



AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES 7061/2A

Paper 2A Buddhism

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Methods of Marking

It is essential that, in fairness to students, all examiners use the same methods of marking. The advice given here may seem very obvious, but it is important that all examiners follow it as exactly as possible.

1. If you have any doubts about the mark to award, consult your Team Leader.
2. Refer constantly to the mark scheme throughout marking. It is extremely important that it is strictly adhered to.
3. Remember, you must **always** credit **accurate, relevant and appropriate** answers which are not given in the mark scheme.
4. Do **not** credit material that is irrelevant to the question or to the stated target, however impressive that material might be.
5. If a one-word answer is required and a list is given, take the first answer (unless this has been crossed out).
6. If you are wavering as to whether or not to award a mark, the criterion should be, 'Is the student nearer those who have given a correct answer or those who have little idea?'
7. Read the information below about using Levels of Response mark schemes.
8. Be prepared to award the full range of marks. Do not hesitate to give full marks when the answer merits full marks or to give no marks where there is nothing creditable in an answer.
9. No half marks or bonus marks are to be used under any circumstances.
10. Remember, the key to good and fair marking is **consistency**. Do **not** change the standard of your marking once you have started.

Levels of Response Marking

In AS Religious Studies, differentiation is largely achieved by outcome on the basis of students' responses. To facilitate this, levels of response marking has been devised for many questions.

Levels of response marking requires a quite different approach from the examiner than the traditional 'point for point' marking. It is essential that the **whole response is read** and then **allocated to the level** it best fits.

If a student demonstrates knowledge, understanding and/or evaluation at a certain level, he/she must be credited at that level. **Length** of response or **literary ability** should **not be confused with genuine religious studies skills**. For example, a short answer which shows a high level of conceptual ability must be credited at that level. (If there is a band of marks allocated to a level, discrimination should be made with reference to the development of the answer.)

Levels are tied to specific skills. Examiners should **refer to the stated assessment target** objective of a question (see mark scheme) when there is any doubt as to the relevance of a student's response.

Levels of response mark schemes include either **examples** of possible students' responses or **material** which they might use. These are intended as a **guide** only. It is anticipated that students will produce a wide range of responses to each question.

It is a feature of levels of response mark schemes that examiners are prepared to reward fully, responses which are obviously valid and of high ability but do not conform exactly to the requirements of a particular level. This should only be necessary occasionally and where this occurs examiners must indicate, by a brief written explanation, why their assessment does not conform to the levels of response laid down in the mark scheme. Such scripts should be referred to the Lead Examiner.

Assessment of Quality of Written Communication

Quality of written communication will be assessed in all components and in relation to all assessment objectives. Where students are required to produce extended written material in English, they will be assessed on the quality of written communication. The quality of written communication skills of the student will be one of the factors influencing the actual mark awarded within the level of response. In reading an extended response, the examiner will therefore consider if it is cogently and coherently written, ie decide whether the answer:

- presents relevant information in a form that suits its purposes
- is legible and that spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate, so that meaning is clear
- is suitably structured and that the style of writing is appropriate.

LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Levels of Response: 15 marks AS-level – AO1

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Level 5
13–15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding is accurate and relevant and is consistently applied to the question.• Very good use of detailed and relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• The answer is clear and coherent and there is effective use of specialist language and terminology. |
| Level 4
10–12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding is mostly accurate and relevant and is mostly applied to the question.• Good use of relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• The answer is mostly clear and coherent and specialist language and terminology is used appropriately. |
| Level 3
7–9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding is generally accurate and relevant and is generally applied to the question.• Some use of appropriate evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• The answer is generally clear and coherent with use of specialist language and terminology. |
| Level 2
4–6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding is limited and there is limited application to the question.• Limited use of appropriate evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• Limited clarity and coherence and limited use of specialist language and terminology. |
| Level 1
1–3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and understanding is basic.• Isolated elements of accurate and relevant information.• Basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary. |
| 0 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No accurate or relevant material to credit. |

Levels of Response: 15 marks AS-level – AO2

- Level 5**
13–15
- A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Reasoned and evidenced chains of reasoning supporting different points of view with critical analysis.
 - Evaluation is based on the reasoning presented.
 - The answer is clear and coherent and there is effective use of specialist language and terminology.
- Level 4**
10–12
- A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Reasoned and evidenced chains of reasoning, with some critical analysis, supporting different points of view.
 - Evaluation based on some of the reasoning.
 - The answer is largely clear and coherent with specialist language and terminology used appropriately.
- Level 3**
7–9
- A general response to the issue(s) raised.
 - Different points of view supported by evidence and chains of reasoning.
 - The answer is generally clear and coherent with use of specialist language and terminology.
- Level 2**
4–6
- A limited response to the issue(s) raised.
 - A point of view relevant to the issue(s) with limited supporting evidence and chains of reasoning.
 - Limited clarity and coherence and limited use of specialist language and terminology.
- Level 1**
1–3
- A basic response to the issue(s) raised.
 - A point of view is stated with some evidence or reasons in support.
 - Some clarity and coherence and basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary.
- 0**
- No accurate or relevant material to credit.

Question 1

0	1	.	1
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Explain reasons why Buddhists hold different views about the authority of the Pali Canon.

