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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2:  
CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM 3120U50-1**

**SUMMER 2022**

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<b>Unit</b>	<b>Page</b>
Unit 2	1

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2022

### UNIT 2 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 between outstanding and 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. Given the optionality allowed in 2022, there was evidence of a significant number of candidates who did not attempt to answer questions in the Christianity section of the paper. As in unit 1, there was an increase in the correct use of sources of authority, where quotations were used by candidates to support their knowledge of Christianity generally and in their evaluations in the extended writing.

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

##### Q.1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'vows'?

Most candidates were able to give the exemplar definition of the key concept or some form of definition of the key concept. The most common response was to include actual examples of the wedding vows exchanged in church by a bride and groom.

##### (b) Describe Christian teachings about the Bible.

There were some outstanding answers in response to this question; many candidates presented a clear understanding of the composition and nature of the Bible, with a recognition of the Bible as source of authority for all Christians. Unfortunately, a number of candidates misread the question and gave a summary of teachings from the Bible or simply narrated a particular Bible story. It is essential candidates carefully read each question and respond to the demands of the actual question.

A number of candidates explored different Christian perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible by different Christian traditions and this was encouraging to see.

**(c) Explain why the Eucharist/Communion is important to Christians.**

Some excellent responses unpacked in detail regarding the different ways in which Christians view the importance of the Eucharist/Communion. Detailed responses offered aspects of a communion or eucharist service as part of the response, and these examples were used to support explanations. Where candidates simply described a communion or eucharist service 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 very brief, 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 aspects of services from different Christian traditions, citing both Catholic and Protestant traditions.

**(d) 'Pilgrimage is the most important Christian practice.'**

The more able candidates were able to fully analyse and evaluate the significance of pilgrimage for Christians, and in this very open evaluation question, engaged with lots of other Christian practices as being more important. The most common example of pilgrimage used was the example of Christians going to the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. There were examples of sophisticated arguments to support the view of pilgrimage as being the most important practice in the sense that Christians would be inspired to live as Christians because they had visited the places where Jesus actually lived.

### **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 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 is'. These, and other connectives, are very useful trigger phrases to help candidates structure and unpack arguments, while demonstrating evaluation.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
**GCSE**  
**Summer 2022**  
**UNIT 2 CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM**

**General Comments**

**Question 2 Buddhism:**

The exam was accessible, with appropriate coverage from the specification. The demand was comparable to previous papers. This option attracted a smaller entry than Unit 1 and candidates generally responded well to the questions, showing maturity and confidence in their answers. Generally, candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of the main aspects of Buddhism and a pleasing conceptual understanding. Very few seemed to struggle with the specifics needed to answer questions. Better responses made effective use of this synoptic knowledge and understanding in order to back up their arguments in the (d) question.

As with Unit 1, candidates were well prepared for the themes of (d) question (due to advanced information). Most candidates were able to gain marks for this answer, even if they relied more on knowledge and understanding rather than analysis and evaluation. However, 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.

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 they don't make this clear and whilst we would not want to deter candidates from using the continuation space, the fact that so many did not make this obvious has caused significant delays to the marking process this Summer.

Please 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 will be missed during the scanning process.

**Comments on individual questions/sections**

**Q.2 (a) What do Buddhists mean by 'Triratna'?**

There were many correct answers with candidates stating the three refuges. In a few cases, candidates referred to Triratna as a Western form of Buddhism which was also acceptable. Some candidates were confused and described the three poisons or the three lakshanas. Incorrect answers were frequently guesses.

**(b) Describe dana (giving) in Buddhism.**

This was frequently well done, with many candidates describing the sorts of things that Buddhists do e.g., monks not handling money so dependent on the laity, the alms round, providing robes to monks at festivals, an understanding of the two-way relationship between monks and laypeople, and accruing karma. Some candidates described dana as skilful actions intended to promote non-attachment and minimise suffering. Some candidates defined dana with limited description of how it might be undertaken: e.g., giving to less fortunate was accepted but was often followed by a limited description of how this might happen. It is important that candidates take note that they were required to describe how Buddhists perform dana rather than explain why they give. Weaker responses indicated a lack of knowledge of the topic or the demands of the paper as some candidates referred to how Christians might give to charity.

**(c) Explain the lakshanas (Three Marks of Existence).**

This was a straightforward question which was generally done well. Responses tended to be either an overview of the lakshanas, or a more detailed examination of each of the Marks of Existence in turn. Many candidates showed some excellent, deep understanding of the meaning and importance of these concepts and were able to link them to other Buddhist teachings and practices e.g., pratitya, (s)kandhas, reference to Nagasena and the Chariot. The better answers made use of specialist language and appropriate metaphors to explain concepts. Some candidates showed a thorough, detailed knowledge and understanding of the different types of dukkha, which was pleasing to see. Weaker responses confused the Three Marks of Existence with the three poisons or the three jewels; while a small number explained the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha. Whilst the majority of candidates were able to explain the Marks of Existence, a small number of responses attempted to analyse the relative importance of each lakshana.

