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# **GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME**

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**SUMMER 2023**

**A LEVEL  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES  
UNIT 3 - OPTION D  
A STUDY OF BUDDHISM  
1120UD0-1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

This marking scheme was used by WJEC for the 2023 examination. It was finalised after detailed discussion at examiners' conferences by all the examiners involved in the assessment. The conference was held shortly after the paper was taken so that reference could be made to the full range of candidates' responses, with photocopied scripts forming the basis of discussion. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners.

It is hoped that this information will be of assistance to centres but it is recognised at the same time that, without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation.

WJEC regrets that it cannot enter into any discussion or correspondence about this marking scheme.

## **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.

## **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

<b>Band (marks)</b>	<b>Assessment Objective AO1 – Section A questions [30 marks]</b>  <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</li> <li>- influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</li> <li>- cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</li> <li>- approaches to the study of religion and belief.</li> </ul>
<b>5 (25-30 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>4 (19-24 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively.</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>3 (13-18 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief.</li> <li>• A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>2 (7-12 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable)</li> <li>• A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used.</li> <li>• Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>1 (1-6 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance.</li> <li>• A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples.</li> <li>• Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate.</li> <li>• Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable)</li> <li>• Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul> <p><b>N.B. A maximum of 3 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'.</b></p>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant information.</li> </ul>

Band	<b>Assessment Objective AO2- Section B questions [30 marks]</b>  <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
<b>5</b>  <b>(25-30 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>  <b>(19-24 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed.</li> <li>• The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>  <b>(13-18 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed.</li> <li>• The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>  <b>(7-12 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed.</li> <li>• Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence.</li> <li>• Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought, appropriately and in context.</li> <li>• Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Some mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.</li> <li>• Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>  <b>(1-6 marks)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue.</li> <li>• An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set.</li> <li>• Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation.</li> <li>• Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence.</li> <li>• Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought.</li> <li>• Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied (within and/or across themes where applicable).</li> <li>• Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.</li> <li>• Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.</li> </ul>
<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No relevant analysis or evaluation.</li> </ul>

## WJEC GCE A LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

### UNIT 3 OPTION D - A STUDY OF BUDDHISM

#### SUMMER 2023 MARK SCHEME

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

#### Section A

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**Examine the changing roles of women in Buddhism.**

[AO1 30]

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

- Examples may be offered from the life of the Buddha and the early history of Buddhism to establish a basis for how things have changed.
- The Buddha ordained women. He was said to have been asked by Ananda whether women had the capacity to become enlightened. When he confirmed that they did, Ananda argued that therefore women must be ordained as full members of the sangha.
- Women of the Buddha's family had a high status in the sangha (his aunt and his wife).
- However, although the Buddha did ordain women, he was reluctant to do so, on the basis of the belief at the time that women were as dangerous to the sangha as mildew in a rice field. Some would suggest this was using 'skilful means' or a 'compromise' to avoid a negative outcome.
- Nuns were constrained by almost a hundred more precepts than monks, thus reflecting the belief that women are responsible for distracting monks from the path to awakening, and for causing dissention and trouble in the sangha. However, some would suggest that the precepts are not restrictions but there to create opportunities for spiritual development.

In terms of how roles have changed historically candidates may mention:

- how the ordination line for nuns was broken, and despite efforts by the Buddhist women's movement and the organisation Sakyadhita, it has not been universally restored.
- Tibetan Buddhism enshrines female Buddhas – such as Tara.
- Candidates may explore the sexuality of Mahayana deities and the notion of ultimate spiritual gender-transcendence for all.
- The Lotus Sutra depicts a young female (the Dragon King's daughter) becoming Awakened, however, she first has to turn into a man.
- In modern times, many traditions confer equality on female practitioners. for example, in Triratna women have equal access to all levels of ordination.
- Despite this, the continued practices of traditional roles could be argued to perpetuate discrimination.
- Rita Gross argues that Buddhism must be reconstructed in order to take it back to its core of gender equality. She says there is nothing within core Buddhist teachings which justify the unequal treatment of women.

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

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**Explain possible reasons for the popularity of Buddhism in Britain.**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

