



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 1 Religion & Ethics

1D Buddhism

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Non-ERA report 2024 1RB0_1D

Introduction GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies B Paper 1D: Area of Study 1 – Study of Buddhism (Paper code: 1RB0/1D)

The paper contributes to 50% of the overall award.

The assessment consists of four 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 four sections:

- Beliefs
- Marriage & the Family
- Living the Religious Life
- Matters of Life & Death

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

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

Question 1a

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.7 Human life: divergent Buddhist understandings of the nature and importance of The Five Khandas (aggregates), including the Khandha Sutta; divergent **Buddhist understandings of the nature and importance of sunnata, tathagatagarbha**, Buddha-nature; divergent Buddhist understandings of the nature and importance of Arahant and Bodhisattva Ideals; divergent Buddhist understandings of the nature and history of Buddhahood and the Pure Land (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about tathagatagarbha'

Candidates are asked to 'Outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

This was a good discriminating question. Candidates familiar with the subject specific vocabulary were awarded 3 marks. Those who had not revised the term found it difficult to access marks on this question.

Examiner advice: 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.

Bullet point 1.6 Fourth Noble Truth, including reference to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: the nature of The Middle Way – magga; **Buddhist teachings about the Eightfold Path** leading to nibbana; the Threefold Way: the nature, purpose and importance of sila (ethics), samadhi (meditation) and panna (wisdom); divergent understandings of the importance Eightfold Path and the Threefold Way for Buddhist life today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist teachings about the Eightfold Path'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two teachings are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the teaching given and to the question asked.

Most candidates were able to show their understanding of the Eightfold Path and many students gained full marks. There were a range of approaches, which were generally valid. The majority of answers made reference to specific elements of the Eightfold Path.

Examiner advice: Candidates should be encouraged to be familiar with the requirements of the different styles of questions in order to make efficient use of their time in the exam.

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

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, **the Four Sights**, including Buddhavamsa XXVI, the enlightenment of the Buddha and founding of the Sangha (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons the Four Sights are 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, 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.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word. The source of wisdom can be given as a recognisable paraphrase
- If examiners are unsure they will use a search engine. Enter the gist of the paraphrase and the source

- If the source is attributed to the wrong person/source/ numerical reference it cannot be credited e.g. a Dali Lama quote attributed to the Buddha and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded
- Numerical or generic references on their own are not awarded. The candidate must use the reference correctly ie not just state the name of a sutta.

Most candidates were able to give detail about some of the Four Sights and the impact that these had on the Buddha and therefore Buddhism.

Question 1d

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the d) items.

The candidates are being assessed on AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

AO2 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 validity of the arguments used / appraisal to gain the higher grades. For higher grades, candidates are also required to build complexity into their responses by building their chains of reasoning. Many candidates produced excellent answers giving reasons for and against but failed to evaluate the credibility of the argument, or include this element of complexity in their analysis of the statement.

Examiner advice: centres should refer to training materials online. Candidates require the religious understanding of the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against before they can begin to evaluate.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.3 First Noble Truth, including reference to the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta: the nature of dukkha; **Buddhist teachings about suffering**; the different types of suffering as pain, fabrication and **change**; the importance of suffering for Buddhists today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was (d) "Change is why people suffer."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

d) items are marked using levels and awarding is carried out using 'best fit' according to the level descriptors.

In response to this question candidates were aware of the discussion around the concept of change, discussing ideas around the view that resisting change and craving the way things were, as opposed to accepting it was a significant factor around suffering.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.8 **Buddhist teachings and attitudes about gender prejudice and discrimination** including the Soma Sutta: Buddhist opposition to gender prejudice and discrimination; examples of gender equality in action in Buddhism (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about gender prejudice.'

a) items are point marked – Outline requires three outlined points.

This question was accessible, with approximately three quarters of candidates achieving full marks. Most highlighted a link between Anatta and the belief that there should not be gender prejudice.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.4 **Support for the family in the sangha**, including the role of the sangha as a refuge as taught in The Khuddakapatha 1: how and why the community tries to support families, including through worship, rites of passage, festivals and counselling; divergent understandings of the importance of this support for Buddhists today. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why the sangha supports family life'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks.

Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

In some responses students were able to show an understanding of the sangha and link this to family life. Candidates who gained fewer marks tended to flip the question, describing how families support the sangha.

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: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.2 Sexual relationships: **Buddhist teachings about the nature and importance of sexual relationships**, including reference to the Third Precept, Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta; different attitudes to celibacy, for example Jodo Shinshu monks; divergent Buddhist teachings and attitudes towards sexual relationships outside of marriage and homosexuality; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of sexual relationships outside marriage and homosexuality and Buddhist responses to them. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: ‘Explain two Buddhist beliefs about sexual relationships.’

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two teachings are required, and both need to be developed to be awarded 4 marks. They must also correctly use a source of wisdom in their answer which must be identifiable, relevant and linked to the teaching given in the answer.

Most candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about sexual relationships. Many candidates were able to use the Five Precepts as a source of wisdom and authority.

