
AS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Component 2: Study of Religion

2A Buddhism

Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were many well-informed, relevant, answers that showed both an excellent grasp of the material studied and good examination technique. There were some full-mark answers to all of the questions set and some excellent scripts. There was very little evidence that answers were rushed and most answers were of a good length, although a little shorter than expected: many answers of around 300 words achieved the highest levels of the mark scheme. This was very impressive for the first examination of a new specification when teachers, as well as students, were unfamiliar with the demands.

Where there were weaknesses, they were often those commonly seen in work produced under examination conditions: a failure to focus on the question; a lack of support for, or development of, points made, and a failure to engage in debate in AO2 answers. Some AO2 answers were limited to a maximum of Level 2 because they only presented and explained one point of view and did not in any way recognise that others would disagree with the reasoning and the view expressed.

There was some impressive use of technical terms and specialist vocabulary; however, there was also some confusion when terms were used without any apparent understanding of their meaning.

Question 01

01.1 Explain why there are different Buddhist beliefs about the authority of the Pali Canon and why the differences between them are significant.

Excellent answers focused clearly on the question, and most answers dealt with both parts of the question. Some weaker answers explained, at some length, what the Pali Canon is and spent little time considering why there are different beliefs about its authority. Most answers focused on the different views found in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism about the teaching and authority of Gautama Buddha, some also dealt with debates about the accuracy of the record and a few referred to the Abhidhamma Pitaka. The significance of the differences between views was generally understood. Some answers explained what the differences were without considering the reasons for them, but then picked up marks on explaining why the differences mattered.

01.2 'From a Buddhist point of view, Nirvana cannot be clearly described.' Assess this view.

There was generally good understanding of the view that Nirvana cannot be described but references to attempts to describe it were often far less informed. Of those who did directly refer to Nagasena's explanation of Nirvana to King Milinda, some were able to comment on how effective, or not, this was, but others simply referred to what the text said. A number made good use of the view that Nirvana, like Samsara, is 'emptiness'. Some answers did no more than explain a point of view, but others clearly debated the issue presented.

Question 02

02.1 Explain why good moral conduct is important in Buddhism.

There were many well-informed answers but many were stronger on what good moral conduct was than on why it was important. Many answers listed or stated points without explanation, for example, 'good moral conduct generates good karma' and 'good moral conduct leads to good

rebirth'. Some answers did explore these ideas clearly and made good use of technical terms such as kusala and akusala to explain the effect of conduct on the character of the Buddhist.

02.2 'Buddhist meditation is just a form of therapy.' Assess this view.

There were some very impressive answers to this question. The issue was clearly understood and there was good evidence about how Buddhist meditation is used as therapy. The counter argument was not always clearly developed. Some expressed opinion rather than offered evidence, and were quite indignant on Buddhism's behalf that anyone should reduce meditation to therapy since it is the way to insight and enlightenment. Only a few considered the idea that Buddhism offers a 'medicine' for the ills of the world, but this could have been an effective argument in support of the view.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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