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

- There may be numerous reasons why Buddhism is popular in Britain, though they are all speculation. However, candidates may question how popular Buddhism actually is, given very small numbers practice it. 178,453 in the 2011 census.
- Candidates may explore features of Buddhism which may make it popular, such as its atheism or agnosticism, its alleged compatibility with science, its apparent commitment to peace, the lack of 'commandments' – in favour of the training precepts, the focus on meditation as an appealing practice, the aesthetic appeal of Buddhism.
- Candidates may explore the early origins of Buddhism in Britain and relate this to its popularity, for example, the Theosophical Society and the work of Blavatsky, Bennett, Olcott and Humphreys. Candidates may state the reasons for popularity then (interest in texts, monasticism, rationalism, the heroic figure of the Buddha) as well as any other reasons in addition to the earlier reasons for Buddhism's popularity today (stress-relief, mindfulness, secular worldview, etc).
- Early reasons included a natural curiosity and engagement with Asian ideas through the processes of colonialism. Some may say the early popularity was due to the works of 'middle / upper classes' and their intellectual curiosity, particular individuals, or, the interest in conflating Asian (then often known as 'Eastern') ideas with those of the 'West'.
- Some may observe that the reasons for its popularity today tend to be an interest in its secular appeal, meditation, focus on spirituality of the individual, etc.
- Candidates may argue that it is the secular nature of British Society which provides a context for Buddhism to be popular.
- However, in their analysis of British society, candidates may question the extent to which it is a secular society, with growing religious pluralism, and the practice of a range of alternative spiritualities being so prevalent.
- Candidates may identify the secular nature of society being significant in the growth of Buddhism. British people appear to be rejecting Christianity in increasing numbers, and Buddhism, as a broadly non-creedal religion, does not suffer with what are perceived as the disadvantages of Christianity (belief in a creation story, an almighty theistic being, in miracles and the resurrection of Jesus, the power of prayer etc).
- They may argue it is not the secular nature of society, but the consumerist nature of society which makes Buddhism appealing. Stress is caused by consumerism, for which Buddhism offers an antidote in the practice of meditation.
- They may argue that Buddhism is a religion. Although people are not religious they nonetheless seek spiritual meaning in their lives. Buddhism is the acceptable face of religion.

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



## Section B

**0 3** 'Buddhism is not a religion.'

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

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

- The debate between Stephen Batchelor and David Brazier may be the main focus of this answer.
- Stephen Batchelor argues that Buddhism is entirely compatible with western atheism. It is rational, humanistic and moral, and not a religion.
- David Brazier focuses upon and highlights the 'religious' aspects of Buddhism.
- Candidates may also refer to Donald Lopez's argument that Buddhism should be seen in isolation from any comparisons with science or traditional religion as something that is unique, practical and works; it is what it is.
- Other more generic points directly related to the teachings of Buddhism may also be presented such as the following:
- The Buddha himself rejected metaphysical speculation as a matter of principle, and his teachings focused entirely on the practical ways to end suffering. The Parable of the Poisoned Arrow directed followers to avoid asking unanswerable questions, and instead to attend to the urgent questions of life.
- Buddhism may be best seen as an existential philosophy or a way of life, rather than as a religion.
- On the other hand, Buddhism appears to be religious – it has ritual, sacred places, sacred objects, chanting, temples, religious hierarchy and so on. In Asia Buddhism has beliefs about ancestors, spirits and karma.
- The Buddha did not explicitly rule out the existence of a God or gods. There are several realms in Buddhist cosmology, gods appear in stories about the Buddha, and their existence is not denied. However, they are not considered important. They too must attain Awakening. But if religion equals belief in gods or spiritual beings, then Buddhism can't immediately be ruled out as a religion.
- Shortly after the Buddha's death, a devotional element formed within Buddhism. Stupas were built to contain relics of the Buddha and pilgrimages were made to places where he had taught and lived. Soon the idea of past and future Buddhas developed, with Maitreya, the Buddha yet to come, being especially important. Bodhisattvas in Central and East Asia were treated as deities too. However, though people showed great respect and veneration to the Buddha and other enlightened beings, this did not mean they were considered to be almighty creator gods. Nonetheless these might be characteristics which qualify Buddhism as a religion.
- Buddhism has a founder, afterlife beliefs, festivals, rituals, legal and ethical teachings, sacred texts, places of pilgrimage etc.
- The writer Dharmavidya argues that Buddhism is a religion, you can believe it.

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

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**'Tibetan Buddhism can only be fully understood through its practices.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

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

- Candidates may well question the existence of a singular 'Tibetan Buddhism' and point out that this term fails to reflect the diversity of the types of Buddhism which exist within traditions associated with Tibet.
- The term Vajrayana is used for the type of Buddhism (also known as Tantric Buddhism) practised in Tibet. There are some features which some might argue are critical for an understanding of Tibetan Buddhism in the sense that they are not found in other forms of Buddhism or in the sense that they are given more significance than is found in other forms of Buddhism.
- One of the distinctive features of Vajrayana Buddhism that is practised widely in Tibet is the use made of the vajra and the tribu by the practitioner of tantra. Seen as symbols, the vajra is representative of upaya – skilful means – whilst the tribu is representative of prajna – wisdom. The two objects – the vajra and the tribu – are always used together with upaya being described as the father tantra and prajna as the mother tantra. These practices help the devotee to truly comprehend Tibetan Buddhism at a deeper level.
- The development of the term Vajrayana for this form of Tantra is based on the usage of the vajra – originally perhaps a weapon in war which was a sceptre. The vajra became a ritual object and is used extensively in Tibetan Buddhist practices. Vajra means both 'thunderbolt' and 'diamond'. Given that 'yana' means 'vehicle', Vajrayana can therefore be understood as the diamond or thunderbolt vehicle which leads to enlightenment.
- Williams describes Vajrayana as using 'magical practices for transforming mundane reality into a form most suited to help others.' One way in which this transformation is attempted is through elaborate and complex visualisation, actualisation and empowerment, practised in a variety of forms by the four different Tibetan Buddhist sects: Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, Sakyapa and Gelukpa.
- One key feature in Vajrayana is the emphasis on visualisation and its associated practices as key to enlightenment. Williams notes how this tantric practice was reworked into the life of the Buddha in sacred texts of Vajrayana. Thus, this supports the statement in that the practices are central.
- Candidates may also argue, however, that the Vajrayana Buddhism practised in Tibet and beyond has many common features with traditional Buddhism such as monastic living and meditation.
- The differences seem to emerge when the notions of mantra, mudra and mandala are considered. Candidates may use such examples to explore their specific ways of teaching Vajrayana Buddhism.
- Candidates may argue that Tibetan Buddhism is best understood through its teachings, for instance the teaching of sunyata, the teaching of the Two Truths, the teachings of reincarnation and the role of tulkus and lamas, and the relationship between wisdom and compassion
- Candidates may argue that the many books and teachings of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama offer the best way to understand Tibetan Buddhism.