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: Marriage & the Family

Bullet point 2.6 **Buddhist teachings about divorce:** divergent Buddhist beliefs, **teachings and attitudes towards divorce and remarriage**, including A Happy Married Life: A Buddhist Perspective by Ven. K. Sri Dhammananda; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to divorce and remarriage, **including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics**, and Buddhist responses to them. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question).*

The question asked was “Married couples should never divorce.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- refer to relevant ethical arguments
- reach a justified conclusion.

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. Candidates frequently explored the debate between the suffering caused by divorce, compared to the suffering encountered by remaining in an unhappy marriage. Many references were made to the Buddha leaving his own family to seek greater fulfilment. Some were able to expand answers with appraisal.

Question 3a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.5: How and why **objects of devotion are used within different Buddhist places of worship**, buddharupas, including reference to Vakkali Sutta, shrine, Bodhi tree; divergent understandings of why devotional objects are important in Buddhism today. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question).*

The question asked was ‘Outline three objects of devotion used in Buddhist places of worship.’

Candidates answered this question confidently. Approximately 75% of candidates gained 3 marks.

Question 3b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.7: 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 ‘Explain two reasons why death and mourning rituals are important to some Buddhists.’

This question was accessible, with approximately 80% of candidates achieving full marks. Most made reference to Tibetan Sky Burials, along with another ritual. Candidates generally identified that this question required them to tailor their knowledge in a way that addressed the question.

Examiner advice: Centres should unpick the bullet points with candidates to prepare them for the questions that may be set.

Question 3c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.6*: 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 puja may take place in the vihara.’

Most candidates were able to access marks on this question, describing the benefits of performing puja in the vihara. However, many candidates did not try to access the mark for a source of wisdom and authority, instead focusing on their reasons and developments.

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

Question 3d

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Religious Life

Bullet point 3.2: 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, with reference to Theravada Buddhism**, including Tiratana: 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: “Chanting is the best way to worship.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- refer to different Buddhist points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Candidates tended to make a comparison between chanting and other devotional practices, most notably meditation. Stronger candidates were able to highlight differences between Theravada and Mahayana traditions and were able to expand answers with evaluation.

Examiner advice: Candidates who understand the diversity within the religious tradition, and the arguments for and against different practices are those best placed to evaluate.

Question 4a

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.1 **Buddhist teachings about the origins and value of the universe:** Buddhist responses to scientific explanations for the origins of the universe, including the origins having no significance and reference to *The Universe in a Single Atom* Chapter 4 by the XIV Dalai Lama; the value of the universe and the natural world in Buddhism; divergent Buddhist responses and teachings to the possible view that the universe is to be used as a commodity. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question).*

The question asked was: 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about the origin of the universe.'

This was a discriminating question, many students being able to express a Buddhist perspective towards the origins of the universe. However, even though on this paper a separate question was included about the origins of human life, many candidates still confused these two distinct elements of the course, impacting their ability to respond effectively to this question about the universe.

Examiner advice: Candidates should write three sentences containing one piece of information in each. There is no need for development: it will not receive credit.

Question 4b

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.3 **Buddhist responses to scientific and non-religious explanations about the origins and value of human life,** including evolution and survival of the fittest, including interpretations of Cula-Malunkiyovada Sutta; divergent understandings of the significance of the responses to scientific and non-religious explanations, such as evolution and survival of the fittest, for Buddhists today *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question).*

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist responses to non-religious explanations of the origins of human life.'

This was a discriminating question, many students being able to express a Buddhist response to non-religious explanations of the origins of human life. However, even though on this paper a separate question was included about the origins of the universe, many candidates still confused these two

distinct elements of the course, impacting their ability to respond effectively to this question about human life. Many also missed the detail requiring them to consider *responses to non-religious explanations* which did hinder many students.

Examiner advice: Centres are advised to ensure candidates are able to recognise subject specific vocabulary so that students are not confused if subject specific terms are used in questions.

Question 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.5 Buddhist responses to the existence of death and the afterlife: **Buddhist teachings and beliefs that support the existence of a life after death**, including the Wheel of Life and the impermanence of the self, including reference to Sahasodgata Avadana, Divyavadana 21; divergent Buddhist responses to arguments for life after death (including remembered lives, paranormal, logic, reward, comfort and meeting loved ones); the significance of arguments for belief in life after death for Buddhists (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: ‘Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the existence of the afterlife.’

This question worked well. Candidates were prepared to show Buddhists beliefs about life after death. Many candidates tried to access the mark for a source of wisdom and authority, with most making reference to the Buddha referring to his remembered lives.

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 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life & Death

Bullet point: 4.2 Buddhist teachings about the sanctity of life, including reference to the First Precept in The Khuddakapatha: Buddhist teachings about why human life is special; how life is shown as special in the Buddhism; divergent understandings of the regarding life as special life for Buddhists today. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: “The sanctity of life is the most important Buddhist teaching”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

d) questions are good discriminators of achievement in RS. Candidates who did well explored the differing views on the sanctity of life. The majority included relevant Buddhist teachings and a conclusion. Many references were made to the Buddhist belief about how rare it is to be born as a human being and that it is from the human state that an individual is most likely to achieve enlightenment. Some were able to expand answers with appraisal.

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?