



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION D: A STUDY OF BUDDHISM**

A120UD0-1

About this marking scheme

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

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

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

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

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

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for Marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

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

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

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

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions 20 marks <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	17-20 marks • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	13-16 marks • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	9-12 marks • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	5-8 marks • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-4 marks • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions 30 marks <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	25-30 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	19-24 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	13-18 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	7-12 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	1-6 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

COMPONENT 1: OPTION D – A STUDY OF BUDDHISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Examine the main themes and concepts in the Heart Sutra. [AO1 20]**

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Heart Sutra (Prajnaparamitahrdaya Sutra) is a Mahayana text and is one of the Prajnaparamita Sutras – Perfection of Wisdom Sutras.
- The ‘wisdom’ in these Mahayana texts refers to gaining insight and understanding of sunyata (emptiness).
- Accounts of the origins of the Prajnaparamita Sutras vary: according to Mahayana Buddhists these are part of the Buddha vacana (words/sayings of the still existing Buddha) whilst according to modern scholarship these texts belong to the first few centuries CE.
- The Prajnaparamita Sutras are often compared with the second century Buddhist scholar Nagarjuna and reflect his Madhyamika philosophy – Middle School of Buddhism.
- The Middle School of Buddhism rejects the belief in eternalism (things exist absolutely) and in nihilism (nothing exists absolutely). Conventional truth is duality - people see things existing separate to themselves. Ultimate truth is non-duality – nothing is separate and everything is interconnected.
- The Heart Sutra provides in a condensed form teaching about sunyata – it is therefore very short and is often used for daily meditation and recitation by Mahayana Buddhists e.g., in Zen Buddhism.
- In the Heart Sutra a dialogue takes place between Avalokitesvara (the bodhisattva of compassion) and Sariputra (representative of Theravada Buddhism and the teaching found in the Abhidhamma Pitaka).
- Avalokitesvara in the course of vipassana meditation develops prajna (wisdom) and reflects on the five skandhas (the 5 elements that constitute an individual). Avalokitesvara explains that what appear to be distinct, separate and different phenomena are in fact empty of svabhava (own-being) and are therefore not distinct, separate and different.
- The key phrase in the Heart Sutra is ‘form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form’. Avalokitesvara continues by teaching that ‘emptiness does not differ from form, form does not differ from emptiness; whatever is form, that is emptiness, whatever is emptiness, that is form, the same is true of feelings, perceptions, impulses and consciousness’.
- The Heart Sutra then repeats and deepens the teaching on sunyata stating that nothing can claim independent existence.
- The Heart Sutra concludes with: ‘Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an Awakening, all-hail!’ which are often used as a Mahayana mantra: ‘Gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha’.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The Heart Sutra accurately represents reality.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates may agree with the statement by arguing that the Heart Sutra conveys what science teaches i.e., that everything is made up of matter which is made up of atoms which are made up of protons, neutrons and electrons.
- It may be argued that the Heart Sutra is very helpful because it distinguishes between appearance and reality – what appears to be solid matter is in fact no one 'thing'.
- Candidates may agree with the statement because if everything is sunyata then everything is inter-connected which is what people today believe about, for example, nature and the environment.
- It may be argued that the teaching is helpful because it makes people sceptical about appearances (conventional truth) and makes them want to look more deeply at the underlying reality (ultimate truth).
- Candidates may argue that the statement is correct because particularly for atheists it emphasises the idea of everything being relative – there is nothing certain or absolute in the universe.
- It may be argued that it is very helpful for some Mahayana Buddhists as it provides a way of demythologising their beliefs in eternal beings such as Buddhas, bodhisattvas, Pure Lands etc.
- Candidates may agree with the statement because it fits in with philosophical teachings about religious language being meaningless and only making sense if one is taking part in the same language game.
- **Conversely**, it may be argued that it is of little help because for most people it is simply a set of contradictory statements about 'nothing' which does not explain anything about reality.
- It may be argued that it cannot be very helpful because it is basically a religious text which implies that reality is only fully understood by the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara whose existence cannot be verified.
- Candidates may argue that it is only a very short text with condensed teaching and that it can only be help when put in the context of the whole of Madhyamika philosophy.
- It may be argued that the teaching is not at all helpful in understanding reality and that for Buddhists much more help would be found in the Four Noble Truths.
- Candidates may argue that the Heart Sutra is nothing more than an extended commentary on one of the Three Lakshanas – anicca – and that understanding that is more helpful.
- It may be argued that the statement is incorrect because the Heart Sutra is unrealistic in its teaching about sunyata – at a practical level this is meaningless and people have to live daily lives with the assumption that form is not emptiness but that in fact things are initially and immediately understood as what they appear to be.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2. (a) **Examine the seriousness of the Four Parajikas ‘defeats’ in the Theravada monastic sangha.** [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Four Parajikas are found in the Sutta Vibhanga which is a section of the Vinaya Pitaka.
- The Parajikas are in addition to the Patimokkha and are four rules which are not subject to change or reinterpretation.
- If any of the four Parajikas is broken then the bhikkhu is de-robed and expelled from the monastic sangha without the possibility of being re-ordained.
- The four Parajikas were designed to maintain the discipline and moral purity of the monastic sangha given that it is made up of people living in close proximity and in a community together.
- Traditionally, the four Parajikas are taught as soon as possible after a monk's ordination to the monastic sangha.
- The first Parajika refers to any kind of sexual intercourse with a person/animal undertaken voluntarily.
- This Parajika means that monks and nuns live a celibate life being detached from intimate sexual relationships with another person. This can be linked to the need to conquer tanha (craving).
- The second Parajika refers to any form of theft. This is defined as taking what is not given and is applied to taking what is not given in an inhabited area and in the wilderness.
- This Parajika reinforces the idea of poverty in terms of the lifestyle of monks/nuns in not having possessions and not seeking for them. It also reinforces the idea of detachment.
- The third Parajika refers to intentionally causing the death of a human being. This would include finding an assassin to kill someone or praising the advantages of death which might incite someone to take their own life.
- This Parajika highlights the view that being reborn in the human realm provides the best opportunity of hearing the dhamma and being free from samsara and that human life is therefore of the greatest value. It also reinforces the importance of avoiding the fire of hatred.
- The fourth Parajika refers to making false claims about spiritual development. This would include claiming to have a superior human state and having noble knowledge and vision.
- This Parajika highlights the importance of avoiding pride in how a monk/nun is living their life compared to others around them. It also reinforces the importance of countering the fire of ignorance.
- Four additional Parajikas are added for nuns (i) lustful touching of a man; (ii) not informing the monastic sangha about a nun who has broken a Parajika; (3) becoming a follower of a monk who has been suspended from the monastic Sangha despite three warnings; (4) consenting in a lustful way to a man approaching her.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The Parajikas still have relevance in the modern world.'

