread or misunderstood the term 'materialistic' and wrote about secularisation or science. These responses could not be credited because they did not respond appropriately to the question.

2.2: 'Buddhism responds successfully to the issues raised by genetic engineering.'

Although there were some excellent responses to this question, with some achieving full marks, many students did not offer different opinions in response to the statement. Some students took 'successful' to mean 'agree with' and therefore did not answer the question. Often these students discussed why Buddhism would agree or disagree, rather than if Buddhism had a successful response to the issues. Many of these students did not move to level 3 because the argument was one-sided.

Many students understood what genetic engineering was and were able to give examples. However, some slipped into other ethical issues such as IVF.

3.1 'Philosophical arguments for the existence of God show that Buddhist beliefs about Ultimate Reality are not coherent.'

There was a range of responses for this question, ranging from level 5 to level 1. The most successful responses showed an excellent understanding of both Buddhism and philosophy, with many using criticisms from Hume and science to support the Buddhist ideas about Ultimate reality and as a counter to the statement.

Some students used the differing arguments for the existence of God and discussed their relevance to Buddhism. A number of students did this very well and were able to identify aspects of the arguments which had comparisons to Buddhist philosophy. Others students did not go into this detail and ended up with a one-sided argument for AO2 because they could find no common ground. These responses were often general or limited for both Buddhism and philosophy.

4.1: 'Philosophy does not support belief in the authority of the Pali Canon.'

This was the preferred question among students. As in previous years, the question saw a range of responses. The best responses showed detailed knowledge of the Pali Canon and Philosophy. These students looked at aspects from the philosophy section of the specification, eg discussing miracles and religious language. Such approaches were often very successful, with critical analysis and evaluation throughout.

Some students showed a superficial understanding of the Pali Canon and were unable to explain how it might be a source of authority for some Buddhists. There were a number of responses which showed excellent understanding of philosophy, but a more limited understanding of Buddhist ideas about the authority of the Pali Canon.

5.1 'Natural Moral Law gives Buddhists clear guidance on issues surrounding wealth.'

Most students chose to respond to 6.1 rather than 5.1. The students who responded to this question showed a good understanding of Buddhist ideas about wealth. There were a range of marks awarded. There were some excellent responses that showed a developed knowledge for both Natural Moral Law and Buddhist responses to wealth. Wealth was generally better understood from the Buddhist perspective than from the perspective of Natural Moral Law.

Some students seemed to struggle with the three aspects of this question, and as such, there were some who did not manage to include all three aspects in sufficient detail to move into the higher levels of marks. Some students gave for and against responses, so they were given level 3 for AO2. Some students did not respond to the question with Natural Moral Law and instead argued

that Situation Ethics or Virtue Ethics gave better guidance. These students did not discuss Natural Moral Law in detail, therefore they were unable to achieve the higher-level marks for AO1 or AO2.

6.1 ‘Bentham’s consequential ethics have no value for Buddhists.’

There was a good range of responses to this question. Many students seemed to be well prepared and had a good understanding of both Bentham and Buddhist ethics. Most were able to argue both for and against the statement, and there were some excellent examples of critical analysis and evaluation from students. The most successful responses were well structured and included a range of different ideas from the Buddhist specification, including the importance of intention and ahimsa, and then linked these to Bentham’s ideas.

However, some students showed a limited understanding of Buddhist approaches to ethical decision making. They displayed a superficial understanding of Bentham’s ethics. A small number of students confused Bentham’s ethical theory with Situation Ethics.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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