



Mark Scheme (Results)

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE
In Religious Studies (4RS1) Paper 2A

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General Marking Guidance

- All candidates must receive the same treatment. Examiners must mark the first candidate in exactly the same way as they mark the last.
- Mark schemes should be applied positively. Candidates must be rewarded for what they have shown they can do rather than penalised for omissions.
- Examiners should mark according to the mark scheme not according to their perception of where the grade boundaries may lie.
- There is no ceiling on achievement. All marks on the mark scheme should be used appropriately.
- All the marks on the mark scheme are designed to be awarded. Examiners should always award full marks if deserved, i.e. if the answer matches the mark scheme. Examiners should also be prepared to award zero marks if the candidate's response is not worthy of credit according to the mark scheme.
- Where some judgement is required, mark schemes will provide the principles by which marks will be awarded and exemplification may be limited.
- When examiners are in doubt regarding the application of the mark scheme to a candidate's response, the team leader must be consulted.
- Crossed out work should be marked UNLESS the candidate has replaced it with an alternative response.

Marking guidance for levels-based mark schemes

How to award marks

The indicative content provides examples of how students will meet each skill assessed in the question. The levels descriptors and indicative content reflect the relative weighting of each skill within each mark band.

Finding the right level

The first stage is to decide which level the answer should be placed in. To do this, use a 'best-fit' approach, deciding which level most closely describes the quality of the answer. Answers can display characteristics from more than one level, and where this happens markers must use the guidance below and their professional judgement to decide which level is most appropriate.

Placing a mark within a level

After a level has been decided on, the next stage is to decide on the mark within the level. The instructions below tell you how to reward responses within a level. However, where a level has specific guidance about how to place an answer within a level, always follow that guidance. Statements relating to the treatment of students who do not fully meet the requirements of the question are also shown in the indicative content section of each levels based mark scheme. These statements should be considered alongside the levels descriptors.

Markers should be prepared to use the full range of marks available in a level and not restrict marks to the middle. Markers should start at the middle of the level (or the upper-middle mark if there is an even number of marks) and then move the mark up or down to find the best mark. To do this, they should take into account how far the answer meets the requirements of the level:

- If it meets the requirements fully, markers should be prepared to award full marks within the level. The top mark in the level is used for answers that are as good as can realistically be expected within that level
- If it only barely meets the requirements of the level, markers should consider awarding marks at the bottom of the level. The bottom mark in the level is used for answers that are the weakest that can be expected within that level

The middle marks of the level are used for answers that have a reasonable match to the descriptor. This might represent a balance between some characteristics of the level that are fully met and others that are only barely met.

Mark scheme

Buddhism

Question number	Answer	Reject	Mark
1(a)	Award one mark for providing a way. Award a second mark for development of the way. Up to a maximum of four marks. • Buddhists study their sacred texts (1) to gain a deeper understanding of the Buddha's teachings (1). • Buddhists use sacred texts to gain insight into the nature of reality (1), because, for example, they contain instructions on meditation (1). • Buddhists refer to these texts to understand the principles of right action (1). Buddhist scriptures outline ethical principles and precepts (1). Accept any other valid response.	• Repeated way/ development. • Development that does not relate to both the way given and the question.	(4)

Question number	Answer	Mark
1(b)	Students will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: • The example of Bodhisattvas inspires Buddhists to cultivate a sense of empathy with, and commitment to, alleviating the suffering of others. It encourages them to actively engage in acts of kindness, generosity, and selflessness • Bodhisattva practice involves cultivating an awakened mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Those who follow this example commit themselves to the path of	(6)

	compassion, wisdom, and liberation, while working tirelessly for the liberation of others • Bodhisattvas embrace all sentient beings without discrimination. Buddhists who follow this path seek to develop an attitude of loving-kindness for all beings, which helps to break down barriers of race, nationality, and other divisions. Accept any other valid response.	
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Mark	Descriptor
0	• No rewardable material.
1-3	• Limited use of religious terms. • Description of relevant religion, beliefs and values is mostly satisfactory. • Gives a partial explanation of the significance and influence of beliefs and values.
4-6	• Use of religious terms is appropriate and shows understanding. • Explanation of relevant religion, beliefs and values is comprehensive. • Explanation of significance and influence of beliefs and values is assured and comprehensive.

