



A-level **Religious Studies**

7062/2A Study of religion and dialogues: Buddhism

Report on the Examination

7062
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General comments:

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

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. A few students seem to have struggled this year with the subject content or focus of some questions, or to understand specification language.

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.

Some students have clearly been taught that critical analysis could be achieved by adding on to each paragraph “This is a weak/ strong argument...” Where this led to genuine critical analysis, this was, of course, credited. However, some students who used this formulaic approach did not understand that there needs 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.

**1.1: Examine the analogy of the chariot in the Questions of King Milinda.
[10 marks]**

This question was generally well answered with the full range of marks given. Many students were able to give a narrative account of the scripture, and this generally put them into level 3. Students who developed this and explained how the analogy illustrated Buddhist beliefs about Anatta tended to move into level 4. Many of the level 5 responses developed this with an explanation of conventional and ultimate truths.

**1.2: ‘There is no single understanding among Buddhists about Anicca’
Evaluate this claim [15 marks]**

Many students showed a good range and depth of knowledge about Anicca and the development into sunyata. There were some excellent responses which showed a range and depth of understanding about this concept and its wider application for Buddhists and well-developed critical analysis throughout. Some students did not respond specifically to the question and these responses tended to be capped at level 2 because they were one-sided. In this case most wrote lots of reasons why there were differing ideas, for example between the lay and monastic sangha, but they did not address why it could be argued that there were similar views. Some were unsure of the differing ideas about Anicca and this caused repetition of the same reworded responses. Several students did not explore the concept of sunyata, which is on the specification and would have given them another aspect to discuss in their responses.

2.1: Examine how Buddhist liberationist approaches influence society today.**[10 marks]**

This question was the one which was most often left unanswered. Broadly speaking students who answered this linked this idea with engaged Buddhism, there was a full range of marks awarded. Many students discussed Buddhism as liberation from suffering and gave some explanation about how this influences Buddhists today. Some students interpreted this question as 'liberal', discussing ideas about LGBTQ+ rights and the equality of women. These responses did gain marks where they were supported with teachings about Dukkha and liberation from suffering or linked to liberationist ideas. Some students read this question as liberationism which ended in a discussion about determinism and freewill, such responses were often not creditable. The best answers made clear links to the influence in society and mainly with reference to engaged Buddhism and equality for women, however this question tended to be answered generally rather than specifically linked to the question.

2.2: 'There is little agreement among Buddhists about the ordination of women.'**Evaluate this claim [10 marks]**

There was a high standard of content and knowledge for this question. Some students did not specifically respond to the question and as a result the cap for level 3 was applied to responses which only explained different views about the ordination of women. The best responses linked each paragraph with the question and were able to develop an argument throughout concerning agreement in Buddhism about the ordination of women.

3.1: 'Religious sources of authority do not require miracles.'**Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy.****[25 marks]**

This question gained a full range of responses. Some students gave mainly Christian centred responses, not linking effectively to Buddhism, which impacted their A01 knowledge marks. Some gave arguments for and against miracles, without fully responding to the question and linking to sources of authority. Many students had good knowledge of miracles in Buddhism and in philosophy as well as their relevance for the authority of the Pali Canon, Sutras, Bodhisattvas and The Buddha. Students who focused on the authority of Buddha and the Pali Canon had the most credible answers, these sources of authority seemed to lend themselves to discussions and evaluations from Tillich, Hume and AJ Ayer.

4.1: 'Science shows that it is not reasonable to believe in ultimate reality.'**Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and philosophy. [25 marks]**

Students appeared well prepared for this question. Responses to this question showed a good understanding of Buddhism and had clear links to science. There was a range of responses to this question. There was a clear understanding of ultimate reality from a Buddhist context with many students focusing on Nirvana and the Trikaya. The best responses also discussed karma and Sunyata. Many students identified that Buddhism is empirical and linked this with science. Weaker responses used science as a general term rather than identifying specific aspects of the specification such as quantum physics.

5.1: ‘Buddhist ethics do not deal effectively with issues concerned with marriage.’**Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and Ethics.****[25 marks]**

This question was often responded to with limited reference to ethical theories with responses being a general discussion about Buddhist ideas about marriage. Some students showed excellent knowledge of Buddhist ethical principles and ideas about marriage but failed to effectively link these to the ethical theories studied. Many students spoke about marriage generally. The most effective responses discussed specific issues within marriage such as children and homosexual marriage, comparing these ideas with Natural Moral Law, Situation Ethics and Virtue Ethics. This was generally the weakest of the dialogue questions because many students did not effectively link Buddhist ethics, marriage and ethical theories from the specification.

6.1: ‘Kant’s ethics are compatible with Buddhist ethical teaching.’**Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Buddhism and Ethics. [25 marks]**

This question was a popular choice among students. Generally, the responses showed a good knowledge and understanding of Kant with many identifying 4 concepts within Kant’s theory. The best answers compared Buddhist ethical principles such as the 5 precepts, Ahimsa and Upaya with Kant’s theory. Some students discussed the phenomenal and noumenal realms, which made for some very interesting and well considered comparisons of the theories. Some students chose to answer this question by bringing in a range of other ethical theories which may fit better with Buddhism, for example virtue ethics. This approach was less successful, and students sacrificed A01 marks by doing this.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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