



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1:
CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM 3120UE0-1
SUMMER 2022**

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GCSE

Summer 2022

UNIT 1 CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM

General Comments

Question 1 Christianity:

The paper proved accessible to candidates and the full range of marks were awarded across the paper. The knowledge of Christianity demonstrated in this examination varied from outstanding to inadequate. There was evidence of a significant number of candidates not engaging with the examination paper and, as a result, some of the responses of these candidates were very brief. Where responses were very brief, candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving any range of higher marks. Disappointingly, there was evidence of a rise in the number of candidates who did not attempt to answer questions in the Christianity section of the examination paper. It was encouraging to see an increase in the number of candidates using references from sources of authority and the demonstration of an understanding of diversity in Christian traditions.

Candidates must remember to clearly state the number of the question(s) they are continuing to answer on any additional writing pages they use, e.g., 1d. 2c.

It is extremely challenging to try and match up their responses if candidates do not make this clear and while there is no intention to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many candidates did not make this obvious on their examination papers caused significant delays to the marking process during the marking period.

Centre must remind candidates not to write their responses on the pages that have 'DO NOT WRITE ON THIS PAGE' printed on them; responses written on these pages may be missed during the scanning process.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Christianity

.1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'omnibenevolence'?

Most candidates were able to give the exemplar definition of the key concept or some form of definition of the key concept. A minority of candidates confused omnibenevolence with omnipotence and a number of candidates did not attempt the question

(b) Describe what happened at the crucifixion of Jesus

There were some outstanding answers in response to this question; a very detailed description of the biblical account of the crucifixion of Jesus. However, some candidates misread the question and gave an account only of the trial of Jesus; the focus of the question is the crucifixion. Disappointingly, a large number of candidates did not appear to know any details of the crucifixion and simply stated Jesus died on a cross. It is important to note that simply repeating the same statement in a different way will not achieve any more marks. Some answers were very brief and some included the use of bullet points which almost always leads to a lack of a coherent description.

- (c) **Explain different ways in which Christians might worship God.**
Some excellent responses were unpacked in detail regarding the different ways in which Christians might worship God. Detailed responses offered a wide range of examples as part of the response, and these examples were used to support the explanations. Where candidates simply listed activities which take place in a church or chapel as a form of worship, without any explanation, higher band marks were not awarded. The rubric demand of the question was to ask for explanation and not a simple description. Some responses were brief, using less than half of the available space, where candidates offered very short answers and disadvantaged themselves. It was pleasing to note some candidates were clearly aware of different Christian traditions and were able to use examples from different Christian traditions. Disappointingly some candidates seemed unaware of the meaning of worship and were unable to answer the question.
- (d) **‘The most important teaching for Christians is to love God.’**
The more able candidates were able to fully analyse and evaluate the significance of the Bible’s teachings about love of God as the most important. It is pleasing to note that many candidates correctly focused on the demands of the question, by unpacking arguments and ideas about how love of God is (or is not) the most important Christian teaching. The most common view expressed was that love of neighbour was as important or indeed more important. It is also pleasing to note many candidates were using, correctly, references to sources of authority. Unfortunately, a number of candidates included atheist and humanist viewpoints; this was not appropriate on the Christianity paper in terms of the question asked because the question asked solely for a Christian perspective.

Summary of key points

It is important that candidates attempt to answer questions as fully as possible; too many candidates gave ‘short’ response to the (b) and (c) questions and the level descriptors clearly indicate that extended responses are required in order to achieve the higher marks. Bullet points should not be used.

In the evaluation responses, it is important that candidates construct a meaningful response based around the question; using phrases such as ‘this is a strong argument because’, ‘this is a weak argument because’, ‘a further argument to support this.’ These, and other connectives, are very useful phrases to help candidates structure and unpack arguments.

General Comments

Question 2 Buddhism:

The exam was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. The demand was comparable to previous papers. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main aspects of Buddhism but sometimes struggled with the specifics needed to answer questions. Better responses made effective use of synoptic knowledge and understanding from across the specification in order to back up their arguments in the (d) questions. Other candidates gained some marks by making use of this general knowledge and understanding without having the specifics to answer particularly well.

Most candidates were prepared for the themes of (d) questions (due to advanced information) and were able to produce answers ranging from satisfactory to excellent. Some candidates, despite having solid knowledge, did not answer the question that was asked, possibly relying instead on questions that they had already prepared. It was particularly pleasing to note improvements in the way that (d) questions were answered; this year more candidates focused on the question asked and constructed arguments which they backed up with well-chosen examples. There was also more evidence of candidates using evaluative language when reaching judgements.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q2 (a) What do Buddhists mean by ‘mettabhavana’?