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

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**‘Social engagement is a distraction on the path to Awakening.’**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

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

- The Buddha did not teach social engagement. The Buddha taught how to overcome greed, hatred and delusion and grasping in oneself, in order to follow a personal spiritual path. He did not teach a people to engage politically or ideologically.
- However, at the heart of Buddhism is the effort to live compassionately, to root out greed, hatred and delusion, and to combat suffering in all its forms. As such it would be easy to argue that Buddhism should champion social engagement, as form of compassion in action.
- It could be said that there is evidence the Buddha was concerned with social issues. His creation of the sangha in which people held very few possessions was arguably radical and engaged. It also stood against the prevailing caste system. He also engaged with the public at large during his ministry.
- Teachers such as Thich Nhat Hanh and the Dalai Lama do promote socially engaged Buddhism, but they ask the individual to focus on self-knowledge and self-improvement as part of the process.
- It could be argued that the Buddhist notion of metta ‘wishing all beings to be free from suffering and ill-will’ requires some action in the world if it is to be brought about.
- However, it is possible to argue engagement in political or social causes involves attachment, and even anger, which are not considered virtues in Buddhism. So social engagement could be even worse than a distraction, it could be a detriment to Awakening.
- If people are dedicated to changing material conditions, they are not focused on Awakening or on the dharma.
- Slavoj Žižek argues that Buddhism in the West is actually a supplement to capitalism and not socially engaged. It allows people enough relief from capitalism to stay engaged and productive. As such, Buddhism is in essence not socially engaged at all.
- Conversely, some scholars, such as Joanna Macy, argue that Buddhism is at heart socially engaged, and that Awakening is only possible when injustice and suffering in all its forms is being addressed.

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

**'The teachings in the Mahayana Sutras are representative of reality.'**

**Evaluate this view.**

**[AO2 30]**

**Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.**

- Candidates are likely in the main to refer to the Heart Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, but they should be credited for referring to any other Mahayana Sutra.
- Taken as a whole, the Mahayana Sutras portray a universe of demons, kings, asuras, devas, celestial bodhisattvas, multiple realms etc. which is not necessarily representative of reality as understood in the scientific paradigm. That said, developments in quantum mechanics do allow for alternate realities.
- Candidates may argue that the Lotus Sutra does not represent reality in its portrayal of the Buddha as a celestial or archetypal figure. However, it could be argued that the Buddha is a figure not confined by human limitations, and in terms of a Sambhogakaya or Dharmakaya.
- The Heart Sutra is a teaching by the Bodhisattva of Compassion Avalokitesvara, who has forgone his own entry into Nirvana in order to help others. As with the Lotus Sutra above, candidates may argue that there is no evidence for the existence of celestial bodhisattvas.
- The Heart Sutra explores the Four Noble Truths and the five skandhas and concludes that these are all empty of inherent existence. Students may agree that this offers a true picture of reality, or argue that other ideas, such as the soul, or a materialist view is a better picture of reality.
- The Heart Sutra's explanation that all is empty (sunya) of inherent existence (svabhava) might be seen as consistent with a scientific understanding of reality as for example via particle physics.
- The Heart Sutra, which in Japanese is called the Hannya Shingyo, is chanted regularly in Zen temples and many other kinds of temples, and by individual Buddhists. It is as much a ritual object as it is a statement about reality.
- Some Mahayana Sutras describe a tier of bodhisattvas whose aid can be called upon which detract from focus on a person achieving enlightenment through their own efforts.
- The Sukhavati Pure Land Sutra with its account of the creation of the Pure Land does not appear to be representative of reality as understood in any scientific paradigm except perhaps the parallel world theory in quantum mechanics. However, there are also this-worldly interpretations of the Pure Land, (the Pure land, like nirvana, is here and now).
- Taken together, Mahayana sutras offer the message of the interrelatedness of wisdom and compassion and the possibility of Enlightenment for all. For this reason candidates may see them as entirely representative of reality.

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