



A Level

Religious Studies

7062/2A Study of Religion and Dialogues: Buddhism

Report on the examination

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General comments

All questions were marked with direct reference to the published Level Descriptors for AO1 and AO2.

This paper was a very accessible, and almost all students were able to write some creditable material for all questions. There were some very accomplished scripts for this paper, and some outstanding individual answers. Students demonstrated AO1 knowledge and understanding of topics generally comparable to previous years. Most were able to discuss alternative views for AO2 answers, and to draw on different sections of the specification for dialogues answers.

For A Level AO1 answers, the trigger 'examine' requires students to show accurate, relevant and developed knowledge and understanding. Those who merely outlined a belief or concept were unlikely to progress beyond Level 3 at best.

For AO2 answers, the quality of critical analysis contributes to the level of response achieved. For a discussion to be 'perceptive', students needed to be able to consider the implications of, and objections to, the ideas they offered to support or reject the statement in the question.

For AO2 and dialogues answers, some students believe that critical analysis can be achieved by adding on to each paragraph "This is a weak/ strong argument...". Where this led to genuine critical analysis, it was, of course, credited. However, some students who used this formulaic approach did not understand that there needed to be some meaningful reflection on the evidence or argument presented, in the context of a dialogue between alternative viewpoints. Simply saying 'this is a weak argument because some people disagree with it' is not critical analysis.

In order to reach the higher levels for the AO1 element in dialogues essays, students needed to show accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of both philosophy or ethics and Buddhism; less successful answers were sometimes lacking development in one of the two. Answers to dialogues questions were, in general, more accomplished than single assessment objective answers by the same student. Dialogues essays were, in general, more likely to show evidence of planning, and were structured more coherently.

There were many examples this year of students choosing to answer questions in a different order to the exam paper. This is wholly acceptable and allows students to navigate through the exam in a way that accommodates their own particular strengths and needs. It has no effect on the way marks are awarded.

A small number of word-processed scripts showed evidence of some artificial intelligence generated content. These were always referred to AQA's irregularities team.

01.1 Examine the significance for Buddhists of Gautama Buddha's authority as the 'enlightened one'. [10 marks]

Almost all students were able to write some creditable material. The best students described both the authority of the Buddha as the enlightened one and the significance of this for Buddhists. Many pointed to events in the life of the Buddha and provided a range of examples of stories and teachings to elucidate the reasons for The Buddha's authority. They discussed The Buddha as role model and source of authority using teachings to highlight the significance of the belief. Less successful answers were very general and often lacked development. These responses were often a retelling of the life of the Buddha without much development about his significance or authority.

01.2 'Buddhists should always act with good intention'. Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]

The majority of students understood the topic of the question and were able to offer alternative points of view about the importance of intention and the importance of following the Five Precepts. Fewer addressed the 'always' aspect of the question, but those who did produced focused, reasoned arguments that showed perceptive discussion with reference to specific situations where intentions might be flawed and used the three poisons as evidence of why this might be the case. Less successful answers tended to explain that Buddhists should always act with good intention often repeating the same argument in different ways.

02.1 Examine the influence of pluralism on Buddhist relations with other faiths. [10 marks]

Most students could describe pluralism and set it in the context of inclusivist and exclusivist views of other faiths. There were some excellent answers which considered how pluralism influences specific examples of relations with other faiths, for example, the situation in Myanmar, the Dalai Lamas view about other faiths and the Nichiren Buddhist perspective. The majority of students described how exclusivism and inclusivism lead to views about other faiths but did not go beyond that to discuss relations with other faith communities. These answers were mostly 'generally accurate and relevant' (Level 3), but fell short of Level 4 'accurate, mostly relevant with good development'. Some students did not address the focus on influence, and merely outlined aspects of inclusivism and exclusivism, which answers were clearly, at best, limited (Level 2). A significant number of answers focused on, or referred to, relations with other Buddhists, which was not relevant to the question and therefore not creditable.

02.2 'Buddhism is no longer a source of truth and moral values.' Evaluate this claim. [15 marks]

The best answers considered truth and moral values as separate issues, and after discussing a range of evidence, often reached quite nuanced evaluations, for example that Buddhism can

be used to support scientific truth, as well remaining a source of existential truth for believers. These answers drew on a range of scholars, Buddhist teachings, ethical and philosophical concepts, and occasionally current affairs. Most answers applied 'truth and moral values' as a single idea, with some vague differentiation when referring to ethics, but where this was done with good critical analysis, students were still able to achieve the higher levels. Almost all students offered alternative views, many with reference to some conservative Buddhist teachings about women compared to more modern teachings.

