



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1D – Buddhism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies B Paper 1D: 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:

- Buddhist Beliefs
- Marriage and the family
- Living the Buddhist life
- Matters of life and death

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

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. *(Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was: 'Outline three features of the Wheel of Life.'

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

Examiner comment: The majority of candidates gained three marks.

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 1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

Bullet point 1.3 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.)*

The question asked candidates to 'Explain two Buddhist teachings about the pancha sila.'

Examiner comment: Most candidates answered this confidently recognising the Buddhist term. The question highlighted those candidates that had not revised the key Buddhist terms.

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

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 and 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.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the importance of Buddha-nature.' In your answer you should refer to a source of wisdom

Examiner comment 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.

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).

Many candidates gave excellent answers citing reasons for and against showing a sound understanding of religion and belief. Any made judgements which linked to the analysis of the statement

In some cases, students focussed on the strength/weakness of an argument but had not demonstrated any understanding of religion and belief.

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 and Teachings

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.*)

The question asked was *(d) "The most important of all Buddhist beliefs is paticca-samuppada."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

In response to this question many candidates left the page blank not knowing what paticca- samuppada was. Those who attempted the question did very well.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.3 Buddhist teaching about the purpose and importance of the family: Buddhist teaching about the purpose of families, including the Sigalovada Sutta; Buddhist responses to the different types of family within 21st-century society (nuclear, single parent, same-sex parents, extended and blended families). (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist beliefs about the purpose of families.'

Examiner comment. Candidates were much more confident on this section of the paper than the previous section. The answers to this question were more generic rather than Buddhist beliefs but were awarded.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family

Bullet point 2.7 Buddhist teachings and attitudes about the equality of men and women in the family: divergent Buddhist beliefs, teachings and attitudes about the role of men and women in the family, including reference to the life of the Buddha and Sigalovada Sutta. (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Explain two Buddhist teachings about the role of men and women in the family.'

Examiner comment Many candidates gave generic answers about men going to work and women staying at home and did not mention the equality of women in the Buddhist family.

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 and the Family

Bullet point 2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage in Buddhism: divergent understandings of the significance of marriage in Buddhist life; divergent Buddhist teachings about marriage, including its importance, the Sigalovada Sutta, and the possible ideal of celibacy; divergent non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to the importance of marriage in society, including a lack of importance, cohabitation and the Buddhist responses to these attitudes.

The question asked was: Explain two Buddhist teachings about the importance of marriage.

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. Very few candidates responded with a source of wisdom.

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 and the Family

Bullet point 2.2 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 "The main role of the sangha is to support families."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- 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.

Question 3a

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Buddhist Life

Bullet point 3.1 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 'Outline three reasons why Buddhists meditate.'

Examiner comment Candidates answered this question well, they had clearly been prepared for this question.

Question 3b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Buddhist Life

Bullet point 3.4 Features of Buddhist places of worship: the divergent nature, history and design of Buddhist places of worship, including temples, gompas, **viharas**, shrines in Theravada, Mahayana and Triratna Buddhism; how and why the places of worship are used, including reference to the shrine room, shrine facing east, **and the library**, showing the importance of learning with reference to the Kimsila Sutta. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why a library is an important feature of a vihara.'

Examiner comment Many candidates gave excellent answers to this question

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 3c

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Buddhist 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.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why buddharupas are used within Buddhist places of worship. 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 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.

Question 3d

Candidates were assessed on Section Three. Living the Buddhist Life

Bullet point 3.6 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 "Death and mourning ceremonies are only important for the living."

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.

Examiner comment Candidates that did well were able to write about the rituals rather than the beliefs in life after death.

Question 4a

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point 4.7 Implications of Buddhist teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of euthanasia: **Buddhist teachings about the nature and use of euthanasia** including Vakkali Sutta; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Buddhist responses to them including support for hospice care, including the Buddhist Hospice Trust. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about euthanasia.'

Examiner comment Candidates could answer this very well in a generic way but lacked the Buddhist teachings

Question 4b

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Matters of Life and 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 to and teachings on 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 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the value of the universe.'

Examiner comment This question discriminated well across the cohort those candidates that had been prepared for the examination and revised did well, however, a high percentage of candidates had not and misunderstood the term 'the value of the universe'

Examiner advice: Make sure that candidates have and clear understanding of words used on the specification that may come up on questions.

Question 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Matters of Life and 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 Buddhism; divergent understandings regarding the importance of life for Buddhists today.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the sanctity of life.'

Examiner comment: Candidates were well prepared for this topic and answered the question well. There were some candidates who thought that life was sacred and belonged to God which did not work on a Buddhist paper.

Question 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point 4.6 Buddhist responses to non-religious arguments against life after death: why Buddhists reject arguments against belief in life after death (including as a source of comfort, lack of evidence, fraudulent accounts, social control), including Brahmajala Sutta 4.

The question asked was "Belief in life after death is more than a source of comfort for those mourning."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

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

Examiner comment This question was not answered well many candidates ran out of time. Those who answered the question did so successfully noting that it was about the belief in life after death not the rituals.

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?