Most answers showed a thorough understanding of the mettabhavana; others were partially correct in referring to loving kindness but failed to mention the part of meditation in its cultivation. It was pleasing to see some candidates use this key term in other answers e.g., 2(d).

(b) Describe the Buddha’s enlightenment.

The better descriptions focused in on the enlightenment and the events immediately preceding it i.e., sitting under the tree, meditating which led to the enlightenment, the temptations of Mara and touching the earth to bear witness. Weaker answers spent too much time giving details that were unnecessary e.g., the 4 sights. Some even referred to the prophecy made after the Buddha’s birth. Some candidates seemed to lack knowledge of the events that led up to the enlightenment, claiming that he attained nirvana by following the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. It was not clear whether this was down to a misunderstanding or if they were thinking about how Buddhists today attain enlightenment. Some candidates were able to pick up ideas from other questions on the paper, although including reference to Parinirvana Day as a celebration of the Buddha’s enlightenment was incorrect. A few candidates seemed unaware of the skill demanded by this question so explained the importance of Buddha’s enlightenment rather than describing ‘how’ he became enlightened.

(c) **Explain why many Buddhists celebrate Parinirvana Day.**

Overall, this question was not done particularly well. Many candidates confused Parinirvana Day with Wesak or Kathina, so wrote about Buddhists celebrating the enlightenment or the end of the rainy season at this time. Other candidates described and explained what happens at the festival rather than explain the reasons why it is celebrated. It is important that candidates are prepared for the different skills and that they read the questions carefully. However, there were some pleasing, appropriate references to anicca, dukkha, nirvana, samsara, and rebirth which illustrated a deep understanding of Buddhist concepts from across the specification. This question offered an opportunity for candidates to refer to appropriate sources of wisdom and authority and move responses to the higher bands; stronger responses accurately identified Parinirvana Day as a Mahayana festival although others confused it as a Theravadin festival or tried to argue which festival (Parinirvana Day/Wesak/Kathina) was more important. There appeared to be an element of guesswork with many responses, with some candidates using content from other answers possibly in the hope that they might pick up some marks. A relatively common misconception was the statement that Buddhists kept Parinirvana Day in order to please the Buddha.

(d) **“The Eightfold Path is all that Buddhists need to live a good life.”**

Most responses showed good knowledge of the Eightfold Path with candidates either focusing on the eight steps or considering the three parts (wisdom, morality, meditation). The better answers kept the question in mind throughout and had a far more synoptic view of the specification by referring to meditation, livelihood and precepts. Candidates showed thorough understanding of Buddhism and had the confidence to put make some perceptive comments e.g., a good life is a life free from dukkha (suffering) which is what the Eightfold Path aims to achieve. There were some excellent responses which were organised and coherent, with evaluative language and reference to sources of wisdom and authority e.g., some candidates argued that Mahayana Buddhists might say that bodhisattvas helping others is the way to live a good life. Sadly, very few answers included direct quotes. Stronger responses made extensive and appropriate use of specialist language e.g., the Four Noble Truths, tanha, magga, three poisons, karma/karmic energy, ahimsa. Weaker responses often lacked focus on the question and sometimes got side-tracked by the Four Noble Truths, only referring to the Eightfold Path as the fourth Noble Truth. While stronger answers tried to weigh up the benefits of the Eightfold Path against other Buddhist teachings and practices, weaker answers often explained the steps of the Path with little or no analysis of whether they were needed to live a good life. Some candidates had a thorough knowledge of the Eightfold Path but often failed to move out of the lower bands as they did not answer this question and made little or no attempt to analyse and evaluate. Again, candidates need to be aware of the skill demanded by each question and use their knowledge and understanding to back up any arguments or viewpoints they put forward. Some candidates included reference to what Christians and non-religious people might think about the statement. This was not required and was not included in the instructions for this question. Despite not being needed, such responses that did make sense were credited but most were not appropriate. The weakest answers merely listed the Four Noble Truths and the steps of the Eightfold Path.

Summary of key points

- Schools are to be commended for all their hard work to prepare candidates for this exam, especially regarding the improvements in the way that (d) questions were answered.
- Candidates need to be aware of (and stick to) the skills required for each question: description in (b) questions, explaining in (c) questions and analysing and evaluating in (d) questions.
- Candidates from centres that omitted Buddhism from their teaching tended to struggle with the (c) questions in Q 3 & 4 as they were lacking the overall knowledge and understanding required to attain the higher bands.
- It is understandable that centres and candidates prepared thoroughly following the release of the advanced information, but candidates are still advised to read the questions carefully so that they can tailor their information appropriately.