03.1 'Philosophy cannot support belief in religious sources of authority.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy. [25 marks]

This was the more popular of the Philosophy dialogue options, chosen by a most of the students who sat this qualification.

AO1 element: There were plenty of excellent answers which considered specific sources of authority, examined philosophical challenges to those sources, and evaluated Buddhism responses. Such students drew on a very wide range of scholars and material they had studied. Less successful answers were less focused on specific sources of authority, and many only considered the authority of Buddhism in general, often contrasting this with arguments for the existence of God.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting beliefs about Buddhist sources of authority and the views of different philosophers in perceptive discussion with one another. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2.

04.1 'Buddhism should reject the truth claims of other religions.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy. [25 marks]

This was the less popular of the Philosophy dialogue options.

AO1 element: The best answers understood clearly the concept of 'truth claims' and considered specific truth claims from particular religions to illustrate the discussion. They drew on key Buddhist teachings, key scholars and the concept of upaya to illustrate the idea from a Buddhist perspective, and made links with discussions about religious language, referencing a range of philosophers. Less successful answers either focused on religious language generally, or on rejecting the beliefs of other religions generally. Some answers more or less reworked the

content of their answer to 02.1, missing out any focus on truth claims, and these answers were, at best, limited (Level 2).

AO2 element: Most answers included different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views derived from a wide range of scholars in perceptive discussion with one another and with Buddhist views about other faiths', and their own, truth claims. This kind of argument usually led to an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2. The least successful evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

05.1 'The conscience is the best guide for Buddhists to make decisions about embryo research.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and ethical studies. [25 marks]

This was the less popular of the Ethics dialogue options.

AO1 element: Most students were able to discuss at least one understanding of conscience, and ways that Buddhists might make ethical decisions, often with reference to the Five Precepts, Upaya, and the Six Perfections. The best answers considered religious and non-religious understandings of conscience, and the weaknesses thereof and often referred to specific Buddhist teachings and detailed analysis of ethical theories. They applied these to specific issues with embryo research, including the creation and destruction of life, interference with Karma and the possibility of himsa. Less successful answers were frequently limited to a more or less generic concept of conscience and/ or a superficial use of Buddhist teachings. It should be noted that although this is not a science subject, students were expected to know what embryo research is. Less successful answers sometimes confused embryo research with IVF, designer babies or cloning, such that their answers showed limited relevance to the question.

AO2 element: Most answers included different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, setting views derived from a range of Buddhist approaches to moral decision making in perceptive discussion with different understandings of conscience. The strongest responses focused well on whether or not, or how far, the conscience offers clear guidance for Buddhists concerning embryo research. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, and such answers were limited to level 2.

06.1 'Neither Buddhism nor ethical theories deal effectively with issues of animal life and death.' Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and ethical studies. [25 marks]

This was the more popular of the Ethics dialogue options, chosen by most of the students who sat this qualification. Animal topics are always popular.

AO1 element: There was a wide range of different approaches to this question. Ethical theories referenced included natural moral law and situation ethics, as well as virtue ethics, utilitarianism and Kant. Most answers also referenced the concepts of Ahimsa and karma. The best answers considered one or more Buddhist approaches and one or more non-religious ethical theories and evaluated whether they are effective when dealing with specific issues of animal life and death, including using for food, xenotransplantation, blood sports and medical research. Less successful answers sometimes did not unpack 'issues of animal life and death' and did not address whether or not, and how far, Buddhist and ethical theories were effective.

AO2 element: Most answers included two different views, even those which drew on limited knowledge and understanding. The majority made an evaluation, either at the start or at the end of the essay. The best answers showed excellent critical analysis, using a good understanding of different ethical approaches and Buddhist teaching critically to analyse how effectively they can be applied to specific issues concerned with animal life and death. This kind of argument usually led to a wholly appropriate evaluation fully supported by the arguments presented. A few answers offered only one view, often with limited evidence or argument to support the student's opinion, or did not offer a coherent evaluation, and such answers were limited to level 2. Less successful evaluations were sometimes little more than partially reasoned opinion.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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