[15 marks]

Target: AO1.3: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief including causes and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

One reason that Buddhists hold different views about the authority of the Pali Canon is because there are many Buddhist scriptures. Some Buddhists may believe that the Pali Canon is the most important scripture because parts of it can be traced back to The Buddha. Others might argue that other Buddhist texts, for example the Heart or the Lotus Sutra, are more important and focus on these teachings.

Another reason that Buddhists might hold different views about the authority of the Pali Canon is because they may see the teachings as only one of many authorities within Buddhism. For example, they may gain insight and understanding through the act of meditation. The Buddha gained his insight in the same way which means this is a more important source of authority.

A final reason that Buddhists might hold different views about the authority of the Pali Canon is because there are different Buddhist traditions. Some traditions may focus on other leaders, for example the Dalai Lama who can offer guidance in a modern society. Others may consider the teachings in the Pali Canon to be more accurate and more important because they contain timeless guidance about how to alleviate suffering.

[15 marks] AO1.3

0 1 . 2

‘For Buddhists, Nirvana cannot be understood.’

Assess this view.

[15 marks]

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

Note that answers may, but need not, be limited to the consideration of the following specification content: Nirvana: Nirvana in this life and after death; Nirvana as indescribable and beyond understanding; attempts in scripture to describe it and their strengths and weaknesses with reference to the 80th dilemma of the Questions of King Milinda.

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

One reason that Buddhists may say Nirvana cannot be understood is because it is a deathless state beyond death. The concept of Nirvana cannot be linked to any other human experience. However, for many Buddhists Nirvana can be understood upon enlightenment. This means that eventually Nirvana is a concept which all beings can, and will, understand.

Another reason Nirvana cannot be understood is because it is not understandable, it is experienced. However, Buddhists can understand aspects of Nirvana through the 80th dilemma of the questions of King Milinda. This scripture uses metaphor to explain the concept and gives Buddhists some understanding of what Nirvana is.

A final reason Nirvana cannot be understood is because descriptions of Nirvana are not useful in helping Buddhists to reach enlightenment. Buddhists may focus on other teachings, for example the Eightfold Path which gives guidance on how to live a good life. However The Buddha was able to explain the knowledge gained at enlightenment, and this knowledge is at the heart of Buddhist teachings. This suggests that all Buddhist teachings aim to illuminate the concept of Nirvana.

[15 marks] AO2

Question 2

0	2	.	1
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Explain the six perfections of Mahayana Buddhism.**[15 marks]**

Target: AO1.1: Knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

The six perfections are interrelated virtues which some Buddhists believe to be the way to cultivate and fully express one's true nature. They are often linked with the Mahayana idea of Buddha nature. These states of mind must be perfected by a Bodhisattva to liberate others from suffering.

One of the six perfections is Generosity (dana). This can be understood through the act of giving and can include time, money, presence or even words of encouragement. The perfection of Morality (sila) means that Buddhists may follow the five moral precepts. These precepts focus on causing no harm.

Another of the six perfections is Patience (ksanti). This may lead Buddhists to focus on developing tolerance, with the aim to overcome anger and maintain a calm disposition. Developing the perfection of Energy (viryā) means that Buddhists will make a conscious effort to achieve enlightenment. Some Buddhists see this perfection as perseverance and focus on not giving up even when things are difficult.

The final two perfections are Meditation (dhyana) and Wisdom (prajna). The understanding gained through Buddhist practice such as meditation is important, and Buddhists may focus on developing these perfections to help them to see clearly, avoid stress and anxiety, and overcome mental wandering.

[15 marks] AO1.1

0	2	.	2
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‘Buddha images are an important part of Buddhist worship.’

Assess this view.

[15 marks]

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

Note: This content is indicative rather than prescriptive and students are not obliged to refer to all the material contained in this mark scheme. Any legitimate answer will be assessed on its merits according to the generic levels of response.

Note that answers may, but need not, be limited to the consideration of the following specification content: Devotion and its purposes: acts of devotion in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism; the nature and role of Buddha images and the importance of making and sharing merit; the different perspectives of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism about the significance of worship.

Answers may present, analyse and evaluate some of the following arguments:

Buddha images are an important part of Buddhist worship because they help Buddhists to focus on the characteristics of buddhas during meditation. However, meditation and worship do not always require buddha images. For example, Metta Bhavana meditation focuses on love and kindness towards oneself and others. Some Buddhists may say that this is a more important aspect of worship because it develops buddha like characteristics such as generosity.

Buddha images are an important part of Buddhist worship because they assist with the path to enlightenment. Focusing on buddhas and their path towards enlightenment is helpful to gain understanding of this path. However, other aspects of worship can aid Buddhists on the path to enlightenment, such as chanting, which may be a more important aspect of Buddhist worship because it enables Buddhists to learn scripture.

For some Buddhists, buddha images may be an important part of worship because an aspect of these buddhas is present within the image. These images enable Buddhists to interact with this presence during worship. Through these images Buddhists can facilitate a personal relationship with buddhas. However, some Buddhists would disagree, because they believe that The Buddha is no longer contactable or present in the samsaric cycle, so therefore the images are just reminders of The Buddha’s teachings.

[15 marks] AO2