

# A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

(7062)

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## Example responses and commentaries

### Paper 2A Buddhism

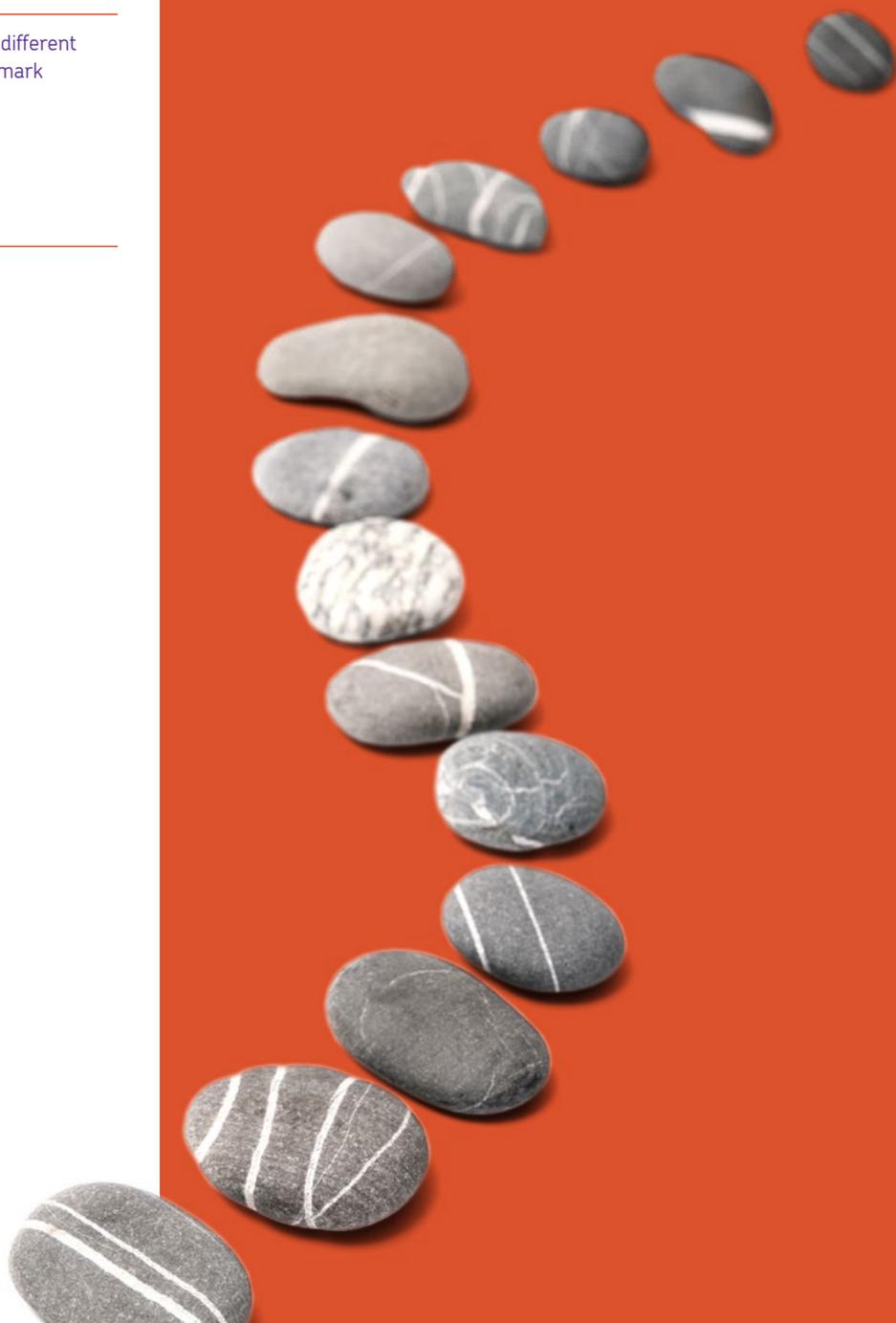
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See a range of student responses that demonstrate how different levels are achieved and understand how to interpret the mark scheme.

