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# GCSE

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8062/11: Paper 1 Buddhism  
Report on the Examination

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**Question 01.1**

Over 89% gave the correct response of Dhamma (Dharma) which was response B for the Buddha's teachings. This is very pleasing and shows the importance of learning the technical vocabulary.

**Question 01.2**

It is pleasing to note that over 83% of students achieved full marks on this 2 mark response question. Many suggested that the main cause of Siddhartha giving up his life of luxury in the Palace was the Four Sights that he saw. Another favourite response was that he sought the religious or holy life having seen the holy man as a 'sight'. Students may have missed out on 2 marks for this question if they repeated, even if phrased slightly differently, a reason they had already stated in their first point.

**Question 01.3**

This was an 'influences' question so to respond with information or a basic list of teachings on the Bodhisattva, however accurate, would not elicit many marks. Students needed to be aware of how a belief in Bodhisattvas might influence Buddhists today such as being a role model, being a model for compassionate behaviour or maybe using the Bodhisattva influence as a guide to help others achieve enlightenment. Some students incorporated the six paramitas (earthly ones) in their responses which was credit worthy. A few responded with the idea that Bodhisattvas can be male or female and this suggests some levels of equality within the Mahayana school of the Buddhist faith which was an interesting angle, and again, a credit worthy one to take. Equally, some students mentioned the qualities of Bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri that may influence Buddhists more directly offering high level responses.

**Question 01.4**

There was a wide selection of responses to this question about the Pure Land. Some identified beliefs about Amitabha/Amida Buddha and many gave responses which included depictions of the Pure Land for believers. Some students were able to use technical terms such as the nembutsu and sukhavati to good effect, whereas some students may have taken a guess that the Pure Land is where Buddhists go once they are enlightened, whereas Buddhists go there to be one step or rebirth from enlightenment or as a possible 'easier' route to enlightenment. Some students gave very generalised responses which could have come from any Buddhist tradition rather than specifically the Pure Land and a few identified, incorrectly, that Pure Land Buddhism was a Theravada school of Buddhism and wrote about Arhats. It might be helpful to ensure students know which are the main Mahayana schools of Buddhism, as distinct from the one Theravada school.

**Question 01.5**

This question produced many interesting answers showing excellent evaluative skills of some of the issues surrounding the concept of enlightenment for Buddhists. Also, examiners noted the increased breadth and depth in responses to 1.5 there appeared to be this year compared to last year. Students were also able to provide good support from their knowledge and understanding of aspects of Siddhartha Gautama's life which eventually led him to becoming enlightened as the Buddha. Other responses appeared to reveal some gaps in knowledge about the enlightenment generally and these were vague at times too, some not even being based on Buddhism. The level

1 and 2 answers tended to concentrate only on what enlightenment is and how you have to be dedicated alongside the phrase that the Buddha achieved enlightenment so others can too. Some responses identified the different 'routes' to enlightenment and in the Theravada tradition, where you have to ordain as a monk, this may be more difficult generally to reach enlightenment than in any of the Mahayana schools. In fact some high level responses provided very good examples from different Buddhist traditions which might affect how difficult (or not) it is to reach enlightenment. There were different routes students could take to reach the top level but these types of responses were thought-provoking and astute. Some students suggested that enlightenment was open to all as the key central practice of meditation was accessible to all, even if a person needed a teacher for such a practice.

### **Question 02.1**

Again, just over 89% ticked the correct box of 'Karuna' meaning compassion. It is very pleasing to see good knowledge of specific technical language in the Buddhist faith.

### **Question 02.2**

This question was accessible to almost every student who took this exam. Responses ranged from chanting and recitation of scriptures to meditation and performing puja. It was pleasing to see the word 'puja' used as well as 'worship' suggesting centres and students are getting familiar with some of the technical vocabulary as second nature.

### **Question 02.3**

Clearly the way that this question was phrased allowed for a more holistic approach as well as an approach which identified the two different Buddhist traditions of Tibet and Japan separately in the responses. Many identified the sky burial ritual in Tibet as a way of mourning the dead and proceeded to write with some degree of authority on the matter. The funeral procedures in Japan were done a little less successfully with some degree of vagueness at times. Picking out bones from the ashes, the chanting of 'Namo Amida Butso' and readings from the Lotus Sutra characterised the more competent responses from some students.

### **Question 02.4**

This question proved to be entirely accessible to virtually all students (around 39% achieving full marks in comparison with around 17% on 01.4) and was generally answered well with some students including a great deal of specific detail on meditation in support of why this practice is important to many Buddhists. Many responses earned four or five marks as they provided references to a sacred writing or another source of Buddhist teaching and belief. A deeper compassion for others, reducing suffering levels, developing loving kindness and seeing into the reality of all things were just some of the excellent points of reference response showed. Again, it is pleasing to record the use of the meditation terms Samatha and Vipassana as an integral part of many responses, and that some students were able to directly quote from the scriptures too, such as the Dhammapada, verse 181.

### **Question 02.5**

This question proved to be a little less successful than 1.5 which could be due to number of factors, not least time as it was the last question on the paper. That said, some of the more effective responses were fulsome in their arguments and fairly well balanced with a justified

conclusion, hence picking up full marks or almost full marks. Many suggested that although there may be peace and quiet at home to meditate, there are still distractions in the mind. Many stated that the home is private and more personal. In the temple when you are with like-minded Buddhists, there is the right atmosphere potentially and a space much more conducive to worship and meditation etc. Some students responded with the temple as the heart of the Buddhist community.

Some students mentioned how peaceful the temple is and therefore conducive to meditation. Study, chanting and talks and guidance from Buddhist monks can be seen to be readily available for the devotee. Disadvantages mentioned were that worship in Buddhism can be an essentially singular practice so why not at home where many Buddhists have their own shrine anyway? Regularity of worship can be best conducted at home too as a temple might not be close enough to visit regularly as well as the commitment of time that not all Buddhists could manage. Some of the more interesting responses highlighted the question of whether Buddhists were actually closer to enlightenment if they meditated at a temple than they would be if they meditated at home. These are the main points with which students justified their alternative arguments. A good number of students managed to make some connections between various parts of the Buddhism course - all credit worthy and often leading to some very balanced responses.

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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