



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and
Conflict
Option 2D – Buddhism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies Religious Studies B Paper 2D: Buddhism (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 a study in-depth of Buddhism as a lived religion in the United Kingdom and throughout the world.

There are four sections:

- Buddhist Beliefs
- Crime and punishment
- Living the Buddhist life
- Peace and conflict

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: Buddhist 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.

The question asked was: 'Outline three features of the Noble Truths.'

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

Examiner comment: The majority of candidates gained three marks. Candidates were well prepared for 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.

Question 1b

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Buddhist 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), **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 reasons why Buddhists should follow the Five Precepts.

Examiner comment Most candidates answered this confidently. Many could list the five precepts which wasted time and did not fully answer the question asked.

Question 1c

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Buddhist 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 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 reasons why the Buddha's birth may be important to Buddhists. 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.

This question was not answered well, candidates wrote about Buddhas early life as a prince and the four sights not his birth.

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: 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 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 *(d) "All Buddhists can achieve Buddhahood"

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 Those candidates who understood the concept of Buddhahood answered this question well. Those who did not managed to gain marks by referring to enlightenment.

Question 2a

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment

Bullet point 2.4 Buddhist attitudes towards punishment: divergent Buddhist teachings and attitudes towards the nature and use of punishment, including Dhammapada 197–202 and links to situation ethics; Buddhist teachings on why punishment can be regarded as justice and why punishment might be needed in society.

The question asked was 'Outline three reasons Buddhists believe punishment might be needed in society'.

Examiner comment: Candidates were much more confident overall on this section of the paper than the previous section. However, the answers given were more generic and not specific enough in some cases to gain marks on a Buddhism paper.

Question 2b

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and 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.

The question asked was 'Explain two reasons why Buddhists may use restorative justice.

Examiner comment Many candidates gave generic answers about types of punishment not restorative justice.

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 and Punishment

Bullet point 2.1 Buddhist teachings about good, evil and suffering: Buddhist teachings about the nature of good actions, how they are rewarded, and teachings about 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)..

The question asked was: Explain two Buddhist beliefs about evil actions.

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: Crime and Punishment

Bullet point 2.2 Buddhist attitudes towards justice: **Buddhist teachings about the nature of justice and why justice is important for Buddhists**, including Dhammapada 256–257; Buddhist teachings on why justice is important for the victim; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) about why justice is important regardless of religion and belief, and Buddhist responses to them. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was "Buddhists should always demand justice."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist 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.

Question 3a

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.)

The question asked was 'Outline three features of Buddhist death and mourning ceremonies.'

Examiner comment Candidates answered this question well

Question 3b

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Buddhist Life

Bullet point 3.4 Mantra recitation: divergent understandings of the nature, purpose, role and importance of mantra recitation with reference to Theravada Buddhism, including

Namo Buddhaya ('Homage to the Buddha'), and Mahayana Buddhism; the nature and purpose of using sacred syllables, devotional articles, offerings and mala beads and why they are used in different schools of Buddhism. *(bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.)*

The question asked was Explain two reasons why using Namō Buddhaya may be important to Buddhists.

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 Festivals and retreats: the divergent nature, history, purpose and importance of festivals and retreats in Buddhism; divergent understandings of the origins, meaning and features of celebration of specific festivals and retreats, including **Wesak**, Vassa/Rain Retreat and Kathina, with reference to the Anapanasati Sutta, and Uposatha days in Theravada Buddhism; Hanamatsuri and Obon (Japanese), Parinibbana Day in Mahayana Buddhism, and Lama Tsong Khapa Day in Tibet.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why a Buddhist might celebrate Wesak. 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 3.5 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 "Devotional objects are essential for Buddhist worship." Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against. In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Examiner comment Candidates answered this question well, showing an understanding of how and why devotional objects are used and why some would argue that they were not needed.

Question 4a

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Piece and conflict

Bullet point 4.4 Buddhist attitudes to pacifism: Buddhist teachings and responses to the nature and history of pacifism, including links to the Five Precepts and Cunda Kammaraputta Sutta; Buddhist teachings about passive resistance and examples of its use within Buddhism.

The question asked was 'Outline three Buddhist beliefs about pacifism.'

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: Piece and 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; the application of ethical theories such as situation ethics.

The question asked was 'Explain two Buddhist responses to the Just War theory.'

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

Question 4c

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Piece and conflict

Bullet point 4.2 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 support the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and Buddhist responses to them.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Buddhist beliefs about the use of weapons of mass destruction.'

Examiner comment: Candidates were well prepared for this topic and answered the question well.

Question 4d

Candidates were assessed on Section four: Piece and conflict

Bullet point 4.1 Buddhist attitudes towards peace: Buddhist teachings about the nature and importance of peace, including Dhammapada 197–208; Buddhism as a religion of peace and how this may be understood differently in the life of a Buddhist. (*Bold indicates the part of the bullet assessed by the question.*)

The question asked was "All Buddhists must be peaceful."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Buddhist teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Examiner comment This question was not answered well many candidates ran out of time.

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?