



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second
Religion
Option 2D – Buddhism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies A Paper 2D: Area of Study 2 –Study of Second Religion: Buddhism (Paper code: 1RA0/2D)

The paper contributes to 25% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of two questions and candidates must answer all questions. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this, rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

This area of study comprises a study in-depth of Buddhism as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are two sections:

- Beliefs and Teachings;
- Practices.

Candidates had studied Christianity within the context of the wider British society.

Please note: AO stands for 'Assessment Objective' SPaG stands for 'Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar'

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

The question asked was: 'Outline three teachings about the nature of paticca-samuppada'

Bullet point 1.2 Dhamma: the nature and different meaning of dhamma (dependent origination /conditionality); **the nature and importance of paticca-samuppada** and the Three Marks of Existence, including reference to the Story of Nagasena and the Chariot in the Milinda Panha; suffering (dukkha), no fixed self (anicca) and soul or essence (anatta); the implications of belief in dhamma for Buddhists today. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

Examiner comment: This question was answered well by candidates. The majority of candidates gained three marks. Where candidates did not do well they had not understood the Buddhist phrase.

Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit. Candidates who answer using a list, which is not an outline, can only receive 1 mark according to the mark scheme. If any one element of a list were incorrect it would get 0 marks.

Question 1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

The question asked candidates to Explain two reasons why the six perfections are important in the lives of some Buddhists..

Bullet point 1.2 Buddhist ethical teachings: divergent Buddhist understandings of the nature, purpose and importance of kamma, including Dhammapada 181–187 and the Khuddakapatha, merit and rebirth, karuna (compassion), metta (loving kindness), pancha

sila (the Five Precepts) and **the paramitas (Six Perfections)**; the divergent applications of each of these ethical teachings in Buddhist life today. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

Examiner comment: Candidates should be encouraged to be familiar with both the requirements of the different styles of questions and the specialist vocabulary on the Specification in order to make efficient use of their time in the exam.

Question 1(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.1 The life of the Buddha: the nature and history of the events in the life of the Buddha and why they are important to Buddhists today, including ancestry, birth, princely life, marriage and the Four Sights, with reference to Buddhavamsa XXVI; the enlightenment of the Buddha and founding of the Sangha.

The question asked was: Explain two events in the life of the Buddha. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom a quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Examiner comment Most candidates answered this question well. The majority of students gave good examples of the four sights and the Buddhas enlightenment

Question 1d

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are assessed on AO2, Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion** – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise, judge the value of, the arguments to reach the higher levels).

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.4 Second Noble Truth, including reference to Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: the nature of samudaya (the root of suffering); Buddhist teachings about the causes of suffering, including the Sermon at Benares; **the Three Poisons** and how they are represented in the Wheel of Life; divergent understandings of the Wheel of Life, with reference to Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism.

The question asked was *(d) "The Three Poisons explain the causes of suffering."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings

- reach a justified conclusion

Examiner comment: In response to this question candidates were aware of the discussion around the causes of suffering and the three poisons.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.7 Death and mourning rituals and ceremonies: the divergent celebration and significance of the ceremonies in Buddhist communities and to Buddhists; the distinct significance of the rituals associated with death and mourning in Theravada communities and in Japan and Tibet, with reference to the Tibetan Book of the Dead. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was Outline three features of death and mourning rituals in Theravada Buddhism..'

Examiner comment: Candidates answered this question well; candidates had been well prepared in features of death and mourning rituals and were able to recall this

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.6 Puja: the nature and purpose of puja in the vihara and the home, including reference to Mangala Sutta; **examples of the different types**; when each type might be used and why; the importance of having different types of worship and their use in different Buddhist contexts. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why having different types of worship is important for Buddhists.

Examiner advice: Refer to the specification bullet point and cover all the different parts of it. These bullet points are the basis of question setting.

Question 2c

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.2 Chanting: the nature, purpose and role of chanting in Buddhism as a devotional practice and to gain mental concentration, including Dhammapada 1–2, confidence and joy. The divergent understandings of the importance of chanting in Buddhist life today: Theravada Buddhism, including Tiratana Buddhism, with reference to Dhammapada 190, and Mahayana Buddhism, including Nam Myoho Renge Kyo.. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why the use of sacred syllables may be important to Buddhists.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, a quote or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked. The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

Examiner comment: Most candidates responded well to this question. Candidates were well prepared for this question and referred to sources of wisdom with confidence.

Examiner advice: Centres struggling to find sources of wisdom should refer to the specification and/or previous mark schemes.

Question 2d

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

Bullet point 2.1 Meditation: the nature, purpose and significance of meditation in Buddhism; the different types of meditation: samatha (concentration), **metta bhavana (loving kindness)** and vipassana (insight); meditative practices, including mindfulness breathing and zazen, divergent understanding of the nature and importance of visualisation of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, including Amitāyus Meditation Sutra; how the different practices are used by Mahayana and Theravada Buddhists and the benefits from their use. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was "Metta bhavana is the best type of meditation.

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Christian teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Examiner comment: This question engaged candidates of all abilities and produced a wide range of marks. All candidates should be encouraged to answer every question because every mark is important.

Key advice from the examiner.

- Centres must teach to the specification, making sure candidates are prepared for all parts of the bullet points in preparation for the questions
- When tackling a) questions, candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.
- The explain questions require two developed points, however, students should also be prepared to describe where indicated on the specification.
- The (d) items need an understanding of religion and belief, as well as the ability to evaluate the arguments in order to reach a conclusion. Centres may wish to consider the

differentiation of teaching to enable some students of different abilities to concentrate on learning the information needed before embarking on the evaluation.

- Candidates should be directed to read the bullet points in the (d) question and understand that they guide them to which viewpoints they should be providing. Centres may wish to consider identifying on the specification the different traditions/viewpoints within Buddhism identified that could be used to answer these questions. The diversity within the religion is the key factor in appraising the arguments. Why do they not all agree?