
AS

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

7061/2A – Study of religion: Buddhism
Report on the Examination

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General comments

There were some very impressive scripts and some answers achieved full marks, but there were also some that did not focus on the question, or did not apply the material to the question asked. Few appeared to have any difficulty completing the paper in the time available, and every question was tackled by every student. On some scripts the answers to the questions varied greatly in quality, but there were no questions which were consistently answered poorly. There was good use of technical terms in many answers, but also some where attempts to use the correct terms resulted in confusion, and in some cases in answers saying the exact opposite to what appeared to be intended. It was, however, generally possible to make sense out of what the student was trying to say. There were only a few scripts that were difficult to read.

Question 1

Part 01.1

Most answers showed a clear understanding of ahimsa, although some confused it with metta – loving kindness. In general, answers were well-informed about Buddhist attitudes to abortion and embryo research, but some did not make a link between these attitudes and the underlying belief. A common weakness was to offer one-dimensional answers which, for example, only reported that a belief in ahimsa means a rejection of abortion; such answers ignored debates in Buddhism about the harm pregnancy could do to the mother or the suffering birth could cause to the child. Some excellent answers considered these issues, among others, and /or focused on the importance of the intention behind, for example, abortion, embryo research or pre-implantation genetic diagnosis.

Part 01.2

Some answers focused closely on the material prescribed for study: better rebirth and Nirvana, and the arhat and bodhisattva ideals. Others were less focused and some dealt with how life might be lived rather than its purpose. Some ignored the claim presented for debate and considered which purpose is more important; some offered the view that the teaching was confusing because it was difficult to understand, rather than having a point of view about whether it was confusing because it was not coherent or was contradictory. A minority offered no point of view at all and simply summarised some different ideas about what the purpose of life might be; that meant that the answer showed no AO2 skills and the marks which could be awarded were very limited.

Question 2

Part 02.1

Some answers were focused and well-informed and included sections on different roles of the monastic Sangha, such as: enabling the development of the monk or nun; preserving the teaching of the Buddha, and educating the lay people. Only a minority included the example of the Wat Phra Dhammakaya movement which is prescribed for study and some answers generally lacked evidence and examples to support the points made. Weaker answers tended to ignore the word 'monastic' and wrote more about the activities of the lay Buddhists, and some were very brief and lacked detail.

Part 02.2

There were some very good answers to this question which clearly expressed the different views of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism. Some less successful answers did not refer to Gautama Buddha specifically, but wrote generally about the authority of the Buddha. Some answers focused on Gautama's instruction to test his teaching through experience, pointing out that the authority of that teaching would therefore remain even if it were somehow proved that Gautama had never actually existed. Other attempts to argue that the teaching, rather than the teacher, had authority were less successful; this was often because they argued both that the Pali Canon got its authority from Gautama and that it replaced him as authority.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.