Question number	Indicative content
1(c)	The student must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. The student will be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and its beliefs when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. The student will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: • Buddhism emphasises the importance of a spiritual community for support, learning, and practising together. The sangha provides a sense of belonging, where practitioners can interact with like-minded individuals who share their goals and values. This community offers guidance, encouragement, and opportunities for discussions and sharing experiences

	• Monks and nuns who have renounced worldly attachments and dedicate their lives to the pursuit of enlightenment serve as role models for lay practitioners. Observing their dedication, ethical conduct, and spiritual progress can inspire others on their own spiritual path • Joining the sangha, whether as a monastic or a lay practitioner, can provide a structured environment conducive to spiritual practice. Monastic life is designed to minimise distractions and facilitate focused meditation and study. Lay practitioners can benefit from the sangha by attending meditation sessions, retreats, and teachings offered by monks and nuns • The sangha represents a lifestyle of renunciation and detachment from worldly concerns. By taking refuge in the sangha, practitioners symbolically commit themselves to the path of letting go of attachments and desires, which are seen as obstacles to enlightenment • Many Buddhists will say that Buddhism is an individual path. Each individual must choose what resources suit them best for their own journey towards Enlightenment, and some may feel there is little value in seeking the support and advice of others • Not every Buddhist has access to a monastic community, and may live isolated from fellow Buddhists. Nevertheless, it is part of Buddhist teaching that, through cultivating their own merit, and perhaps by reading the Dhammapada, everyone is able to make spiritual progress. Accept any other valid response. (10 marks)
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Mark	Descriptor
0	No rewardable material.
1–3	• Demonstrates isolated elements of understanding of religion and belief. • Identifies information/issues and makes superficial connections between a limited range of elements within the question. • Judgements are supported by generic arguments to produce a conclusion that is not fully justified.

4-6	• Demonstrates limited understanding of religion and belief. • Deconstructs religious information/issues, and makes superficial connections between many but not all of the elements in the question. • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made. Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence, much of which may be superficial leading to a conclusion that is not fully justified.
7-8	• Demonstrates accurate understanding of religion and belief. • Deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between many but not all of the elements in the question. • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of many but not all of elements in the question. Judgements are supported by the appraisal of evidence, some of which may be superficial leading to a partially justified conclusion.
9-10	• Demonstrates sustained accurate and thorough understanding of religion and belief. • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between the full range of elements in the question. • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question. Judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence, leading to a fully justified conclusion.

Question number	Answer	Reject	Mark
2(a)	Award one mark for providing a ritual. Award a second mark for development of the ritual. Up to a maximum of four marks. • Buddhists visit temples and monasteries to offer fresh flowers (1) as a sign of reverence and respect to the Buddha (1) • They engage in chanting Buddhist scriptures and	• Repeated ritual/ development. • Development that does not relate to both the ritual given and the question.	(4)

	sutras (1), which emphasise the teachings of impermanence (1) • Meditation sessions are held (1) to reflect on the teachings of the Buddha (1). Accept any other valid response.		
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Question number	Answer	Mark
2(b)	Students will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: • Visiting sites associated with the life of the Buddha allows pilgrims to connect with his story on a personal level. Walking in the footsteps of the Buddha and visiting places like his birthplace, the site of his enlightenment, and his parinirvana, can deepen one's understanding of his teachings and the path he followed • Pilgrimage often evokes strong feelings of devotion and inspiration. Being in the presence of sacred relics, statues, and monuments can enhance a pilgrim's faith and devotion to the Buddha and his teachings • Many Buddhists believe that engaging in pilgrimage and visiting sacred sites can lead to the accumulation of positive karma. This is believed to contribute to one's spiritual growth and progress on the path to enlightenment. Accept any other valid response.	(6)

Mark	Descriptor
0	• No rewardable material.
1-3	• Limited use of religious terms. • Description of relevant religion, beliefs and values is mostly satisfactory. • Gives a partial explanation of the significance and influence of beliefs and values.
4-6	• Use of religious terms is appropriate and shows understanding. • Explanation of relevant religion, beliefs and values is comprehensive. • Explanation of significance and influence of beliefs and values is assured and comprehensive.

Question number	Indicative content
2(c)	The student must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. The student will be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and belief when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. The student will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: • Festivals often revolve around important events and teachings in the life of the Buddha. By commemorating these events, Buddhists are reminded of the core principles of the Dharma, including the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and the importance of compassion, mindfulness, and wisdom • Festivals bring together Buddhists from various backgrounds and walks of life. Sharing in the celebration with a community of like-minded individuals fosters a sense of belonging and encourages practitioners to support each other on their spiritual journey • Festivals often emphasise virtues such as compassion, generosity, and gratitude. Engaging in acts of kindness, making offerings, and participating in charitable activities during festivals help Buddhists cultivate these virtues, which they believe are important for their spiritual development • Festivals provide opportunities for Buddhists to practise mindfulness by being fully present in the moment. Engaging in rituals, ceremonies, and meditation during these occasions encourages self-reflection and introspection, enabling practitioners to deepen their understanding of themselves and their path • Some Buddhists might say that the journey to enlightenment is a personal one that involves an inner struggle. They might conclude that when the focus of Buddhists is on this individual search for enlightenment, there is no need for it to be marked with shared festivals • Some Buddhists may be concerned that festivals can be occasions for excess. This could increase craving rather than reduce it, and be an impediment rather than a help on the journey to enlightenment.