Evaluate this view, with reference to Buddhism.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- It may be argued in support of the statement that any ancient text-based rules such as the Parajikas have no relevance because the modern world is very different from that when they were composed.
- It may be argued that the statement is correct because today Buddhists recognise that the Buddha did not intend any rules to be permanent but – as suggested by the Parable of the Raft - only to be applied when they were of use in achieving Awakening/Enlightenment.
- Candidates may argue that the rules have no contemporary relevance because they reflect a heteronormative/patriarchal understanding of society and people's behaviour – particularly shown in the additional rules for nuns.
- It may be argued that the Parajikas have no relevance because they were conceived with a particular context in mind – that of small monastic communities in an ancient agrarian society trying to establish themselves over and against other religious and cultural traditions.
- Candidates may argue that whilst the Parajikas have some relevance for monks of the Theravada monastic sangha, they have no relevance for monks and nuns belonging to other schools of Buddhism today.
- It may be argued that the Parajikas have no relevance because they are not focused on key principles accepted today such as showing loving kindness and forgiveness.
- **Conversely**, candidates may argue that the Parajikas are part of what many regard as the authentic voice and words of the Buddha and, given the wisdom he obtained at his Awakening/Enlightenment, they are relevant for all time and in all places.
- It may be argued that the Parajikas are just as relevant today as in the past for those Buddhists – particularly if they are heritage Buddhists – who belong to the Theravada monastic sangha.
- Candidates may argue that rules are vital for any community of people living in close proximity and that the first Parajika in particular continues to protect monks and nuns from any form of sexual exploitation within the monastic sangha.
- It may be argued that the fourth Parajika is particularly important within the Theravada monastic community today as it prevents any form of personality cult being encouraged or developing.
- Candidates may argue that the third Parajika is as relevant today as when it was first passed on because it prevents members of the monastic community from falling into a negative/pessimistic/nihilistic understanding of themselves and the human condition.
- It may be argued that taken together the Parajikas are still relevant in the modern world as their ultimate goal is to promote well-being and to establish a way of life which is most conducive to attaining Awakening/Enlightenment.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3. (a) Explain the importance of meditation in Buddhism. [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The importance of meditation can be seen in the fact that the best-known image of Buddhism is of the Buddha seated in the lotus position in meditation.
- The Buddha on leaving the palace followed the six ascetics who taught him how to meditate and it was through meditation that he attained Awakening under the Bodhi Tree.
- Many Buddhists imitate the example of the Buddha in meditating in order to attain enlightenment for themselves.
- Meditation is important in Buddhism as it is part of the Eightfold Path which includes the Way of Meditation involving Right effort, Right mindfulness and Right Concentration.
- Following the Eightfold Path is the path the Buddha set out in order for people to achieve an end to dukkha and to attain Awakening which shows that meditation is important.
- Meditation is seen by many Buddhists as the best way for a person to tackle the Three Fires (poisons) of delusion, greed and hatred which are the main cause of dukkha and which keep a person trapped in samsara.
- Meditation is of central importance in Theravada where the whole purpose of a bhikkhu's monastic life is to develop his skills in meditating in order to achieve Awakening and to escape samsara.
- Many Buddhists would practice samatha (calm meditation) which would be important as it might include Buddhist ritual practices such as chanting, the use of mudras and taking refuge.
- In Zen Buddhism, meditation through sitting (zazen) is important because through the focus required on koans etc., sudden Awakening (satori) - can be achieved in this life.
- In Mahayana Buddhism in general, meditation is important in helping people particularly in trying to focus on the ultimate truth as opposed to the conventional truth.
- Many Buddhists would practice metta bhavana (cultivation of loving kindness) because it enables them to spread metta (loving kindness) to all sentient beings and is a way for them to show karuna (compassion).
- More experienced Buddhists of different schools would find vipassana (insight meditation) essential as they try to understand more fully key parts of the dhamma such as the Three Lakshanas.