General Comments

Questions 3 and 4 Religious Responses to Philosophical Themes:

This is the third year of this particular specification. The report should be read in conjunction with the mark scheme which contains the assessment criteria and indicative content for each question. Each of the types of questions are analysed later in the report as are considerations regarding each individual question.

The paper differentiated well. All questions were accessible although there were a number of non-attempts in 3d and 4d. In many cases this appeared to be because of timing issues.

It was pleasing to note that the vast majority of candidates felt confident in defining the key concepts in 3a and 4a. In some cases these were full explanations or supported with a relevant example. It was also pleasing to note candidates engagement with the AO2 questions. Responses were often coherent and included a range of different viewpoints. There appeared to be less reliance on writing frames which can sometimes restrict an answer and more examples of prior planning before embarking on answering the question. Such planning often included key words, sources of authority and main points for discussion. Such strategies often helped candidates formulate evaluative discussions rather than just recall of information.

The paper requires candidates to answer from Christianity and a further religious tradition. A common finding across the paper was a lack of knowledge and understanding of the second religion in Questions 3 and 4. It was rare to find a detailed and mature understanding of a schema of a second religion in responses. Candidates often seemed to have some sketchy understanding (or misunderstanding) of a second religious tradition which they applied to all questions. This imbalance had an impact particularly on 'c' questions when responses are expected from two religious traditions.

This year candidates were not required to include references to non-religious traditions. Many did, but these were often weak generalisations which did not reflect the integrity of a non-religious world view. References to Humanism were often misinformed and/or generalisations.

The **use** of appropriate religious/specialist language is a key criteria in this component. Some candidates confidently used key religious, philosophical and ethical terms to express their arguments. It was disappointing to see that there were few candidates who transferred their knowledge of relevant key terms from their other units into their answers. It was also disappointing to see the lack of specialist language used in 'd' questions. Candidates would often use a more limited range of specialist terms in 'd' questions compared to the rest of the paper..

Candidates are expected to make reference to sacred texts where appropriate. The form of reference is not dictated. What is important is that the sacred text is contextualised to show clearly the rationale for its inclusion. There were many instances where a candidate referred to ,for example, 'love thy neighbour' but failed to explore the meaning of the reference in connection with the question. Conversely, there was an increased trend of giving lengthy narrations of parables without applying the teaching to the focus of the question. Direct references are not needed, however, some candidates seemed to think that by placing quotation marks around a statement that credit would be gained. There were some very spurious quotes alleged to be Biblical or Pali Canon sources.

There are many opportunities in the paper for candidates to include references to relevant contemporary philosophical debates. As detailed later in the report some candidates had some understanding but were unable to effectively deploy this information to answer the question. This often resulted in a case-study descriptive narrative rather than a reference to support a particular view or judgement.

The demands of each type of question are distinct and, reflecting previous reports, it is appropriate to consider candidate performance in each type of question before scrutinising responses to individual questions.

- (a)** Questions. These questions are always based on the key concepts for each unit. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts for the unit. For this paper definitions do not need to be placed within a religion specific content. Often candidates supported their definition with an example. It is important to remember that in addition to answering 'a' questions the use of key concepts can be credited, where used appropriately, as part of the criteria for 'b', 'c' and 'd' questions which require the use of 'religious/specialist terms'. This cross transference of knowledge was not always evident in candidates' responses. Some of the key concepts are difficult to exemplify. In such cases candidates should try to give a full description rather than create a spurious example.
- (b)** Questions. These questions require candidates to select and then describe relevant information using specific religious language to respond to the question. These answers require a deployment of information. Candidates are expected to refer to a source of authority, where relevant. References to sources of authority do not need to be confined to sacred texts. Relevant sources of authority could include references to God; Jesus; the prophets; sacred scriptures; conscience; family ; religious leaders; religious founders, philosophers, the Law etc.
- (c)** Questions. These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from religion(s) or religious tradition(s). Candidates answered this question in a variety of ways. Some inserted the heading of the two traditions they had studied and wrote relevant details under each heading. Some candidates tried to answer from the two traditions simultaneously pointing out similarities and differences. A response cannot be awarded a high band if the response is only from one religious tradition or includes a non-religious tradition. There was an increasing number of examples where candidates had tried to turn these explain questions into an evaluation 'd' type question. This would not meet the rubric of the question not the assessment criteria. It was apparent that some candidates believed they had to compare the two traditions responses and therefore sought to make them polar opposites. It is recognised with the marking criteria that there will sometimes be overlap between particular traditions beliefs regarding a certain issue and that a response will be judged upon the evidence, including the specific religious language and interpretation of sources of authority.

