

This essay is outstanding on a number of fronts. First, the research question is clear and well defined. It is not a paper on Buddhism in general, which would at most have received 1 point for criterion A, or even on a specific doctrine or practice, which might have received 2 points but would not have set up such a fruitful investigation. Rather it asks a very specific question, the answer to which is not obvious, which can be investigated by means available to the student and which, through the process of that investigation, will reveal something important and interesting about the tradition being studied.

Second, the student does an outstanding job of situating the question in its social context, explaining why it is important. The introduction is scholarly, but gives enough relevant personal information to establish the student's distinctive perspective on the problem.

Third, the student uses an appropriate research method: a rather in-depth questionnaire. There is clear recognition of the limits imposed by the small sample size, which would otherwise have hurt the marks significantly, the material obtained is good, and is used quite well. One key here was focusing questions in a way which linked key problems to rich empirical data: attraction to Buddhism, daily observance, and monasticism.

Fourth, the analysis and argument are well developed. The student shows what difference conversion to Buddhism, as opposed to growing up in the tradition, makes, and documents claims with interview data.

Finally, the paper is well written, the presentation is solid, and both the abstract and the conclusion are appropriate. A particular additional strength comes from the appropriate use of the appendices to reproduce answers from the questionnaires, a technique that should only be used if the material is actually of interest to the reader.