- Meditation – bhavana – is a form of mental development which is important for all Buddhists in helping them to become awake to themselves and to the true nature of things.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) 'Metta bhavana (cultivation of loving kindness) is the most important type of meditation in Buddhism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates may identify metta bhavana as being separate from samatha (calm meditation) or as being a development of samatha and allowance should be made accordingly.
- It may be argued that the statement is correct because the Buddha stated that 'just as a mother would protect her only child with her own life, even so let us cultivate boundless thoughts of metta (loving kindness) towards all beings'.
- Candidates may argue that the practise of metta bhavana is the most important as it prevents Buddhists from becoming too focused on themselves and their own enlightenment.
- It may be argued that metta bhavana is the most important type of meditation because it is easily accessible to anyone – even those who are just starting the practice of meditation.
- Candidates may agree with the statement because following the stages of metta bhavana helps a Buddhist in developing their skill in other forms of meditation such as vipassana and zazen.
- It may be argued that the statement is correct particularly for Mahayana Buddhists as it helps to develop the skills and insight needed for becoming a bodhisattva.
- **Conversely**, candidates may argue that vipassana is the most important form of meditation because it is the most advanced form building on other types of meditation.
- Vipassana may be seen as the most important form of meditation because it enables the Buddhist to focus on specific aspects of the dhamma or living the Buddhist life e.g., the Three Fires (poisons) of delusion, greed and hatred.
- It may be argued that samatha is the most important form of meditation because it is accessible to all Buddhists and requires nothing complicated – simply focus on breathing (anapanasati) or on small coloured circles (kasinas) etc.
- Samatha may be seen as the most important form of meditation because it is the foundation for other forms of meditation i.e., only when the mind is calm and peaceful can the Way of Meditation in the Eightfold Path be followed.
- Candidates may argue that in Zen Buddhism, zazen is the most important form of meditation because only through emptying the mind of distraction can the moment of sudden Awakening (satori) be reached.
- **Alternatively**, it may be argued that there is no hierarchy in terms of importance with regard to meditation since everything depends on the person meditating and on the goal they are hoping to achieve.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. (a) Explain the characteristics of bodhisattvas in Buddhism. [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Explanation of the characteristics of bodhisattvas is complex and may vary according to sources used for which allowance needs to be made.
- Belief in the bodhisattva concept is found in different forms of Mahayana Buddhism but not in Theravada.
- Bodhisattvas can be understood as heavenly beings on the path to perfect Buddhahood who have achieved enlightenment and may be prayed to such as Manjushri, Tara, Avalokitesvara, Ksitigarbha etc.
- Bodhisattvas can also be understood as people who are journeying towards enlightenment such as significant spiritual leaders in Buddhism or others who might be regarded as symbols and signs of compassion.
- A key aspect of bodhisattvas is the belief that through the bodhisattva vow the bodhisattva aspires to achieve enlightenment but only to enter it when all other sentient beings have become enlightened.
- Bodhisattvas are therefore seen as actively compassionate in the realm of samsara in helping others to achieve enlightenment.
- The characteristics of bodhisattva include the development of bodhicitta (Buddha consciousness) which bodhisattvas find within themselves and develop through meditation.
- The taking of vows involves the continual commitment not to be a cause of suffering (dukkha) in the world to others, to be free from the Three Poisons and to help others through wisdom and compassion to be free as well.
- Various explained, the bodhisattva's path involves developing the paramitas (perfections) which include: dana (generosity), sila (morality), virya (energy), kshanti (patience), samadhi (meditation), prajna (wisdom).
- Additional paramitas may also be named: skilfulness (upaya), resolution (pranidhana), strength (bala) and knowledge (jnana).
- The paramitas may be linked to particular bhumis (stages) in the progress made by the would-be bodhisattva in acquiring complete self-discipline and perfect wisdom.
- The ten bhumis in fully developing a person's nature as a bodhisattva include: (1) delights and joy (2) purity (3) brightness (4) inflammation (5) hard to conquer (6) clearly manifest (7) far progressed (8) immovable (9) perfect intelligence (10) cloud of dharma.
- The path of the bodhisattva is a complex one and may involve numerous rebirths as the person develops their paramitas and is able to complete each of the bhumis.
- Ultimately a bodhisattva might appear indistinguishable from a buddha in terms of characteristics but is generally seen as retaining the key features of wisdom and compassion for all sentient beings.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The concept of bodhisattva is an essential feature of Buddhism'.

