



Mark Scheme (Results)

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCE
In Religious Studies (8RS0)

PAPER 4: Study of Religion
Option 4A: Buddhism

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk . Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus .

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your students at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2025

Question Paper Log Number P67609RA

Publications Code 8RS0_4A 2506_MS

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2025

General Marking Guidance

- All candidates must receive the same treatment. Examiners must mark the first candidate in exactly the same way as they mark the last.
- Mark schemes should be applied positively. Candidates must be rewarded for what they have shown they can do rather than penalised for omissions.
- Examiners should mark according to the mark scheme not according to their perception of where the grade boundaries may lie.
- There is no ceiling on achievement. All marks on the mark scheme should be used appropriately.
- All the marks on the mark scheme are designed to be awarded. Examiners should always award full marks if deserved, i.e. if the answer matches the mark scheme. Examiners should also be prepared to award zero marks if the candidate's response is not worthy of credit according to the mark scheme.
- Where some judgement is required, mark schemes will provide the principles by which marks will be awarded and exemplification may be limited.
- When examiners are in doubt regarding the application of the mark scheme to a candidate's response, the team leader must be consulted.
- Crossed out work should be marked UNLESS the candidate has replaced it with an alternative response.

Question number	Indicative Content Explore the main sections of the Tipitaka.	Mark
1	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates may refer to the following: • The Vinaya Pitaka contains 227 rules that monks and nuns have to follow. • The Sutta Pitaka contains the teachings of the Buddha which are usually conversations between the Buddha and a follower. • The Sutta Pitaka is split into five Nikayas (collections) containing the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, and a collection of the Buddha's sayings known as the Dhammapada. • The Jataka Tales show how the Buddha lived out the ten qualities or perfections which lead to enlightenment. • The Abhidhamma Pitaka contains discussions on how to interpret and understand the Buddha's teachings.	(8)

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Question number	Indicative Content Assess the importance of the concept of the Buddha as a cosmic presence that influences the world.	Mark
2	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting the AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1: • Mahayana Buddhists sometimes describe being able to access living Buddhas who are present in other realms. • Vajrayana Buddhists may see Buddha Gautama as a presence that is influencing people. • Amitabha can be approached through his emanations and is a presence throughout the universe. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2: • In a largely atheistic way of life, the idea of the cosmic presence of the Buddha provides Buddhists with assistance on the path to enlightenment, therefore they would feel strengthened in their individual journey. • The idea of the presence of the Buddha in cosmic representations in the heavens provide Buddhists with a focus for their supplications and their meditation, and as such these ideals can provide inspiration for all. • The universal presence of the Buddha is mainly a Mahayana concept, as such Theravadans and others would see it as an addition that was not in the original teaching of the Buddha. • The concept of the Buddha as a cosmic presence can be seen to stand in opposition to the idea that there is no eternal self, therefore many Buddhists would not recognise this. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.	(9)

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues are identified (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).
Level 2	4–6	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2)

Question number	Indicative Content Assess the importance of the Buddha's life as an ascetic.
3	3 marks AO1, 6 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1: • His life as an ascetic gave the Buddha an opportunity to find enlightenment through self-denial. He realised that it did not provide the answer. • The protection of the Buddha during this time (for example by the snake) shows his importance for all of nature in seeking to use him as an example. • During the time that he lived as an ascetic he associated with others who would eventually become his first disciples. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2: • Without living the life of an ascetic, the Buddha would not have discovered the Middle Way which enabled enlightenment. Therefore, it was an important step in his own search for enlightenment. • Looking at the Buddha's example during his life as an ascetic, Buddhists can avoid such a pitfall and strive for enlightenment without the trial and error, therefore even his 'failures' can be seen to be important for Buddhists today. • It shows that the path to enlightenment is not always easy and can include wrong decisions that need to be overcome, however it could be argued that this is just believers striving to ascribe meaning to a time of the Buddha's life that can be seen to be a failure. • The self-denial and meditative practices of the ascetics, while imperfect, helped the Buddha develop attributes and practices that would be important in the development of the Middle Way thereby providing inspiration for all Buddhists. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–3	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues are identified (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generalised arguments (AO2).