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# EXAMPLE RESPONSES



## 10 mark questions: A01

### Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate, relevant and fully developed in breadth and depth with very good use of detailed and relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate</li><li>• Where appropriate, good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion is demonstrated</li><li>• Clear and coherent presentation of ideas with precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 4 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate and mostly relevant with good development in breadth and depth shown through good use of relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.</li><li>• Where appropriate, alternative views and/or scholarly opinion are explained</li><li>• Mostly clear and coherent presentation of ideas with good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 3 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding is generally accurate and relevant with development in breadth and/or depth shown through some use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate</li><li>• Where appropriate, there is some familiarity with the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion</li><li>• Some organisation of ideas and coherence with reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 2 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding is limited, with limited development in breadth and/or depth shown through limited use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate</li><li>• Where appropriate, limited reference may be made to alternative views and/or scholarly opinion</li><li>• Limited organisation of ideas and coherence and use of subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 1 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge and critical understanding is basic with little or no development</li><li>• There may be a basic awareness of alternative views and/or scholarly opinion</li><li>• Isolated elements of accurate and relevant information and basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

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Examine the changing role of the monastic Sangha in Thailand.

**[10 marks]**

The monastic sangha literally means community, in a traditional sense the sangha is a place where Buddhists find refuge in an attempt to attain enlightenment. However over the changing years in Thailand their role has altered slightly as a result of the changing needs of the world.

A monastic would traditionally renounce all possessions other than robes to wear, a water strainer, a needle to sew robes up and an alms bowl to collect donations from the lay people so that they can create positive karma phala (karmic fruit). However there is now less emphasis on the traditional roles of the monastic sangha, as that society has evolved. There is now more of an emphasis on teaching the younger generation and for bhikkus to offer support for the lay people, as life becomes more challenging and demanding.

Furthermore charitable work has increased as a result of the dominance of capitalist systems, fewer people are using the middle way and following the eightfold path, therefore there is a need for kusala (good actions) and performing acts of dana (generosity).

Equally the role of the monastic sangha in Thailand has changed because of the changing role of women. Before women were unable to be ordained under the 1928 sangha act, although some were able to become sameneri's, with the rise of western feminism there has been a pressing need for change in the monastic sangha.

Dhammananda for example was one of the first ordained bhikkhunis and has since encouraged the change of the role of monastics in the sangha. Particularly in Thailand where women in the workforce are higher than the average amount of women in Asia in work. It makes it seem almost necessary that women are given a similar role in the sangha, although still discriminated against having to follow 311 rules rather than men who follow 227 rules. Furthermore the sakyadhita movement has altered the traditional role of the monastic sangha advocating women's rights and helping to attain ordained status for female monks in the sangha.

Although ultimately there is still a sense of traditionality in the role of the monastic sangha in Thailand as there is still an emphasis on meditation/bhavana devotion and chanting the dharma to show commitment to Buddhism. However the make up of the sangha has changed in recent times highlighting it's importance to benefit Thai society.

The introduction briefly states what a Sangha traditionally is – a place of refuge.

Paragraph 1- traces a change from a place of spiritual development of monks to communities teaching and supporting the lay community. Many other answers regarded education of boys as having been a key part of the Sangha's role until it was taken over by the state.

Paragraph 2 centres, rather vaguely, on the charitable role of the Sangha.

Paragraph 3 is the best part of the answer and focuses on the role of women.

The conclusion tries to strike a balance between the traditional and developing roles.

The answer is a satisfactory length 393 words.

**Level 5, 9 marks**

## 15 mark questions: A02

### Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised</li><li>• Perceptive discussion of different views, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought with critical analysis</li><li>• There is an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the reasoning</li><li>• Precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 4 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised</li><li>• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought, with some critical analysis</li><li>• There is an appropriate evaluation supported by the reasoning</li><li>• Good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 3 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A general response to the issue(s) raised</li><li>• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought</li><li>• An evaluation is made that is consistent with some of the reasoning</li><li>• Reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 2 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A limited response to the issue(s) raised</li><li>• Presentation of a point of view relevant to the issue with some supporting evidence and argument</li><li>• Limited attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary</li></ul>
Level 1 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A basic response to the issue(s) raised</li><li>• A point of view is stated, with some evidence or reason(s) in support</li><li>• Some attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary</li></ul>
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

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'Buddhism's attitude to other faiths is generally positive.'

Evaluate this claim.

**[15 marks]**

Buddhism's attitudes to other faiths is generally positive, as it lacks a god there is no ultimate being which dictates circumstance and therefore reduces conflict with other faiths.