	Accept any other valid response. (10 marks)
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Mark	Descriptor
0	No rewardable material.
1–3	• Demonstrates isolated elements of understanding of religion and belief. • Identifies information/issues and makes superficial connections between a limited range of elements within the question. • Judgements are supported by generic arguments to produce a conclusion that is not fully justified.
4–6	• Demonstrates limited understanding of religion and belief. • Deconstructs religious information/issues, and makes superficial connections between many but not all of the elements in the question. • Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made. Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence, much of which may be superficial leading to a conclusion that is not fully justified.
7–8	• Demonstrates accurate understanding of religion and belief. • Deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between many but not all of the elements in the question. • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of many but not all of elements in the question. Judgements are supported by the appraisal of evidence, some of which may be superficial leading to a partially justified conclusion.
9–10	• Demonstrates sustained accurate and thorough understanding of religion and belief. • Critically deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between the full range of elements in the question. • Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question. Judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence, leading to a fully justified conclusion.

Question number	Answer	Reject	Mark
3(a)	Award one mark for providing a way. Award a second mark for development of the way. Up to a maximum of four marks. - The primary practice involves spinning the prayer wheel clockwise (1). This motion is thought to symbolise the continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (1) - Buddhists often spin the prayer wheel mindfully (1) focusing their attention on the mantra or prayer contained within it (1) - While spinning the prayer wheel, practitioners may recite the mantra verbally (1) and may visualise the blessings radiating outward as the wheel turns (1). Accept any other valid response.	- Repeated way/ development. - Development that does not relate to both the way given and the question.	(4)

Question number	Answer	Mark
3(b)	Students will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: - In private meditation, Buddhists have the opportunity to experience insights and realisations directly, without external distractions or influences. This direct experience can be thought fundamental to understanding the nature of reality and the selfless nature of existence - Private meditation allows individuals to tailor their practice to their own needs and preferences. They can choose specific meditation techniques that	(6)

	resonate with them and adjust the duration and intensity of their practice accordingly • Practising mindfulness in private meditation sessions helps individuals bring that quality of presence and awareness into their everyday activities. This enhances their ability to remain present, make conscious choices, and respond skilfully to life's challenges. Accept any other valid response.	
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Mark	Descriptor
0	• No rewardable material.
1-3	• Limited use of religious terms. • Description of relevant religion, beliefs and values is mostly satisfactory. • Gives a partial explanation of the significance and influence of beliefs and values.
4-6	• Use of religious terms is appropriate and shows understanding. • Explanation of relevant religion, beliefs and values is comprehensive. • Explanation of significance and influence of beliefs and values is assured and comprehensive.

Question number	Indicative content
3(c)	The student must underpin their analysis and evaluation with knowledge and understanding. The student will be required to demonstrate thorough knowledge and understanding as well as accuracy of religion and belief when responding to the question and in meeting AO2 descriptors described below. The student will develop responses using ideas/reasoning/arguments such as: • There isn't a single standardised design for a vihara that applies universally. The design of a vihara can vary greatly based on factors such as the specific Buddhist tradition, such as Theravada and Mahayana, and the specific cultural context

	• The design of a vihara can be dependent on the available resources. Whilst viharas are places of gathering and prayer, they do not have to contain any specific decoration or ornamentation where local circumstances make that impossible • One of the central features of a vihara is the meditation hall. This is considered important because it is where monks or nuns gather for meditation, study, and communal activities. The meditation hall often serves as the spiritual heart of the vihara • Many viharas have a shrine room dedicated to housing images or statues of the Buddha and other revered figures, which is an important aspect of Buddhism for many Buddhists. This room serves as a place for worship, offerings, and daily rituals • Viharas often include spaces where monks or nuns can gather to study and receive teachings. These areas are important because they facilitate the transmission of Buddhist teachings and discussions on the dharma • What is essential in the design of a vihara is that it supports the spiritual and communal needs of the resident monks or nuns. The design should facilitate meditation, study, worship, and communal living in alignment with the principles and teachings of Buddhism. Accept any other valid response. (10 marks)
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Mark	Descriptor
0	No rewardable material.
1–3	• Demonstrates isolated elements of understanding of religion and belief. • Identifies information/issues and makes superficial connections between a limited range of elements within the question. • Judgements are supported by generic arguments to produce a conclusion that is not fully justified.
4–6	• Demonstrates limited understanding of religion and belief. • Deconstructs religious information/issues, and makes superficial connections between many but not all of the elements in the question.

	Judgements of a limited range of elements in the question are made. Judgements are supported by an attempt to appraise evidence, much of which may be superficial leading to a conclusion that is not fully justified.
7-8	- Demonstrates accurate understanding of religion and belief. - Deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between many but not all of the elements in the question. - Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of many but not all of elements in the question. Judgements are supported by the appraisal of evidence, some of which may be superficial leading to a partially justified conclusion.
9-10	- Demonstrates sustained accurate and thorough understanding of religion and belief. - Critically deconstructs religious information/issues, leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning that consider different viewpoints and that make connections between the full range of elements in the question. - Constructs coherent and reasoned judgements of the full range of elements in the question. Judgements are fully supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence, leading to a fully justified conclusion.

