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# GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8061/1 Paper 1 Buddhism  
Report on the Examination

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**Question-based comments****1.1**

Only approximately a quarter of students correctly chose option B – Paticcasamuppada. It would seem that this technical term on the specification was not well known

**1.2**

The majority of students responded well to this question. The experience of a strict regime and lifestyle practised by the Buddha was clearly known and understood by the majority of students. Many chose to focus on what little the Buddha ate, often mentioning three sesame seeds a day or one grain of rice a day and also how the Buddha slept on a bed of thorns or lived in hostile forest regions.

**1.3**

Many students responded positively to this question on rebirth and they were able to link some of the key concepts in Buddhism to their responses such as karma, the five skandhas (khandhas) as well as showing a good grasp of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. Those that linked in well with karma were able to demonstrate how actions influence subsequent lives, though some students only mentioned one influence in detail and failed to move onto a second influence. This suggests that students do not always focus on the 'influence' word in the questions itself. In this case, students were very knowledgeable about rebirth in the main but did not always suggest how this belief could go on and influence how Buddhists live their lives.

Other responses which were more fulsome wrote about intentional actions causing karma for Buddhists and the links made with the five aggregates were often knowledgeable too. Many of the good responses suggested that Buddhists would want to reap good habits to sow the seeds of a future rebirth. Cultivating skilful mental states and actions actually laid the groundwork for a more favourable rebirth if they did not achieve nirvana (nibbana) itself.

**1.4**

This question required students to write about knowledge and understanding of two beliefs of Pure Land Buddhism. Many students answered from a general Buddhist perspective rather than a Pure Land perspective as the question asks. Sometimes, there was sufficient detail and development of Buddhist ideas that there was some overlap into Pure Land Buddhist beliefs but in the main, this question was the least successfully done by the students.

Students need to know some detail about the different Buddhist schools or traditions on the specification to avoid generalised responses. Good responses to this question identified this as a school of Buddhism that focuses on Amitabha Buddha (Amida in Japan) and how and why he is worshipped by Pure Land Buddhists, alongside the importance of chanting in this school of Buddhism. Responses also mentioned the sukhavati heaven on the edge of a western paradise too.

Students were less successful when they identified Pure Land Buddhism with the Theravada tradition and mostly with the concept of the Arhat which is wrong. There are also plenty of supportive sources of authority not least from Honen and also his disciple Shinran. It is worth students learning some of these as they are not that detailed. What these sources of authority do agree on is that Pure Land and entrance to the Pure Land is less dependent on morality and more dependent on chanting Amitabha's name. So reference to the five moral precepts as something Pure Land followers must try and cultivate, is not really a belief of this tradition. so did not earn any credit.

**1.5**

This evaluation question, concerning the Four Noble Truths, proved to be popular and there were some very detailed and well thought through evaluation responses. A question that suggests a Buddhist teaching is more important than any others, gives students plenty of scope to write about support of this view and offer other views on the statement made.

Many students were able to achieve level 4, the highest level, and this was pleasing to see. Some students got confused with the four sights the Buddha saw rather than the focus of this question which was on the Four Noble Truths (though students could offer the teachings the Buddha realised through seeing the four sights as a legitimate counter argument). Other evaluative comments that pitched the Four Noble Truths against the Three Marks of Existence were well articulated. Other students saw that the teachings about the end goal of Buddhism, nirvana (nibbana), far outweighed all the other teachings the Buddha gave. This allowed for some sophisticated responses that compared different aspects of the Buddha's teachings.

The majority of students tried to give a justified conclusion, however brief, and even those students who only offered some simple reasoning showed that they knew about aspects of the Buddha's teachings so could draw on these to support their answers.

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

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