Level 2	4–6	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues which lead to a simplistic chain of reasoning (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2).
Level 3	7–9	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2).

Question number	Indicative content Explore the practice of meditation in Buddhism.
4(a)	8 marks AO1 AO1 will be used by candidates to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and specialist language and terminology when responding to the question. Candidates may refer to the following: • The focus of meditation is the control of the body and mind and the consideration of the individual and requires one to ignore one's surroundings and focus on the moment. • Samatha meditation aims to bring about peace within the mind and is sometimes called tranquillity meditation. • Clarity of mind is only the first stage. Other, higher, forms of consciousness (known as jhanas) can be sought through samatha meditation. • In Zen meditation the help of a master enables a person to achieve enlightenment quickly through the attainment of perfect wisdom – or the ability to see things as they really are. • Focussing on the mind and body is only the first stage of meditation; ultimately it goes beyond the individual. It is through meditation that one gains the understanding to be truly selfless in one's thoughts and actions.

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–2	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Provides a superficial understanding of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1).
Level 2	3–5	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a narrow range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).

Level 3	6–8	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Knowledge and understanding addresses a broad range of key religious ideas and beliefs (AO1). • Comprehensively develops key religious ideas and beliefs to show a depth of understanding (AO1).
Question number	Indicative content Analyse the significance of vipassana meditation.	
4(b)	5 marks AO1, 15 marks AO2 AO1 will be used by candidates to underpin their analysis and evaluation. Candidates will be required to demonstrate knowledge and understanding using specialist language and terminology when responding to the question, and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO1: • Vipassana is taught to a person by a master. • Usually vipassana is carried out in the lotus position. • Practitioners are trying to develop mentally so that they can look at themselves as if they were an outsider. AO2 requires candidates to develop their answers showing analytical and evaluative skills to address the question. Such responses will be underpinned by their use of knowledge and understanding. Candidates may refer to the following in relation to AO2: • The purpose of vipassana is to internalise the dhamma. It is not just theoretical concepts but a (the only) reality that becomes a part of the meditator and therefore enables them to attain enlightenment. • It is the insight gained by this method which brings enlightenment; as such it is hugely significant as all other forms of meditation are really preparation for vipassana. • Dhyana meditation can be carried out through quietening the mind, sitting in certain positions, controlling the breathing, or fixing the mind on particular ideas and as such is more accessible and therefore more important for the majority of Buddhists. • Vipassana may be seen to be inaccessible to many and for the majority of Buddhists samatha would be more important as it enables a very common focus for the mind through breathing. For example, focusing on one's own breathing enables the meditator to rid themselves of outside distractions and stresses. • Samatha meditation may be seen to be more practical on a day to day basis as it enables a person to be at peace with themselves, and has been adopted by people in the secular world suggesting that it has more universal appeal and effectiveness. • All other forms of meditation, such as dhyana, are only preludes to vipassana, suggesting that they are inferior as only through vipassana can enlightenment be realised. Candidates who show achievement only against AO1 will not be able to gain marks beyond the top of Level 1.	

Level	Mark	Descriptor
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1–5	• A narrow range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected but are unlikely to be used appropriately or accurately (AO1). • Information/issues may be selected (AO2). • Makes basic connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements are supported by generic arguments (AO2). • Judgements made with no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 2	6–10	• A limited range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, some of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues (AO2). • Makes connections between a limited range of elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements made with little or no attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 3	11–15	• A range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are selected, most of which are used appropriately with some inaccuracies (AO1). • Deconstructs religious information/issues, which lead to a simple chain of reasoning (AO2). • Makes connections between many but not all of the elements in the question (AO2). • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made (AO2). • Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence (AO2).
Level 4	16–20	• A wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology are carefully selected and used appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout (AO1). • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning (AO2). • Makes connections between the full range of elements in the question (AO2). • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question (AO2). • Reasoned judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence (AO2).

Pearson Education Limited.
Registered company number
872828

with its registered office at 80
Strand, London, WC2R 0RL,
United Kingdom