



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8062/11 Paper 1 Buddhism
Report on the Examination

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Question 01.1

Just over 62% gave the correct response of Sunyata, option D, arising the meaning of 'emptiness'. This was perhaps not as high as usual and was more problematic for students than 2.1. It certainly shows the importance of learning the technical vocabulary.

Question 01.2

It is pleasing to note that over 80% of students achieved full marks on this 2-mark response question. Many knew the Three Marks of Existence very well and the majority gave the technical terms rather than the English meaning. The meaning of the technical terms was fine and scored full marks too but again it was pleasing to see so many know the technical terms for each of the Marks of Existence.

Question 01.3

This was an 'influences' question so to respond with information or a basic list of teachings on dependent arising or paticcasamuppada, however accurate, would not elicit many marks.

Students needed to be aware of how the concept of dependent arising might influence Buddhists today such as knowing that nothing is permanent and unchanging, so Buddhists might live their lives accordingly. Also, because nothing is eternal this includes human beings. So, the realisation that death is inevitable as well as the view in Buddhism that 'one thing leads to another' are two of the fundamental influences that the understanding of paticcasamuppada would contribute to.

Some students incorporated the teachings of the Tibetan Wheel of Life which illustrates the process of dependent arising which represents the Buddhist teaching on rebirth and this was very pleasing to see. In terms of influences responses, mention of other Buddhist teachings such as karuna (compassion) and metta (loving kindness) might be examples of Buddhists showing their thoughts, actions and faith in trying to break habits such as craving. All of which would be creditworthy..

Question 01.4

There was a wide selection of responses to this question about the Four Sights seen by the Buddha. Some identified only one or two sights and went into detail on these as to why they were specifically important to Siddhartha Gautama's life and others discussed all four sights. Whichever route was taken there were many good, creditworthy responses.

Some students were able to use technical terms such as links with anicca, anatta and dukkha and link these teachings to different sights. Some of the more impressive responses discussed how seeing the holy man influenced Siddhartha to be inspired like him and become a wandering 'truth seeker', perhaps even suggesting that this sight was the main one that saw the beginning of the Buddha's quest to search for the answers to the problem of suffering.

Some students gave more generalised responses with little depth or detail but were able to score some marks for accuracy. It important to note that many students failed to achieve the fifth mark on this question because, whilst they may have referenced, even in part, a Buddhist teaching, they did not attribute it to a source. This is something centres can work on when practising question responses with their students.

Question 01.5

This question produced many interesting answers showing some very good evaluative skills particular if the counter claim might have tackled the concept of the Arhat from the Theravada school of Buddhism as a contrasting aim for some Buddhists. It was pleasing to see some decent breadth and depth in some of the responses to this 1.5 question such as reference to the six

perfections or paramitas and a discussion surrounding whether these perfections are any more or less worthy than the four stages to becoming an Arhat.

Students were also able to provide good support from their knowledge and understanding of aspects of Mahayana Buddhism such as the importance of compassion (karuna) which is raised to the same level of wisdom (prajna) in the school of Mahayana. Some students talked about the different spiritual ideals of the two main schools of Buddhism whereas other students produced very generalised responses on almost everything they knew on Buddhism rather than focus on spiritual aims and enlightenment.

A few students linked in to Pure Land Buddhism where the aim would be to achieve a rebirth in Sukhavati and this surpassed any aim to become a Bodhisattva. So, some high-level responses that provided very good examples from different Buddhist traditions clearly scored very well on this question and offered plenty of variety on both sides of the issue.

Question 02.1

Nearly 87% ticked the correct box of 'Wesak' as the name of the festival which remembers the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. This is very pleasing to see good knowledge of specific technical language in the Buddhist faith.

Question 02.2

This question was very accessible to almost every student who took this exam. Responses were from the full range of five precepts and many used the way they tend to be phrased in Buddhism such as 'to abstain from taking the not given' but of course, no stealing was sufficient to gain a mark too. Those who missed out on two marks may have inadvertently stated two of the five moral precepts as no killing and no harm which are one and the same thing in Buddhism of course.

Question 02.3

Clearly the way that this question was phrased focused on a specific aspect of meditation so generalised responses, if they did not focus on visualisation, could not achieve full marks. Many identified kasinas as coloured discs that Buddhists might visualise as well as a Buddharupa or body / image of the Buddha as another way to use visualisation. Some of the stronger responses even mentioned certain Buddhas such as Amitabha or Amida from the Pure Land tradition and some mentioned the Medicine Buddha which is related to healing and the reduction of suffering for Buddhists.

Question 02.4

This question proved to be mostly accessible except for those students who confused Buddhist retreats with Buddhist pilgrimages. Those who responded accurately linked in to a variety of ideas such as an opportunity to visit a Buddhist monastery for a concentrated period of time, to take part in study groups, rituals, workshops and to deepen their understanding of different aspects of the Buddhist faith.

Many students mentioned the central practice of the Buddhist faith, meditation and the opportunity to step back from a busy schedule and practise meditation techniques on a Buddhist retreat. It was noticeable that as with 1.4, there were very few references to any source of authority in Buddhism to supplement the responses. Something as simple as 'I go to the sangha for refuge' would have sufficed or maybe a reference to the Buddha when he said 'no one saves but ourselves. We ourselves must walk the path' .

It would be useful for centres to work on different sources of authority in more depth when considering the different topics within the Buddhist faith. We can see the importance of a Buddhist retreat generally when referencing Lama Zopa Rinpoche when he said 'this is the first reason for

doing retreat - to develop the basic human qualities of affection and loving kindness. The second reason is that it gives us the time for putting into practice the teachings we have received.'

Question 02.5

This question proved to be a little less successful than 1.5 which could be due to number of factors, not least time as it was the last question on the paper. That said, some of the more effective responses were fulsome in their arguments and fairly well balanced with a justified conclusion, hence picking up full marks or almost full marks.

Many suggested that because kamma (karma) is viewed by Buddhist as a natural moral law, they are governed by it so must pay attention to it. This might make all Buddhists behave well with regard to it being a natural moral law in Buddhism so inescapable anyway. Since there was acknowledgement from some students that in Buddhism, everything is connected in some way in life, activities have consequences and anything that is seemingly based on the law of cause and effect will have repercussions for good or ill. This interconnectedness in Buddhism and the law of cause and effect allowed some students to reflect quite well on actions having consequences and they gave some good examples.

Some students cleverly linked in aspects of the modern world as counter claims to the statement by suggesting that it may be difficult to avoid manipulating or taking advantage of others in the competitive world in which we live, and this was a strong argument to make and a common sense one. In a different but related way, some students were able to counter argue effectively with reference to Buddhists being ordinary human beings too and they cannot be expected to live their lives constantly thinking about good or bad kamma (karma); they will complete actions anyway. Some might even behave badly, despite a belief in kamma (karma).

A good number of students managed to make some connections between various parts of the Buddhism course - all creditworthy 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.