



GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES (SHORT COURSE) 8061/1

Section 1 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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Mark Schemes for GCSE Religious Studies

This paper requires expert markers who have wide knowledge and understanding of the particular subject content of the Specification. With the exception of the multiple-choice question, many of the questions asked have many different creditable answers and students are able to bring to their answers their own knowledge, understanding and background. They will offer details, arguments and evidence which the examiner, with the help of the mark scheme, will need to judge as creditable or not. It is therefore important that the examiner has a good understanding of the principles and spirit of the mark scheme in order to be fair and consistent when marking students' answers. The Content included is designed to be as helpful as possible but in many cases is not exhaustive. So Content sections are introduced by the sentence:

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

this is to remind examiners that there may well be additional correct answers which, with their expertise, they will be able to allow. With all questions if an examiner has any doubt about answers being creditworthy they should consult their team leader.

Structure

The mark scheme for each question shows:

- the question; Each question is printed in full before its target and mark scheme. It is always important that examiners remind themselves of the exact question being asked. In particular, they will need to do this in instances where the answer appears to be 'straying' from the question set or perhaps offers a valid alternative not included in the mark scheme
- target; The target provides the specific assessment objective which the question is testing. It reminds examiners of the skills the question is designed to test, eg knowledge and understanding, evaluation
- the total marks available for the question and if Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar is assessed
- the typical answer(s) or content which are expected
- generic instructions related to the question target of how to award marks (ie levels of response grid).

Themes papers guidance (Specification A and Short Course)

In questions where students may choose religions from which to illustrate their answer, there may be some general Content, ie credible comments which students will make which could be applied to any religion or perhaps to a secular viewpoint as well. Where these are appropriate they are usually given first. The mark scheme will also include, under separate headings, Content sections for each of the six religions allowed within the Specifications.

General Guidance

.../. means that these are acceptable alternative answers in the mark scheme, eg Guru Har Krishan / Guru Tegh Bahadur / Guru Gobind Singh.

Answers may include specialist terms, in Hebrew or Arabic for example. If this is the case, the mark scheme will usually indicate this by providing in brackets the English as well, eg 'Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)'. In such questions, answers will be credited whether provided in the original language or in English.

Some mark schemes use bullet points to separate content. Each bullet point refers to a different possible 'belief' or 'teaching' or 'way', depending on the question. Obliques (.../...) used within the bullet point indicate different ways in which the point may be expressed and points which may be made to give the further detail or development needed for the second mark.

Where a student has crossed out a complete answer, it should be marked if it remains legible, unless an alternative is provided in which case only the alternative should be marked. When part of an answer is crossed out, then only what remains should be considered.

In questions where credit can be given to the development of a point, those developments can take the form of:

- example or evidence
- reference to different views
- detailed information.

1-mark multiple-choice questions

Such questions have four alternatives and the one correct answer will be given together with the correct letter, eg 'Answer: D Trinity'.

2-mark short-answer questions

The principle here is provided in the mark scheme: 'One mark for each of two correct points.' Students may give **more than** the two answers required by the question. In such instances:

- **award for the first two answers only, wherever they appear**
- if a student gives more than one answer on the first line and another answer/other answers on the second line, the 'first two answers' will be the **first two** on the first line and **only these two** should be considered for marks. Other answers must be ignored
- if on the first line the first two answers given are correct, award two marks, regardless of what is written elsewhere in the answer
- if the first two answers can only be awarded one mark yet there is a third answer that is correct, this correct third answer must be ignored and no mark given for it
- however, if the student gives some **elaboration after the first answer**, which is clearly developing their first answer, (which they are not required to do), do not consider this elaboration to be their second answer (unless the elaboration happens to contain a second correct answer to the question asked), regardless of whether there are other answers provided. In this case, the second answer also, if correct, may be credited for the second mark.

4 and 5-mark answer questions

Examiners should take care to note the target of the question. Clear information is provided for these types of question on how to award marking points. Examiners should carefully read the additional instructions provided for each type of question (eg for influence questions the final sentence in the general guidance box reminds the examiner that the second mark (detailed explanation) awarded in each case must show clear 'influence').

12-mark answer questions

The 12-mark questions test Evaluation skills (AO2). The mark scheme for these answers is based on Levels of Response marking in which the examiner is required to make a judgement on the completed answer taken as a whole.

Level of response marking instructions

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

Level 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.)

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.

Level 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. If examiners have any doubt about what level to award a response, they should consult their team leader.

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before examiners apply the mark scheme to a student's answer they should read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. They should then apply the mark scheme. It may be necessary to read the answer more than once to be sure of assigning the correct Level.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in 12-mark questions.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) will be assessed against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
High performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. • Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.	3
Intermediate performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. • Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.	2
Threshold performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.	1
No marks awarded	• The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.	0

0 1 . 1 Which one of the following is not one of the Six Perfections?

[1 mark]

- A Craving**
- B Energy**
- C Generosity**
- D Patience**

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

Answer: **A - Craving**

0 1 . 2 Give two reasons why Siddhartha Gautama left his life of luxury.

[2 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

One mark for each of two correct points.

If students provide more than two responses only the first two should be considered for marking.

Students may include two of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

He became dissatisfied with his life in the palace / he grew curious about the outside world / he saw the four sights (old age / illness / death / a holy man) / he wanted to find the answer to the problem of suffering / he knew that if he stayed in the palace, he would not find the answers he was looking for / he was becoming too attached to his life of luxury / he was searching for the truth / fulfilled his destiny / Asita predicted that Siddhartha Gautama would become a great King like his father or a Buddha, etc.