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates may agree with the statement by arguing that the concept of the bodhisattva is an essential feature of Mahayana Buddhism in terms of its teachings and it provides beings who can be addressed in prayer for help.
- It may be argued that homage shown to figures throughout the Mahayana tradition such as Manjushri, Tara, Avalokitesvara can only be understood through the concept of the bodhisattva.
- Candidates may argue that the Dalai Lama – the best-known leader within the Mahayana tradition and within Buddhism in general – has a position and role which is defined by the concept of the bodhisattva.
- It may be argued that the late Thich Nhat Hanh showed the importance of the concept of the bodhisattva by broadening it to include people of compassion such as Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jnr.
- It is an essential feature of Buddhism because the concept is the logical outcome of each person having the Buddha-nature within which when realised leads on to the path of the bodhisattva.
- Candidates may argue that the concept of the bodhisattva is an essential feature of Buddhism because it helps people to recognise that Buddhism is not self-focused but instead promotes universal compassion.
- **Conversely**, candidates may disagree by pointing out that the concept of the bodhisattva is not at all prevalent in Theravada which promotes the concept of the arhat instead.
- Disagreeing with the statement, it might be argued that the concept of the arhat is far more important and indeed essential as it reflects the true dhamma of the Buddha and the type of life he led.
- It may be argued that the concept of the bodhisattva is certainly not essential for secular Buddhists or many Western Buddhists because it involves very complex supernatural beliefs in divine beings.
- Candidates may argue that the concept of the bodhisattva is too complex and the bodhisattva path is too challenging to be essential for most Buddhists – instead concepts such as enlightenment are much more important.
- It may be argued that the concept cannot be an essential feature of Buddhism because it does not appear to go back to the dhamma of the historical Buddha himself but is instead a later development of extended Buddhology.
- Candidates may argue that the concept is only essential for those Buddhists following the Mahayana path at a very deep level – such as monks and nuns – but certainly not for lay Buddhists.
- It may be argued that it is an essential concept as it provides every Buddhist with the opportunity to become what Snelling calls 'a spiritual hero' in terms of compassion and wisdom.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. (a) **Examine the view that Buddhism avoids ‘blind faith’ with reference to the Kalama Sutta v.9 and 10.** [AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Buddhism does not hold on to belief/faith in a creator God as part of its teaching.
- The Buddha encouraged the asking of questions – rather than blind acceptance - to discover the truth of what he taught as evident in the Water Snake Simile – i.e., the true dhamma should be embraced and held on to.
- The story of Upali suggests that people should not listen to the Buddha simply based on his authority as a teacher but on their experience of his teaching defeating ignorance, greed and hatred.
- ‘Faith’ is belief in something for which there is no evidence according to Russell.
- Harvey distinguishes pasada (calm faith) from saddha (soundly based faith/confidence).
- Buddhism avoids amulika saddha (blind faith) in favour of akaravati saddha (confidence based on reason and experience).
- The Kalama Sutta describes a visit of the Buddha to Kesaputta where he meets with the Kalama Clan.
- They have been listening to rival religious teachers who praised their own beliefs and condemned the beliefs of others.
- They ask the Buddha how they should try to distinguish between those who speak the truth and those who are lying.
- The Buddha emphasises the importance of rejecting ‘blind faith’.
- ‘Don’t go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, that this contemplative is our teacher.’
- The Buddha states that ‘blind faith’ based on things such as tradition or on recognising someone as the teacher is insufficient.
- Instead, the Buddha teaches that common sense should be applied and teachings which are skilful should be accepted and teachings which lead to harm and suffering should be abandoned.
- Buddhism is therefore seen as encouraging the recognition of truth in experience and the avoidance of ‘blind faith’.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) **‘There is a very close relationship between Buddhism and science.’**

