



GCSE AQA Religious Studies A Practice Papers

Component 1: Buddhism

Update v1.2, October 2025

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Teacher's Introduction

This resource consists of a selection of practice exam-style questions and mark schemes for AQA Specification A.

The sample questions are numbered as per the specimen materials published by AQA, so that all three examples from within a religion have the same number. This is to help avoid confusion between these materials and a live paper numbered as the relevant section. This resource is focused on Buddhism which is question 3 on a full paper 1, and so all three examples are numbered '3'.

Remember!

Always check the exam board website for new information, including changes to the specification and sample assessment material.

There are similar resources available for other religions, making it possible to mix and match an entire exemplar paper 1 from these resources. Note that the cover of each paper assumes it is being sat as a standalone 50-minute exam on one religion, whereas the real exam is a 1 hour 45 minute exam on two religions.

The mark scheme content given is indicative, meaning that it includes a selection of material likely to appear across a range of candidate responses, but does not seek to exhaustively list all possible material.

July 2017

Update v1.1, January 2020

SPaG marking has been removed from Question 10 Practices and applied to Question 5 Beliefs (12 mark questions) in all papers. SPaG marking has also been corrected to 3 marks.

Update v1.2, October 2025

As per the exam board assessment updates, the following changes have been made to these papers:

- “contrasting” replaced with “different” in the 4 mark question
- 5-mark question replaced with a 6-mark question
- 2-mark question reduced to a 1-mark question

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* resulting from minor specification changes, suggestions from teachers and peer reviews, or occasional errors reported by customers

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Schemes of Assessment

Assessment Objectives

Assessment Objective 1 has three elements, which are assessed with different styles of question.

- 1(1) is assessed via questions 03.1, 03.2, 03.4, 03.6 and 03.7. Responses to these questions should demonstrate:
 - ✓ knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including practices and sources of authority
- 1(2) is assessed via questions 03.3 and 03.8. Responses to these questions should demonstrate:
 - ✓ knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and society
- 1(3) is assessed via question 03.9. Responses to these questions should demonstrate:
 - ✓ knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including differences and similarities between and within religions

Assessment Objective 2 is always assessed via the 12-mark questions, 03.5 and 03.10. The objective is to:

- ✓ analyse and evaluate aspects of religion, including their significance and influence

Allocation of Marks

Questions assessing Assessment Objective 1(1) are awarded one mark for each correct point, up to the maximum marks available for the question.

Questions assessing Assessment Objective 1(2) and 1(3) are either 4- or 6-mark questions which ask for two separate points to be made. One mark is given for the point itself, and a second for appropriate development of that point. In the 6-mark question, the final two marks available are awarded for the reference and application to teachings required by the question. One mark is awarded for naming a relevant source of authority, and one mark for the application. Each mark can be awarded individually, and if the source is both named and applied, then two marks should be awarded.

Questions assessing Assessment Objective 2 are 12-mark questions. Marks are allocated according to the following levels of response:

• One point of view stated, with limited justification	1–3 marks	(12 marks) Plus a possible 3 marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG)
• Different arguments for and against, with justification OR Several linked and justified arguments supporting one position • This is the highest level which can be reached if only one point of view is considered or there is no mention of religion	4–6 marks	
• Good arguments on both sides of the issue, well justified and linked together • Clear reference to religion	7–9 marks	
• Very well argued. Arguments on both sides are linked together and fully justified, leading to a reasoned conclusion • Clear and appropriate reference to religion applied to the question	10–12 marks	

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Marks are awarded for Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar. These marks are awarded based on the candidates' responses to the 12-mark questions only.