**(d) “For Buddhists, the Buddha is the most important of the Three Jewels.”**

Candidates approached this question in several ways. Some responses put forward arguments as to why Buddha is the most important e.g., as founder, or as an example, and counterargued against this viewpoint e.g., Buddha not a god so not worshipped/idolised, symbol of nirvana. Other responses put forward an argument for the dharma being the most important showing very thorough knowledge and understanding of many Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths, the precepts, three poisons, and reference to the Middle Way. Many candidates considered the role of monks and their relationship with the laity in order to argue that the Sangha might be the most important Jewel. Numerous responses compared the Buddha with the dharma and/or sangha, analysing their relative importance and evaluating the strengths of their arguments. Stronger responses looked at the Three Jewels as being refuges, considering which might provide the greater refuge to Buddhists today. Some responses referred to Mahayana attitudes towards bodhisattvas by arguing that they are more important than the Buddha as bodhisattvas stay in the human realm in order to help others and in so doing, offer real refuge. Although this question was generally done well, the better responses engaged in an actual discussion of the statement and kept that focus throughout. They also used appropriate evaluative language that moved the discussion on, whilst also using specialist language and referring to sources of authority and wisdom, including using suitable quotes.

Weaker answers often explained each part of the Three Jewels without engaging in an analysis of their value, with a minority of candidates retelling the story of Buddha's life.

### **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.
- Although not as much of an issue as in Unit 1, candidates still need to be reminded of the skills required for each question: description in (b) questions, explaining in (c) questions and analysing and evaluating in (d) questions. Adhering to the required skills should enable answers to move into higher bands.
- Regarding the (d) questions, candidates are still advised to read the statements carefully in order to tailor specific subject content. Some candidates underline or highlight specific words in a question (e.g. 'most important') while others might draft a plan of the points they intend to make – both of these can help a candidate focus.
- 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.

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES**  
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**General Comments**

**Questions 3 and 4 Religious responses to ethical themes**

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 3(d) and 4(d). 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 concept in 3(a). In some cases, these were full definitions or less full but 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 ethical 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. Candidates are required to give a definition of one of the key concepts. For this part of the 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; ethical philosophers, religious founders, the Law etc.

**(c) Questions** – These questions usually require candidates to demonstrate an understanding of an area of specification content from two religions. 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 were 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 within 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 the paper. 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. However, 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 ‘commitment’? (2)**

The majority of responses gave an adequate description of what is meant by commitment with many including a relevant example. A few responses gave a detailed example but failed to actually define the concept.

**(b) Describe from either Christianity or Buddhism the nature and purpose of the family (5)**

The question asked for a response from either Christianity or Buddhism. Many responses were very generic with little reference to the specific religion chosen. Strangely, within answers relating to the Christian tradition, many references were made to the role of the father going out to work and the mother cooking at home and looking after the children as a Christian practice. Some responses only focussed upon the nature **or** the purpose.

**(c) Explain from Christianity and Buddhism attitudes towards divorce (8)**

The question required candidates to respond from Christianity **and** Buddhism. Unfortunately, many responses focussed on only one tradition with, at best, some very general comments made about the second tradition. Some responses indicated similarities between the two religious traditions such as within both Buddhism and Christianity divorce is regrettable and there will be strategies within the faith communities for reconciliation. It is creditworthy, when accurate, to illustrate similarities between and within religious traditions as well as differences. Some responses explained the diversity of attitudes within Christianity.

**(d) ‘Religious believers should never use contraception.’(15)**

This was generally a well answered question. There were some high-level responses which gave a range of viewpoints justified by religious practice and sources of authority. Many responses gave a detailed consideration of circumstances when religious believers might use contraception. Responses generally showed an accurate knowledge from at least one religious tradition. There was no requirement for candidates to include view-points from non-religious traditions; the directive of the question is to consider ‘religious believers. When such references were made they often were not rooted in a worldview, as such, but the belief that Humanists do whatever they individually want to do without reference to any moral reasoning.

This is a misrepresentation of Humanism. The question also attracted a SPaG mark. It was noticeable that a more limited range of religious and specialist language was used (perhaps due to uncertainties regarding accurate spelling).

**Q.4 (a) What is meant by extremism (2)**

This was generally well answered.

**(b) Describe why religious believers might agree with censorship (5)**

The question asked why religious believers might agree with censorship. Many responses were very general without any reference to attitudes from *religious believers*.

Some responses described examples of censorship or gave reasons for and against censorship. This is not required and not worthy of credit.

**(c) Explain from Christianity and Buddhism attitudes to wealth (8)**

This question could be responded to with a focus on gaining or using wealth or a combination of both. There were some high-level responses which explained Christian and Buddhist attitudes to wealth and gave very detailed explanations. However, such detail often only related to one religious tradition with the second tradition often only being referred to with very general comments. Highly developed answers often incorporated reference to the teachings of Jesus, such as reference to the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Parable of the Sheep and Goats. It is important that responses use such teachings to illustrate a point made in the explanation. Sometimes the response included lengthy descriptions of such teachings without any reference to how they relate to the question focus.

**(d) 'Religious believers should do more to encourage human rights' (15)**

This was often a less developed answer than 3d. It appeared that this was sometimes a result of time pressure, but also that there were few examples of human rights in the working knowledge of candidates. Some responses described examples of human rights abuse but failed to draw out from their descriptions a response to the question asked. Although references were made to some religious believers e.g. Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, and Malala there were limited references to religious agencies working for human rights.

The question also attracted a SPaG mark. It was noticeable that a more limited range of religious and specialist language was used. Perhaps this was due to uncertainties regarding accurate spelling.

### Summary of key points

- Be aware of the requirement to explain from 2 religious traditions in (c) questions.
- There are many opportunities throughout these units to use references to contemporary situations and religious charities and agencies.
- When referring to teachings from sacred texts it is important to draw out the meaning from the teaching in relation to the question demands than to give the narrative of the story.



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