- (d) Questions. This question requires an extended piece of writing and carries half the marks for each of the unit. The most effective responses use a well selected range of information with appropriate sources and language to justify their arguments. It is the argument and evaluative discussion which makes this question different to the demands of a c question. Candidates are expected to select evidence to reinforce and exemplify their arguments. There were an increasing number of instances where candidates gave a viewpoint and then added that this was a strong argument because it is what faith members believe or because it is not a weak argument. To gain higher bands responses must show informed reasoning as to why an argument is considered strong or weak. This year many responses displayed a depth of knowledge of the focus of the question. At times, such knowledge was displayed without any analysis or evaluation and appeared similar to how a 'c' type question might be answered.

As has been reported in past reports it is vital that the candidates read the question and understand what the demands of the rubric are. There are an increasing number of examples of candidates hi-lighting key words which helps to focus on the response required.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.3 (a) 'What is meant by soul.'** (2)
Generally well answered although some candidates found difficulty in expressing clearly what they knew and understood in their writing. This is a concept that does not easily exemplify and therefore needed a precise definition to be awarded full marks. Many references were made to 'the spiritual part of a person' which was fully creditworthy. Answers limited to 'me' were not able to be credited.
- (b) Describe how religious believers might support sustainability** (5)
Many responses focussed on 'why' not 'how'. The question could be responded to in two ways: either relating to generic practice of religious communities e.g. eco places of worship, prayer, religious action group. Alternatively the response could be centred around the actions of one particular faith group. References were accepted to practices that non-religious and religious believers might employ e.g. writing letters to M.P.'s or leading campaigns. Responses from a particular religion or religions per se were credited. To achieve the highest band responses must include the use of specialist and appropriate religious, philosophical or ethical terms.
- (c) Explain from Christianity and Buddhism how funerals reflect beliefs about life after death.** (8)
This question required candidates to relate their knowledge and understanding of how **funeral rites** reflect beliefs in **life after death** in **two** religious traditions. There were many responses which were limited to explaining funeral rites or beliefs about life after death in one religion. The connection between the two is a clear requirement of the specification. There were some high band responses in which candidates had not only linked funeral rites to beliefs about life after death but also included references to diversity within each tradition. It was disappointing that many candidates were unable to respond from a Buddhist perspective. Many of the responses focussed on Christianity.

Q.3 (d) 'Abortion is every woman's right to choose'. (15)

There were some excellent responses to this question which demonstrated informed analysis and evaluations. The majority of responses related to a variety of religious viewpoints and used an extensive and appropriate range of specialist terms and sources of authority. Answers were often well structured through a logical sequence of arguments rather than a writing frame which limits argument to 'point, explain and evaluate' in two religious tradition. Some candidates failed to reach the higher bands due to a lack of focus on 'a woman's right to choose.'

Q.4 (a) What is meant by morality? (2)

This was well answered with precise definitions which were often supported with an appropriate example. It is rather disappointing that although the vast majority of candidates understood what is meant by 'morality', the term was not generally used in responses to 'b' 'c' and 'd' questions. There are many instances where the use of key concepts are relevant in responses to questions.

(b) Describe what Christians or Buddhists believe makes an act wrong? (5)

This question required candidates to write their response from either Buddhism or Christianity. Responses were often very general with little relation to a specific religious tradition. Some references were made to an act going against 'love thy neighbour' but the reference often lacked context. Some references were made to absolute and relative morality which were relevant to the demands of the question.

(c) Explain Christian and Buddhist teachings about evil

Although the majority of candidates showed an understanding of what was meant by evil many responses made general comments which could be true of a number of religious traditions. There was little use of specific specialist terms such as **Original Sin, soul –making, etc** although it was pleasing to note that some candidates did refer to the Theravada tradition. As previously stated, 'c' questions do not require candidates to compare the attitudes from the two traditions but just to explain the distinctive teachings and attitudes.

(d) 'It is impossible to forgive'. (15)

The majority of responses gave considered and informed judgements. A range of viewpoints were often given and most candidates focussed their answer on whether it is actually possible to forgive. Some references were made to relevant examples such as Gee Walker and Martin Luther King. It is important that when relevant examples are used in a response that the candidate clearly focuses on how the example relates to their argument. There were frequent examples where the response was under-developed or incomplete, perhaps due to a lack of time .

Summary of key points

- 'c' questions require responses from two religious traditions. Higher bands cannot be awarded if candidates only write about one religious tradition.
- Although candidates are able to give clear definitions of key concepts in 'a' questions there appears a reluctance to use such specialist terms in other responses. This is particularly noticeable in 'd' questions.
- Schemas of understanding of distinctive religious traditions are often lacking in an understanding of why there is diversity within a tradition.
 - Candidates must focus on the demands of the question to achieve the higher bands.



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