The Dalai lama was taught to follow only one religion however as he grew up he realised the danger that this causes. The one truth he came to understand was religious tolerance is essential, to create a better world a 'enemies are our best teachers' we can learn metta and karuna (compassion and loving kindness) from other religions which in turn will aid our spiritual growth. Furthermore the Dalai Lama attend world religion meetings to show positive Buddhist attitudes to other faiths and claims he has learnt kindness and compassion from Islam and Hinduism.

Similarly King Asoka showed how Buddhist attitudes to other faiths are generally positive as after he witnessed 200,000 deaths he converted to Buddhism. By doing so he created peace poles which read 'let peace prevail' all over the world in order to highlight the essential nature of tolerance. In his twelfth edict it is understood that he spoke of the importance to not criticise other religions but instead let them grow and develop so that we can all learn from them. Ultimately all religions are founded on similar ethical beliefs to do the most loving thing, which shows the communication between religions. Consequently showing how Buddhist attitudes to other faiths is usually tolerant.

Equally it is understood in Buddhism to create peace in the world there is no place for going against ahimsa (non harm) as war and fighting creates negative karma phala (karmic fruit) and even if these beliefs are not acted on they are still akusala (bad actions) as they hinder Buddhists on their quest to enlightenment. As religious intolerance falls under one of the three mental poisons: hatred which essentially prevents Buddhists from being free of the samsaric wheel of rebirth. Furthermore negative attitudes to other faiths goes against sila (morality) as it is not right action, right livelihood or right speech, again all hindering chances of enlightenment. Buddha's teachings were supposed to encourage people to 'find their own salvation with diligence' not act negatively to other religions.

However in recent cases Buddhism does not appear to be particularly tolerant of other faiths. In Myanmar at the moment all the Rohingya Muslims are being persecuted and forced to move to Bangladesh. However with such an influx of people moving Bangladesh cannot cope and no longer accepting refugees therefore making them stateless. This is a particularly controversial matter as their president Aung San Suu Kyi is a Nobel peace prize winner yet is allowing all of this to occur in Myanmar, therefore showing Buddhist intolerance to other faiths.

Similarly in Sri Lanka the BBS (a Buddhist organisation) is also persecuting Muslims as a result of a Buddhist monk and businessman arguing over trade. There is now racial tension within the country which is leaving many Muslims homeless and unsafe. Consequently further showing negative attitudes towards other faiths as it is believed the authorities are encouraging the BBS to act.

To conclude Buddhism on the whole is very tolerant to other faiths, as it's primary teachings encourage this. However there is a small minority of people who are acting unjustly, ethically cleansing groups with the justification of religion applied afterwards. This is not a true reflection of Buddhist views but merely a diversion from it.

The structure used in this answer is not always successful for evaluation questions because, it can become a list of arguments in support then those against. That is a Level 3 style approach as it lacks critical analysis.

However, there is a clear attempt to draw the evidence together in the final paragraph which shows clear, effective critical insight, drawing directly on what has gone before, and applying the evidence previously presented.

**Level 5. 14 marks**

## 25 mark questions

**Target: AO1:4:** Knowledge and understanding of approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

**Target: AO2:** Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

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'Buddhist statements about the Trikaya, the three bodies of the Buddha, are non-cognitive.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy.

**[25 marks]**

Buddhist statements about the triyaka, the three bodies of the Buddha are partially non-cognitive. Although the sambhogakaya (the body of enjoyment/joy) and the dharmakaya (the body of the enlightened mind) can be accepted in a non-cognitive or non-factual way as they are concepts rather than physical beings. By contrast to the Nirmanakaya (the historical body of the Buddha) is to be understood as cognitive as it is the factual claim that the Nirmanakaya is the body of Siddartha Gotama.

Claims of the Nirmanakaya can be understood cognitively under the Vienna Circles' verification principle. These are statements which are synthetic making a judgement a posteriori after evidence and analytical making a judgement a priori in it's prepositions. Both types of statements are subject to strong and weak verification, strong being one where there is direct evidence for and weak usually historical claims which seem to be plausible through the little conclusive evidence there is for the statement. A J Ayer puts emphasis on the meaningfulness of a statement rather than whether it is true or not with the parable of the gardener. In relation to the Nirmanakaya Buddhists are claiming that this body was in fact the historical, physical body of Siddartha Gotama, who lived on this earth and produced his teachings for the dharma and showed himself as an enlightened being. This statement has weak verification however is should be taken as a cognitive statement.

