



GCSE

Religious Studies (Short Course)

8061/1

Report on the examination

Version: 1.0
June 2025

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01.1

Approximately 70% gave the correct response of craving to this question.

01.2

This question asked for two responses about why Siddhartha Gautama left his life of luxury. Almost all students could identify two responses to this question. Most responses covered the four sights Siddhartha saw as well as his discontentment at living the lifestyle that he was in the palace. The mark scheme accepted two of the four sights as two reasons why Siddhartha left the Palace so many students were able to gain full marks on this question.

01.3

This was answered well too. Most students knew the meaning of *anicca* and could explain why it influences Buddhists today. Some students were able to easily identify that suffering can arise when people resist change and people often want things to stay the same and will live their lives to try and ensure this. Some of the more successful responses mentioned the general Buddhist belief that Buddhists tend to suffer less because they can let go of attachment and this can become habitual. Some students were able to identify a range of responses as to when *anicca* can make an influence on the lives of Buddhists such as when it affects people's minds, thoughts, longings, notions, ideas and ideals. It would appear that students who wrote successful answers wrote two separate answers and left a space between the two points.

01.4

Students, in contrast to 01.3 found this question much more difficult. Many did not appear to understand dependent arising or *paticcasamuppada*. There were many gaps in the exam papers as it was clearly quite a challenging question for many students. Dependent Arising expresses the Buddhist vision of the nature of reality and a Buddhist must understand this concept to become enlightened. Any references made to the Buddhist concept that everything arises, and continues, dependent upon conditions, that is, everything depends on something else for its existence, would have scored well. Some of the responses that were comprehensive often mentioned that everything links in life like a 'causal chain' and that nothing is permanent and unchanging. Some students referred to The Tibetan Wheel of Life to help illustrate the process of dependent arising. This question also highlighted the need for students to have access to a relevant quotation, teaching and / or source of authority, even on the more difficult topic areas.

For example, a straightforward reference to a famous scripture in Buddhism would be the Samyutta Nikaya which simply states 'When this exists, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be. With the cessation (nirodha) of this, that ceases.' Samyutta Nikaya 12.61. A relevant portion of this whole quote would have been sufficient. A handful of students did reference the Dalai Lama when he stated. 'Think of a wave in the sea...it is something that has been made temporarily possible by wind and water and that it is dependent on a set of constantly changing circumstances.'

01.5

Many students fared well on this question as they knew the word compassion (*karuna*) and were able to compare it with other teachings for example: the five precepts and / or The Noble Eightfold Path. Many students compared *karuna* with *metta*, though sometimes they were not always clear on the difference between the two. This made some responses unclear in terms of how the students were arguing their case.

Some of the higher-scoring responses referenced how The Buddha taught that compassion was an important quality all Buddhists should develop, both towards themselves and towards others. On the other hand, not many responses identified that compassion (*karuna*) is one of the four sublime states which in turn means that compassion is one of the four qualities that the Buddha taught for people to specifically develop.

The more successful responses covered the fact that in Mahayana Buddhism, compassion has to be developed in equal measure with wisdom (*prajna*) on the *Bodhisattva* path and these responses scored well.

As a counter discussion, some students discussed the Buddhist concept of wisdom and how this could be the most important teaching in Buddhism on how to behave towards others because it means to have experience, knowledge and good judgement as well as forming one of the three parts or trainings of the *Eightfold Path* and includes right understanding and right thought.

Some students gave plenty of detailed analysis on the concept or teaching of *metta* (loving kindness) which they felt could be seen as of equal value to compassion (*karuna*). The question statement certainly opened up the opportunity to give plenty of depth and detail as well as understanding on some of the most important Buddhist concepts so seemed to work well on the whole.

This is a useful point of information for those teaching this Buddhism short course in that students who were able to make links to compare to other aspects of the course (in this case perhaps centred more on rules that could govern a Buddhist's morals and actions) scored some impressive marks.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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