• No response is given OR the response contains no material relevant to the question asked OR the spelling, punctuation and grammar demonstrated in the response do not meet threshold performance	0 marks	-
• Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate • Any errors in grammar do not hinder the overall communication of meaning • A limited range of appropriate specialist terms is used	1 mark	Threshold
• Spelling and punctuation are mainly accurate • The rules of grammar are used to give an overall clarity of meaning	2 marks	Intermediate
• Spelling and punctuation are consistently accurate • The rules of grammar are used effectively to control and communicate meaning • A wide range of specialist terms is used	3 marks	High

Religious Studies

Component 1: Buddhism

Practice Paper 1

Name	
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Question	Mark
03.1	
03.2	
03.3	
03.4	
03.5	
03.6	
03.7	
03.8	
03.9	
03.10	
Total	
SpaG	

Time allowed

50 minutes

Instructions

Answer **all** of the questions.

Information

The total marks available for each religion is **51**. The number of marks available for each question is shown in brackets.

Marks are available in the 12-mark question of the Beliefs section for using good spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question 3: Buddhism

Beliefs

- 03.1 Which **one** of the following terms means 'Enlightened One'?
- A) Arhat B) Monk C) Buddha
- 03.2 Give **one** of the Three Marks of Existence.
- 03.3 Explain **two** ways in which the ascetic life of the Buddha is important.
- 03.4 Explain **two** Buddhist teachings about rebirth.
Refer to scriptural or sacred writings in your answer.
- 03.5 'All beings are capable of enlightenment.'
Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
- Refer to Buddhist teaching
 - Give developed arguments to support this statement
 - Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
 - Reach a justified conclusion

Practices

- 03.6 Which **one** of the following is a type of Buddhist meditation?
- A) Gompas B) Puja C) Vipassana
- 03.7 Give **one** Buddhist place of worship.
- 03.8 Explain **two** different methods of meditation.
- 03.9 Explain the importance of **two** of the Five Precepts.
Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.
- 03.10 'Buddhists do not need special places of worship.'
Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
- Refer to Buddhist teaching
 - Give developed arguments to support this statement
 - Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
 - Reach a justified conclusion

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Question 3: Buddhism

Beliefs

03.1 Which **one** of the following terms means 'Enlightened One'?

☐ A) Arhat

☐ B) Monk

☐ C) Buddha

03.2 Give **one** of the Three Marks of Existence.

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03.3 Explain **two** ways in which the ascetic life of the Buddha is important.



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03.4 Explain **two** Buddhist teachings about rebirth.
Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

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03.5 'All beings are capable of enlightenment.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to Buddhist teaching
- Give developed arguments to support this statement
- Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion

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03.6 Which **one** of the following is a type of Buddhist meditation?

- ☐ A) Gompas ☐ B) Puja ☐ C) Vipassana

03.7 Give **one** Buddhist place of worship.

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03.8 Explain **two** different methods of meditation.

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03.9 Explain the importance of **two** of the Five Precepts.
Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.

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03.10 'Buddhists do not need special places to worship.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to Buddhist teaching
- Give developed arguments to support this statement
- Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion

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Preview of Questions Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of questions ends here to avoid students previewing questions before they are set. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.

Mark Scheme

Question 3: Buddhism

Beliefs

03.1 Which of the following is not an aspect of the Threefold Way?

A) Panna

B) Sila

C) Dukkha

Correct response: C) Dukkha

03.2 Give one of the Four Noble Truths.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted

- Suffering/Dukkha
- Nirodha (the end of suffering)
- Tanha/Craving (the origin of dukkha)
- Magga (the path to the end of suffering)

03.3 Explain how two points on the eightfold path might influence individual behaviour.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted

- Right conduct means to act in a positive and skilful way that has a positive effect on future rebirths; Buddhists carefully consider their actions and choices
- Right mindfulness requires that one is always conscious of their thoughts, feelings and actions; it ensures Buddhists are aware of the five aggregates (skandhas) and recognise the five aggregates (skandhas)
- Right view means accepting the Buddha's teachings as true; it leads to one's own enlightenment

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- 03.4 Explain two beliefs about Buddhahood.
Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

Responses might include the following, but any relevant point will be credited:

- For Theravada Buddhism 'Buddha' describes a person who has achieved enlightenment through their own efforts, without the benefit of a teacher or guide.
- Mahayana Buddhism includes the idea of a Buddha as a being who has transcended the human form as a human being in order to lead others to nibbana.
- Scripture is a complex question in Buddhism, as the Buddha is seen as having no divinity from whom such texts can originate; religious texts are seen as having no absolute authority in the religion; the Pali Canon includes teachings of many different Buddhas and different qualities are emphasised by different schools. The Anguttara Sutta describes Buddha as the supreme man, who emphasises that any living creature can become a Buddha.

- 03.5 'Nothing happens without a cause.'
Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to Buddhist teaching
- Give developed arguments to support this statement
- Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion

Responses may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but any relevant point will be credited:

Arguments in support of the question:

- Dependent arising (paticcasamupada), also called dependent co-arising, states that everything which happens does so as a result of a combination of causes. This is part of the dhamma (dharma).
- The Buddha identified a chain of causation, consisting of 12 links, where one leads to the rise to another and ignorance is the start of the chain.
- This principle is in accord with modern scientific views that nothing exists without a cause.

Arguments in support of other views:

- The metaphor of a chain of causation implies a first cause, but there is no first cause. Even if we don't know what that first cause is, it is still there. People who believe in God would argue that God is the one who starts off everything; this rule; God is the uncaused causer that starts off everything.
- The Buddha refused to answer questions about the eternity of the soul on the basis that such questions were unanswerable and speculations that led to unease and confusion (Sabbasava Sutta).

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03.6 Which one of the following terms means 'loving-kindness'?

A) Metta

B) Upekka

C) Karuna

Correct response: A) Metta

03.7 Give one Buddhist ritual associated with death.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted. Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.

- Monks chanting mantras and/or scriptural verses
- Gifting food to monks in attendance
- Reading the Tibetan Book of the Dead

03.8 Explain the importance of two different places of Buddhist worship.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted. Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.

- Buddhist temples offer Buddhists a chance to worship community, Sangha, one of the Three Jewels
- Sites like Bodhi Gaya are places where important events of the Buddha's life took place. Visiting them will help bring Buddhists closer to the reality of the Buddha's life.
- Some places house physical relics of the Buddha, like the Tooth Relic. There may be specific beliefs associated with these relics, such as that they will protect you. People may visit them to feel they are close to the Buddha.

03.9 Explain how two of the six perfections are put into practice by Buddhists. Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.

Responses may include the following, but any relevant point will be accepted. Refer to Buddhist teaching in your answer.

- Generosity/Giving might influence Buddhists to support the community and the Sangha
- Patience encourages Buddhists to accept things, and not create more suffering (dukkha)
- Effort/energy means Buddhists will keep striving to follow the Eightfold Path skilfully at all times

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03.10 'The Buddha's birthday is not as important for Buddhists as the day of his death (nirvana).' Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to Buddhist teaching
- Give developed arguments to support this statement
- Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion

Responses may include some of the following evidence and arguments which will be credited:

Arguments in support of the statement:

- The day the Buddha achieved enlightenment is the reason why Buddhists are encouraged by the example of the Buddha to seek enlightenment themselves, so a day which reminds them of this should be important to them
- Religious festivals offer opportunities to teach children and adults about events which led to that festival; the enlightenment of the Buddha is a key event in the religion and so the most useful teaching opportunity is the date of it

Arguments in support of other views:

- If the Buddha had not been born, he couldn't have become enlightened, so there would be no Buddhism
- Many Buddhists believe that the Buddha was born, became enlightened and died on the same day so there is no need to distinguish
- Any festival can be a reminder of the teachings of the Buddha, so the Buddha's birthday which is one of the Three Jewels and for that reason all are important

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Preview of Answers Ends Here

This is a limited inspection copy. Sample of answers ends here to stop students looking up answers to their assessments. See contents page for details of the rest of the resource.