Equally the Nirmanakaya is to be taken as a cognitive statement under Flew's justification principle. By stating that claims should be subject to falsibility rather than verification as there needs to be an understanding of what evidence could be given to prove a claim false. Much like statements of science they need to be subject to empirical evidence which can ultimately act to falsify a statement. In the case of the Nirmanakaya as a factual statement of the historical body of the Buddha it is open to the falsification principle is it is not a metaphysical term, which a lot of religious claims are. Instead evidence can be used to disprove the truth behind the statement.

However it can be argued that the sambhogakaya should be taken in a non-cognitive way as it is merely a speculation rather than a statement which infers fact. This links in with Aquinas view of taking language to be part of an analogy. As humans we cannot fully comprehend the supernatural element of religious claims therefore instead of taking them cognitively they should be broken down into analogy of ambition and proportionality. In terms of god we can attribute god's love not univocally (being the same every time) and equivocally (being different every time). Simply he has love which is beyond us but present as we also have love. Then

proportionally we understand god's omnipotence is superior to ours as the ultimate being. Therefore in relation to the claim of the sambhogakaya Aquinas' language theory of analogy can be applied as a heavenly Buddha mahayaka's believe in the Bodhisattva's (enlightened beings) who have power and the love beyond human comprehension yet forms such as Avolakitshvera(Buddha of compassion) analogy can be applied to this claim.

Furthermore the Dharmakaya should be taken as a non-cognitive claim as it falls into Tillich's view that language is symbolic. He states that religious claims are often symbolic in meaning they reveal power which is not always obvious and also allow for deeper spiritual and emotional connection. For example a country's flag show's a country's power but it also symbolises patriotism among a nation. In relation to the dharmakaya this statement can be reviewed as symbolic as it is the enlightened mind which symbolises a state of bliss, essentially nirvana/enlightenment and freedom from the samsaric wheel of rebirth and free from karma (volitional actions).

Equally the Dharmakaya and sambhogakaya can be taken as a non-cognitive statement in relation to Wittgenstein's language games as those outside of the Buddhist faith are not expected to understand the value of a claim. Wittgenstein's view of language is the context in which it is used rather than whether it can be verified or falsified. For example at a construction site someone shouting 'bricks' doesn't literally mean bricks they are simply inferring they need more bricks thus highlighting how only those within the language games can fully understand what a statement means. When applied to the sambhogakaya and the dharmakaya only those in the language game of Buddhism understand the spiritual relevance and power they have as they are not factual historical claims, rather concepts.

Similarly Hare's view of Bliks supports the idea that the Nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and the dharmakaya can all be taken non cognitively. Bliks are someone's formulated views of the world, Hare uses the parable of the lunatic to outline this view. As a student is convinced his professors are going to kill him, but his friend tries to show him they are good people, but he won't believe it because of his bliks of the world. All religions have bliks which non-believers cannot understand. Therefore in relation to the dharmakaya, Nirmanakaya and the sambhogakaya these claims are non-cognitive as Buddhists have bliks about the trikaya and won't change their view regardless of whether the claim is proven true or false.

To conclude Buddhist statements of the trikaya are partially non-cognitive. As the Nirmanakaya is a factual claim of the historical Buddha it is subject to cognitive evaluation of verification and falsification. However the sambhogakaya are essentially concepts rather than cognitive claims and are therefore to be taken non cognitively either as a symbol, through analogy or language games.

It is always important when assessing answers to bear in mind that they are not prepared answers but responses to an unseen task under examination conditions.

The information base for this response is very strong. It applies very good knowledge and understanding of the Trikaya and relevant views of religious language, its understanding of cognitive and non-cognitive is largely implicit, but it starts with a basic distinction. This is a fully informed response –

**AO1 = L5, 10 marks**

The approach to the issue discusses statements about a Nirmanakaya Buddha – Gautama, and shows how such statements can be seen as cognitive and subject to weak verification or falsification.

The section on analogical use of language is less successful because it is not self-evident why this would mean that the statements were non-cognitive. However, it does establish that the words are not straightforwardly informative.

This is a very full and very long answer (estimated at well over the expected 900 words). The critical analysis comes in the structure of the answer and the application of the various theories of language to the statements about the Trikaya.

**AO2 = Level 5, 15 marks** – Under examination conditions it would be unreasonable to expect more.

## Get help and support

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