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Examiners' Report June 2010

GCSE Religious Studies 5RS15

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Buddhism

The A02 part (b) and part (d) questions have changed in style from the previous specification and centres should be aware of the different skills needed to answer them. In part (b) questions candidates are not asked for an opposing viewpoint, rather they need to include two reasons to support the view that they are arguing for. These should be developed reasons as no more than two reasons can be credited. In part (d) questions there was less of an issue as the structure of the new questions outlines what is required in each part; though candidates should be encouraged to develop arguments that they make.

Section 1

This section had mixed responses. For Question 1 part (b) candidates generally answered the question about the wheel representing the Eightfold Path rather than the Wheel of Existence. However, there were some very high quality answers that referred to the importance of the wheel for understanding the cycle of rebirth and how to escape it. In part (c) while most candidates were able to provide a short response to explain how morality functions within Buddhism, a number were unable to go on to explain its importance. Responses to part (d) were generally argued well and suggested an engagement with the arguments for and against the importance of lay people.

Question 2(b) was answered simply and development of the reasons provided would have enabled more candidates to achieve the higher levels. For part (c), candidates were generally able to explain the sangha's importance in great detail. There seemed to be less focus on a description of the sangha which suggests that candidates were fully prepared for this style of question. For part (d) a number of candidates used non-Buddhist responses to support the statement, which is acceptable, if they use Buddhism in one of the two parts of the question. There were also some excellent answers that provided arguments for and against, from a purely Buddhist perspective.

Section 2

This section produced some excellent answers but also indicated that some aspects of the specification were not well known. There was a comparable number of responses to both questions.

Question 3(b) was answered well by many candidates. Candidates were able to use many other aspects of the Buddha's life to expand their reasoning. Part (c) produced few higher level answers. Candidates were able to explain the meditation of the Buddha but a significant number were unable to relate it to how others might use it as an example of the path of enlightenment. Candidates should be reminded to make sure that the answer they provide completely answers the question. Part (d) indicated that some candidates did not have a knowledge of the distinctive features of different traditions of Buddhism.

Question 4(b) produced some excellent answers, in a similar manner to 3(b). For part (c) candidates tended to not know the distinctive features of Vajrayana Buddhism which supports the conclusion of 3(d); candidates should be aware of these features for the traditions outlined in the specification.

Part (d) was answered generally very well with candidates exploring the importance of the Buddha's teachings for Buddhists and non-Buddhists.

Section 3

There was a comparable number of responses to both questions; but there seemed to be some misunderstandings about the festivals addressed.

Question 5(b) was answered well on the whole, and candidates were able to outline supporting reasons for their viewpoint. But as outlined earlier candidates do not need to give a for and against. Part (c) was generally answered well, however, a significant minority mistook Wesak for Vassa and as such could only get marks where the activities crossed over. Some candidates also spent time on this question explaining "how" the festival is celebrated, which was not what the question asked for. Part (d) was answered well but some candidates struggled to argue the opposing view to the statement. Candidates should be reminded to look at both sides of the argument in part (d) questions.

Question 6(b) caused problems for some candidates who tried to answer the question positively; there seemed to be little understanding of the reasons why some Buddhists might celebrate New Year. Question 6(c) was answered well by some candidates. Candidates who achieved the higher levels ensured the importance was highlighted rather than just focusing on description. Part (d) was generally well answered and candidates were able to argue both sides well.

Section 4

Candidates answered most of the questions in this section well. Questions 7 and 8 were equally popular with candidates.

In Question 7(b) most candidates were able to provide arguments to support their view. However, the answers tended to be simplistic and were not developed adequately for the higher levels. For part (c) most candidates were able to identify why a vihara is important but there needed to be more focus on the local area. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that their answer addresses the requirements of the question. For part (d) most candidates answered with confidence and were able to provide a number of simple reasons on each side of the argument.

Question 8(b) was not well answered by many candidates with general statements being made rather than focusing on Buddhist responses. The question is focused around Buddhists and the answers should reflect this. For part (c) most candidates were able to describe Buddhist teachings on karuna but the majority did not go on to explain its importance to Buddhists. Part (d) was answered well in the majority of cases but some candidates answered with reference to the additional pansils which could not be credited.

Grade boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Raw boundary mark	80	63	55	47	40	33	26	19	12
Uniform boundary mark	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20

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