



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 2 Religion, Peace & Conflict

2D Buddhism

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Non-ERA report 2024 1RB0_2D

Introduction GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies B Paper 2D: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace & Conflict (Paper code: 1RB0/2D)

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

There are four sections:

- Buddhist Beliefs
- Crime & Punishment
- Living the Buddhist Life
- Peace & Conflict

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: Buddhist 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 beliefs about the Five Khandas'

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: Buddhist Beliefs.

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, **anicca – no fixed self** and anatta – soul or essence; the implications of belief in dhamma for Buddhists today (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about anicca'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two beliefs 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 beliefs given and relevant to the question asked.

Most candidates were able to show their understanding of the impermanent and constantly changing nature of all things and many students gained full marks. However, this was also a good discriminating question, with 20% of candidates who had not revised the term being unable to access marks.

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

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Buddhist Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.4 Second Noble Truth: the nature of samudaya – **the causes of suffering**, including reference to Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, **the Three Poisons**; Buddhist teachings about the causes of suffering – Sermon at Benares, 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: 'Explain two Buddhist teachings about the Three Poisons'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (c) items. Therefore, two teachings 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 teaching given and to the question asked. The teaching then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the teaching 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 as 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 provide good detail about the Three Poisons and their link to suffering. Many candidates made reference to the Wheel of Life and the symbolism related to the poisons that can be found there.

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 1.8 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), panca 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 was (d) "Developing compassion should be the most important part of Buddhist life."

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 tended to make a comparison between developing and showing compassion and other devotional practices in the pursuit of enlightenment. Stronger candidates were able to highlight differences between Theravada and Mahayana traditions and were able to expand answers with evaluation.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime & Punishment

Bullet point 2.3 Buddhist teachings about good, evil and suffering: **Buddhist teachings about the nature of good actions, how they are rewarded**, and the nature of evil actions; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) about why people suffer, including believing in religion and Buddhist responses to them; divergent Buddhist teachings about why people suffer, including the words of the XIV Dalai Lama's Nobel acceptance speech (10 December 1989) (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist teachings about how good actions are rewarded.'

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

This question was accessible, only approximately 6% of candidates not being able to gain some marks from it. Most highlighted the concept of kamma, plus also positive rebirth or enlightenment.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime & Punishment

Bullet point 2.2 Buddhist attitudes towards crime; Buddhist teachings and responses to the nature, causes and problem of crime, including Dhammapada 160–165; Buddhist teachings about crime; **what action is taken by Buddhist individuals and Buddhist groups to end crime, including the Prison Dharma Network/Prison Mindfulness** (*bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Explain two ways Buddhists try to end crime'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two ways 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 way given and to the question asked.

Whilst a number of students were able to show an understanding of the strategies employed by Buddhist communities to end crime, lots also gave very vague answers, which were not then linked to the wording of the question. For example, many referred to forgiveness, without linking this to a reduction in crime.

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: Crime & Punishment

Bullet point 2.6 Buddhist teachings about forgiveness: **Buddhist teachings and responses about the nature and importance of forgiveness**, including Dhammapada 3–10, how offenders are forgiven by the community and why this is needed; Buddhist responses to the nature and use of restorative justice, and why it is important for criminals (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: ‘Explain two reasons why Buddhists believe forgiveness is important.’

Candidates are asked to ‘Explain two’ on (c) items. Therefore, two reasons 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 reason given in the answer.

Most candidates were able to show knowledge and understanding about the importance of forgiveness. Many candidates made reference to the idea that hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love, 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: Crime & Punishment

Bullet point 2.8 Buddhist attitudes towards the death penalty: the nature and purpose of capital punishment; divergent **Buddhist teachings about the nature, purpose and arguments surrounding the use of capital punishment**, including Brahmajala Sutta 1; **non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes towards the use of capital punishment**, 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 “The use of capital punishment is wrong.”

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.

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 made reference to the contrast between general Buddhist beliefs and the use of capital punishment in a number of countries where Buddhism is the predominant religion. A number of candidates did not address the non-religious aspect of the question at all, limiting their access to the higher marks. Others responded by offering an application of ethical theories, which is another possible ‘third bullet point’, but was not the one used in this question.

Question 3a

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 and 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, including reference to the Kimsila Sutta (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was 'Outline three places of worship in Buddhism.'

Candidates answered this question confidently. Over 60% of candidates gained 3 marks from this question.

Question 3b

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 'Explain two reasons why samatha meditation is significant to some Buddhists.'

This question was generally accessible, more than 50% of candidates achieving full marks from it. However, this was also a good discriminating question, with nearly 20% of candidates who were not confident with the vocabulary referred to in the specification unable to access marks on this 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 Buddhist 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 features of the death and mourning rituals used by Buddhists.'

Most candidates were able to access marks on this question, describing the features of the death and mourning rituals used by some communities. Many candidates made reference to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, whereas many 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 Buddhist 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: “How a Buddhist performs puja is more important than where it is performed.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Candidates tended to make a comparison between conducting puja in a place most conducive to personal concentration and places such as a vihara where they may be supported by others, but where there may be more distractions. Stronger candidates 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: Peace & Conflict

Bullet point: 4.7 Buddhist attitudes to weapons of mass destruction (WMD): **Buddhist teaching and responses to the problems and benefits of WMD**; Buddhist attitudes towards the use of such weapons, including Dhammapada 129–145; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) and the application of ethical theories, such as utilitarianism which supports the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and Buddhist responses to them (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: ‘Outline three Buddhist beliefs about weapons of mass destruction.’

Many students were able to express a Buddhist perspective about weapons of mass destruction. Although most highlighted that WMD contradict most aspects of Buddhist teaching, some did successfully make the case for WMD as a deterrent in order to avoid suffering. However, it was more straightforward for candidates to simply outline more clear-cut Buddhist beliefs.

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: Peace & Conflict

Bullet point: 4.2 The role of Buddhists in peacemaking: **Buddhist teachings about peacemaking**; the importance for Buddhists of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation in peacemaking, including Dhammapada 1–8; the work of Buddhists working for peace today, the divergent approaches in what they do and why they try to work for peace, including the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: ‘Explain two Buddhist teachings about peacemaking.’

This was a discriminating question. Many students were able to clearly express Buddhist teaching about peacemaking and others struggled to recognise the concept of peacemaking beyond the idea of forgiveness and reconciliation in an individual's own life.

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 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace & Conflict

Bullet point: 4.3 Buddhist attitudes to conflict: **Buddhist teachings** and responses to the nature and **causes of conflict**, including links to the Three Poisons and Itivuttaka 50; Buddhist responses to the problems conflict causes within society and links to situation ethics; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes about the role of religion in the causes of conflict 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 the causes of conflict.’

This was another discriminating question, with the full range of marks being awarded fairly evenly. Many had a good command of the ideas around conflict, making reference to the Three Poisons as the basis of their response. Others were less specific, attempting to give a very general knowledge style response. This gave the impression that they would benefit from being more familiar with the specification, to help direct their response.

Examiner advice: Centres are advised to ensure candidates are able to recognise subject specific vocabulary in order to make efficient use of their time in the exam.

Question 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace & Conflict

Bullet point: 4.5 Buddhist attitudes to the Just War theory: **Buddhist teachings and responses to the nature and importance of the Just War theory; divergent opinions on whether the Just War theory should be rejected by Buddhists**, including reference to War and Peace: A Buddhist Perspective by the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, including the application of ethical theories such as situation ethics (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question*).

The question asked was: "The Just War theory should be rejected by all Buddhists"

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

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

d) questions are good discriminators of achievement in RS. Candidates who did well explored the differing views on the Just War Theory. The majority included relevant Buddhist teachings and a conclusion. A common approach to this question was to contrast Buddhist beliefs about non-violence and the sanctity of life with a legitimate attempt to minimise suffering. This was a link for many to Situation Ethics and/or Utilitarianism to address the 'third bullet point' and therefore access the full range of marks. 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?