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates may identify science as being based on the empirical approach of using observation/evidence in order to reach conclusions as to what is true/false factual/fictional etc.
- It may be argued that the relationship between Buddhism and science is very close because of the rejection of ‘blind faith’ and the focus on ‘truth in experience’.
- Candidates may argue that the relationship between Buddhism and science is very close because there is no requirement for ‘blind faith’ in any creator God/heaven/hell/miracles etc. but instead everything is based on experience of what is skilful and unskilful in following the path.
- It may be argued that the Mind and Life Institute founded by the Dalai Lama shows the close relationship between Buddhism and science because meditation has benefits which can be empirically verified.
- Candidates may argue that the teaching about karma shows how close Buddhism and science are because it is simply based on the verifiable evidence of cause and effect.
- It may be argued that the concepts of pratityasamutpada (dependent origination) and sunyata (form is empty of inherent existence) show the close relationship between Buddhism and science since evidence shows both the interconnectedness of all things at the molecular level and the fact that at that level everything is in a perpetual state of flux.
- **Conversely**, candidates may argue that some forms of Buddhism include belief in the supernatural (e.g., the realms of existence) for which there is no scientific evidence.
- It may be argued that many Buddhists hold on to the truth of the miraculous and supernatural (e.g., accounts of the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha) which contradict scientific understanding.
- Candidates may argue that ritual and worship carried out by Buddhists contradicts a scientific approach since this involves prayers to bodhisattvas/prayers to avoid being reborn in the Hungry Ghost Realm.
- It may be argued that there cannot be a very close relationship between Buddhism and science since Mahayana Buddhism holds to the belief in supernatural beings such as bodhisattvas who respond to prayer and assist those who have faith in them.
- Candidates may argue that there cannot be a very close relationship between Buddhism and science since the goal of many Buddhists is either a better rebirth or nibbana gained through punya kamma which cannot be supported by scientific evidence.
- Candidates may argue that everything depends on what type of Buddhism is being discussed e.g., Secular Buddhism might have a very close relationship to science whereas Pure Land Buddhism might seem very far-removed from a scientific worldview.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised