



GCSE MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES (ROUTE A) COMPONENT 3
OPTION 1 - BUDDHISM
C120U30-1**

Please note the question paper and mark scheme were amended in August 2025.
Question 1b is different from that which appeared on the Summer 2025 paper.

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

EDUQAS GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES (ROUTE A) – COMPONENT 3

OPTION 1 – BUDDHISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

General Marking Instructions for Examiners

The mark scheme defines what can be reasonably expected of a candidate in response to questions asked. Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must also be credited.

1. Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes that is accurate and relevant, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme. Errors should be ignored, not penalised.

2. Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor for the band provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains a range of marks.

3. Two-mark questions

Banded mark schemes are not suitable for low tariff questions. Instructions for the awarding of marks are given with the indicative content.

Using the banded mark scheme

Stage 1 – Deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Stage 2 – Deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. It is extremely important to note that **indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a candidate need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.** Where a response is not creditworthy, i.e. that is contains nothing of any significance to the mark scheme, or is entirely irrelevant to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

Assessment Objectives

The questions test the candidate's ability to:

- AO1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief*, including:
 - belief, practices and sources of authority
 - influence on individuals, communities and societies
 - similarities and differences within and/or between religions and belief
- AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief*, including their significance and influence

* The term 'belief' includes religious and non-religious belief as appropriate to the subject content requirements.

Question (a)

See instructions provided with indicative content.

Question (b)

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark total
3	An excellent, coherent answer showing knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. An excellent understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses a range of religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately and appropriately.	4–5
2	A good, generally accurate answer showing knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. A good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses religious/specialist language and terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority generally accurately.	2–3
1	A limited statement of information about the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. A limited understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses religious/specialist language and terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority in a limited way.	1
0	No relevant information provided.	0

Question (c)

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark total
4	An excellent, highly detailed explanation showing knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. An excellent understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses a range of religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately and appropriately.	7–8
3	A very good, detailed explanation showing knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. A very good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses a range of religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority accurately and appropriately.	5–6
2	A good, generally accurate explanation showing some knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. A good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority generally accurately.	3–4
1	A limited and/or poorly organised explanation showing limited knowledge and understanding of the religious idea, belief, practice, teaching or concept. A limited understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority in a limited way.	1–2
0	No relevant information provided.	0

Question (d)

Band	Band Descriptor	Mark total
5	An excellent, highly detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on detailed knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements and present alternative or different viewpoints. An excellent understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority extensively, accurately and appropriately.	13–15
4	A very good, detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements and present alternative or different viewpoints. A very good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses and interprets religious/specialist language, terms and sources of wisdom and authority appropriately and in detail.	10–12
3	A good, generally detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue based on a generally accurate knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate reasonable judgements and recognise alternative or different viewpoints. A good understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses and interprets some religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority.	7–9
2	Limited statement(s) of more than one viewpoint based on limited knowledge of religion, religious teaching and moral reasoning to formulate judgements. A limited understanding of how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Uses limited religious/specialist language and terms and/or few sources of wisdom and authority.	4–6
1	A poor, basic statement of a point of view and a very limited attempt or no attempt to formulate judgements or offer alternative or different viewpoints. Little or no attempt made to demonstrate how belief influences individuals, communities and societies. Poor use, or no use, of religious/specialist language, terms and/or sources of wisdom and authority.	1–3
0	No relevant point of view stated.	0

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must also be credited.

1. Beliefs and Teachings

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition or example and 2 marks for a developed definition with or without an example.

(a) What do Buddhists mean by ‘(s)kandhas’? AO1 [2]

Indicative content here:

- The five elements that make up a human being.
- The elements are form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

Refer to the marking bands for question (b).

(b) Describe what some Buddhists believe about Amida Buddha. AO1 [5]

Indicative content here:

- Amida can also be known as Amitabha – the Buddha of Infinite Light
- Pure Land Buddhists believe that Amida helps others on the path to enlightenment.
- Pure Land Buddhists believe that Amida created the western paradise called Sukhavati (the pure land), a heaven-like place.
- Pure Land Buddhists believe that calling on Amida for assistance can result in being reborn into Sukhavati where they can be enlightened/attain buddhahood.
- Some Pure Land Buddhists chant a mantra called the Nembutsu – “Namu Amida Butsu” – calling on Amida to grant them a place in Sukhavati.
- Other Pure Land Buddhists chant the Nembutsu to thank Amida for their place in Sukhavati.
- Calling on Amida for a minimum of ten consecutive moments of genuine faith is needed for rebirth into the Pure Land.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

“Namu Amida Butsu” (Hail to Amida Buddha)

*“Amitabha is neither a God who punishes and rewards, gives mercy or imposes tests, nor a divinity that we can petition or beg for special favours.”
(Encyclopaedia Britannica)*

Amitabha is “the great saviour deity worshipped principally by members of the Pure Land sect in Japan”. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

“Our prime purpose in this life is to help others.” (Dalai Lama)

Refer to the marking bands for question (c).

- (c) Explain how following the Eightfold Path (magga) could help a Buddhist reach nirvana. AO1 [8]**

Indicative content here:

- The teachings on wisdom, morality and meditation are essential for keeping a Buddhist life which can help someone advance on the path to enlightenment.
- By following the Eightfold Path, a Buddhist could achieve a favourable rebirth which is a step on the route to nirvana.
- The Wisdom (panna) section includes right view and right intention.
- Right view means understanding Buddhist teachings, such as anicca, anatta and dukkha. Understanding these concepts would help a Buddhist to accept the world as it really is and make progress towards enlightenment.
- Right intention encourages Buddhists to realise that their thoughts can lead to good or bad karma. Encouraging positive thoughts leads to positive actions; this could help a Buddhist eliminate craving and suffering which in turn might bring them closer to nirvana.
- The Morality (sila) section includes right action, right speech, and right livelihood.
- Right action involves living by Buddhist principles (precepts); this should be the consequence of having right intentions. By acting in the correct way, a Buddhist would aim to minimise suffering for themselves and others to make progress on the path to enlightenment.
- Right speech involves speaking the truth and using words that promote positive outcomes. The Buddha spoke his teachings/dharma that have been preserved through recitation, so speech can be very powerful in helping Buddhists on the path (magga) to nirvana.
- Right livelihood involves having an occupation that does not bring any harm to others. By having the right job, lay Buddhists can put the teachings/Dharma into ethical actions and this can move them closer to achieving nirvana.
- The Meditation (samadhi) section includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- Right effort implies the commitment needed to overcome greed, hatred, and ignorance (the Three Poisons), which is necessary to become enlightened.
- Right mindfulness means having an awareness of the consequences of intentions, actions and speech and moving towards thinking, acting and speaking skilfully. This in turn can help a Buddhist on the path (magga) to nirvana.
- Right concentration is the use of meditation to see into the true nature of reality which is needed to overcome attachment and suffering and become enlightened.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

“To avoid all evil, to cultivate good, and to cleanse one’s mind – this is the teaching of all the Buddhas” (Dhammapada 183)

“This noble eightfold path is the path of practice leading to the cessation of form.” (Buddha – the Sattatthana Sutta)

“... the eight factors exemplify the ways in which morality, meditation, and wisdom are to be cultivated on a continuing basis.” (Damien Keown - Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction)

“The practice of the Eightfold Path is a kind of modelling process ... The Eightfold Path is thus a path of self-transformation ... ignorance and selfish desire are overcome, the cause of suffering is removed and nirvana is attained.” (Damien Keown – Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction)

“Wisdom springs from meditation.” (Dhammapada 282)

Refer to the marking bands for question (d).

- (d) ‘Seeing the Four Sights was the most important part of the Buddha’s life.’**

Discuss this statement, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

AO2 [15]

Indicative content here:

- The Four Sights were Siddhartha’s first experience of suffering, and it was this that formed the basis of his teaching of the Four Noble Truths (and the Three Marks of Existence).
- It was the sight of the ascetic that encouraged Siddhartha to renunciate his previous life to find the truth of why people suffer.
- The Four Sights caused Siddhartha to follow the life of an ascetic, which ultimately led to his enlightenment.
- If Siddhartha had not seen the Four Sights, there would be no Buddhism.
- His early life in the palace had shown him the other extreme (luxury), and if he had not been born into this life things might have been very different.
- Enlightenment under the bodhi tree is clearly the most important aspect of his life as it was this that Buddhism is based on.
- All aspects of his life are important as each contributed to his teachings/dharma; no one event is more important than any other.
- Buddha’s teachings on morality and how to live (e.g., the precepts) owed little to the Four Sights.
- Theravada Buddhists celebrate his birth, enlightenment, and death at Wesak so these could be seen as equally important aspects of his life.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

“All conditioned things are impermanent – when one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering.” (The Buddha, Dhammapada 277)

“The root of suffering is attachment.” (The Buddha, Pali Canon)

“Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering and sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering.” (Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta)

Please note: the mark scheme is not a checklist. Other valid points must be credited.

2. Practices

For all (a) questions, credit 1 mark for a very simple definition or example and 2 marks for a developed definition with or without an example.

(a) What do Buddhists mean by 'pratitya'? AO1 [2]

Indicative content here:

- Dependent origination.
- Everything 'exists' only because of the 'existence' of other phenomena in a complex web of cause and effect.

Refer to the marking bands for question (b).

(b) Describe how some Buddhists might use malas. AO1[5]

Indicative content here:

- A Buddhist might hold the mala in their hands when they chant.
- The beads might be used to count how many times a mantra has been chanted.
- Counting the beads might also indicate the number of breaths taken during breathing meditation (samatha/anapansati).
- Some Buddhists might use malas to remind them of the purpose of their worship.
- Mala beads might be used as a sensory aid to worship and help some Buddhists focus during meditation.
- Some malas are used to show the importance of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (Three Jewels).
- Tibetan Buddhists might use malas to help them perfect the power of total recall, or to develop peaceful practices.
- Some Japanese Buddhists (Pure Land/Jodo Shinshu) might use malas when reciting the Nembutsu.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

'Om mani padme hum.' (Hail to the Jewel of the Lotus)

'Namu amida butsu.' (Hail to the Jewel of Amida/Amitabha Buddha: Nembutsu chant)

'Nam myoyo rengo kyo.' (Hail to the Jewel of the Lotus Sutra: Nichiren chant)

Refer to the marking bands for question (c).

(c) Explain why Buddhists make offerings.

AO1 [8]

Indicative content here:

- Offerings might be made in front of a statue or an image of the Buddha to recognise his importance in finding a way out of samsara. They are a way to show respect to him and his teachings.
- Flowers or leaves are offered to symbolise anicca (impermanence).
- Food and/or fruits might be offered to show understanding of pratitya, that everything is interdependent e.g., human life is dependent on the earth's resources. They might also be offered to express gratitude.
- Water is offered at a shrine as it is essential for life and can be used as a symbol of respect.
- Candles are lit as a symbol of enlightenment.
- Incense might be burned at shrines; the smoke symbolises the Dharma permeating the universe.
- Buddhists might offer dana (charity/generosity) in the form of money or help to the monks and the temple; this is a way to show equality within the Buddhist community (sangha).
- Making offerings to monks could be seen as a practical example of metta (loving-kindness).
- By make offerings Buddhists can gain merit (punya) which will lead to the accumulation of positive karma.
- Buddhists aim to get a better rebirth through the positive karma gained by making offerings.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

*"An offering made to the monastic Sangha is incalculable, immeasurable."
(Dakkinavibhanga Sutta)*

*"There is no need for temples ... our own brain, our own heart is our temple"
Dalai Lama*

Refer to the marking bands for question (d).

(d) 'Buddhists should not waste their time with ceremonies for the dead.'

Discuss this statement, showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer.)

AO2 [15]

Indicative content here:

- Buddhists accept the belief in rebirth and that death is just another part of the cycle of samsara, so they shouldn't need to waste their time participating in ceremonies or rituals.
- Buddhists believe in anatta (no permanent self) so it might be a waste of time to have ceremonies that mourn the inevitable ending of a life.
- Accepting the concept of impermanence (anicca) might mean that ceremonies should not be essential if it is not possible to carry them out.
- Rituals and ceremonies for the dead can help send positive energies to the bereaved so should not be considered a waste of time if it helps them with their grief.
- Ceremonies for the dead that the whole Sangha perform can bring a sense of community between lay and monastic members. This should not be a waste of time.
- The ceremonies for the dead can help Buddhists understand the concepts of impermanence (anicca) and anatta (no permanent self) so would not be a waste of time.
- Ceremonies for the dead might offer the chance to reflect on the teachings of samsara and nirvana.
- Rituals that allow the living to transfer merit to the deceased are not a waste of time as mourners want to be able to believe that they can help their loved ones to a favourable rebirth.
- Merit-making rituals and ceremonies are motivated by generosity and selflessness which are important Buddhist ideals so cannot be a waste of time.

Sources of Wisdom and Authority may include the references below, but other relevant sources must also be credited:

"The world is afflicted by death and decay. But the wise do not grieve, having realised the nature of the world." (The Buddha – Sutta Nipata)

"Merit is not burnt by fire, by wind too it cannot be broken asunder, and not by water be rotten, and it is able to sustain the world. Merit can bravely withstand both the king and the thief and cannot be taken away by humans and non-humans." (Sutra of the Questions of the Deva)

"Analysis of death is not for the sake of becoming fearful but to appreciate this precious lifetime." (Dalai Lama)

"The resolution of grief in the survivors is intertwined with the journey to rebirth of the deceased." (R.E. Goss & D. Klass - Tibetan Buddhism and the resolution of grief: the Bardo-thodol for the dying and the grieving)