0 1 . 3 Explain two ways in which a belief in impermanence (anicca) influences Buddhists today.

[4 marks]

Target: AO1:2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and societies

First way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

Second way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

To be a 'detailed explanation' the 'influence' of the way must be included.

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Suffering can arise when people resist change / people want things to stay the same and will live their lives to try and ensure this.
- Buddhists realising anicca will know that all conditioned things are transient / this should enable Buddhists to suffer less because they can let go of attachment / letting go of attachments becomes a lifestyle.
- People expect things to stay the same / people suffer when things change / this influences them to be habitual.
- Anicca affects people's minds, thoughts, longings, notions, ideas and ideals / if they do not accept that these things change, they can suffer.
- People's bodies change all the time / the ageing process influences how they see life / it influences what someone can physically do in their life.
- Happiness is only temporary as all things can change / the story of Kisa Gotami teaches about suffering and death because of anicca / people could read and understand this story and it may influence their lives, that they become more accepting of how things are, etc.

0 1 . 4 Explain two Buddhist teachings about the concept of dependent arising (paticcasamuppada).

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

First teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Second teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Buddhist belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Dependent arising expresses the Buddhist vision of the nature of reality / a Buddhist must understand this concept to become enlightened / that is understand the true nature of things.
- It says that everything arises, and continues, dependent upon conditions / that is, everything depends on something else for its existence or function / interdependence / everything links / a 'causal chain' / nothing is permanent and unchanging.
- There is a list of twelve elements from the Buddhist teachings which arise depending on the preceding link / for instance, a tree depends on soil, rain and sunshine to survive / nothing is eternal including human beings.
- The Tibetan Wheel of Life illustrates the process of dependent arising / this can be seen in relation to human life, death and rebirth.
- The arising of mental formations and the resultant notion of "I" and "mine," which are the source of suffering / the outer circle of the wheel is made up of 12 links or stages which arise depending on the preceding link / for instance, the twelfth link which is old age and death leads directly to the first link which is ignorance / equally, the link of craving means that people can become attached and this will lead to greater dukkha, etc.

Sources of authority might include:

'When this exists, that comes to be. With the arising (uppada) of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be. With the cessation (nirodha) of this, that ceases.' Samyutta Nikaya 12.61

'All events in life are so intimately linked with the fate of others that a single person on his or her own cannot even begin to act...' The Dalai Lama.

'Think of a wave in the sea...it is something that has been made temporarily possible by wind and water and that it is dependent on a set of constantly changing circumstances.' Sogyal Rinpoche, a Tibetan Buddhist Teacher.

Accept all other sources of authority that correctly support the beliefs given.

0 1 . 5 'For Buddhists, compassion (karuna) is the most important teaching on how to behave towards others.'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Buddhist teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[SPaG 3 marks]

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10–12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7–9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4–6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1–3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

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No marks awarded	• The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- The Buddha taught that compassion was an important quality all Buddhists should develop / The Buddha said that people should show compassion towards themselves and towards others.
- Compassion is a human emotion which leads humans to want to relieve another's pain.
- Compassion (karuna) is one of the four sublime states / this means that compassion is one of the four qualities that the Buddha taught for people to specifically develop / it is maintaining stability and calm in the face of both happiness and suffering.
- Compassion is about how people act / compassion is a key quality in how someone or why someone may follow the 5 Precepts / Buddhism is a practical faith and about action rather than just words.
- Compassion is a crucial quality in Mahayana Buddhism for Bodhisattvas to develop and is taught to develop equally with wisdom / compassion is a key quality for Bodhisattvas / having a desire to relieve people of their suffering / it is one of the six perfections.
- A major quality in Buddhism such as wisdom cannot be developed without compassion / it is not really possible to have one without the other / Buddhists can develop the wisdom for how to help others, but it is of little use without compassion to want to help others.
- Compassion is different from just pity and is a desire to relieve others who are suffering for its own sake / giving compassion as dana paramita or 'the perfection of giving'.
- Rokpa is a Tibetan word meaning 'help' or 'friend' and is the name given to the 1986 international charity which was set up and based on the premise of showing compassion to others.
- 'If we are to protect this home of ours, each of us needs to experience a valid sense of universal compassion.' Tenzin Gyatso (the Dalai Lama) / 'My religion is simple; my religion is kindness.' The Dalai Lama, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- Wisdom could be the most important teaching in Buddhism on how to behave towards others because it means to have experience, knowledge and good judgement / it forms one of the three parts of the Eightfold Path and includes right understanding and right thought.
- Wisdom is the key to understanding suffering and the nature of reality / therefore to gaining enlightenment.
- The opposite of wisdom is ignorance, and this is one of the three fires / it is a human emotion which leads humans to want to relieve another's pain.
- The concept or teaching of Metta (loving kindness) could be seen as of equal value to compassion (karuna) / Buddhists can practice Metta through Metta Meditation and the four stages of this.
- Ethics (sila) in Buddhism has three components to it / right speech; right action; right livelihood / a belief in kamma (karma) and how moral behaviour can determine a favourable rebirth / all could be equally important in how to behave towards others.
- Overcoming the three fires or poisons of greed, hatred and delusion could be seen as a vital teaching in Buddhism of how to behave towards others.
- 'We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts, we make the world.' The Buddha / 'My religion is simple; my religion is kindness' so if Buddhists think about loving kindness, it may actually overlap with compassion, etc.