



GCSE

Religious Studies A

8062/14 Paper 1 Hinduism

Report on the Examination

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General comments

Performance on the paper was not dissimilar to that of 2023.. Generally, centres have prepared students well for the examination. The best answers demonstrated clear and coherent knowledge and understanding, which was both wide-ranging and holistic. They brought that to their responses, referencing wider aspects of the religion in answers to specific topics. They made excellent use of a wide range of religious teachings, which were both appropriate and applied well, usually far beyond the most common teachings, so that they had real pertinence to the point being made. They articulated their arguments clearly and evaluated well. Contrastingly, the weakest students had limited knowledge and showed little understanding. The challenge of key terms meant that these students could not always make a relevant response to some questions. Most students were able to attempt all of the questions.

For most students, the beliefs section was stronger than the practices section. 'Beliefs' covers abstract ideas, and so is more complex for anyone, so it is pleasing to see that centres are clearly focusing energies there. However, good understanding of practices is greatly aided by a good understanding of the beliefs, since beliefs underpin and give foundations for all practice. Centres should continue to strengthen their teaching of the beliefs section and build links back to it when they deliver lessons on practices.

The use of technical language by students continues to be a strength on the paper. It is the case that some questions used key terms which some students struggled with. Centres must remain vigilant in covering every element of the specification to give students the best chance to recognise all key terms and thus be able to at least attempt all questions with confidence. This year, 'avatar' proved a more difficult term for some than expected.

In 2022 and 2023, the use of 'Hindu scriptures/texts teach...' as in an introduction to a teaching was commented on. This was noted to a much lesser extent this year. In reminder, these phrases do not achieve the 'Source of authority' mark. For this mark, the source must be named, eg Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, etc.; when the source is named, with its relevant and appropriate teaching, the mark is gained. Those centres teaching students to write 'Hindu scriptures/texts...' are limiting students to four out of the five available marks on the .4 questions.

1.1

Most students were successful in answering this question concerning the four aims of human life, with around 80% choosing the correct option.

1.2

This question was marked very broadly, so that any way of showing 'the personal virtue of respect' was credited, religious or not. Hence most students gained full marks for the question. Often this meant a very short phrase (eg, obeying laws), or even a single word (eg 'worship') could be credited, as long as respect could be inferred. A small numbers of students wrote about why respect should be shown, whereas the question was about how it is shown. These responses gained no marks.

1.3

The question asked for an explanation of two ways in which belief in the Tri-murti influenced Hindus today. Most students recognised the term, and so made at least a good attempt to answer this question. Just under 50% of students gained full marks, with over 80% gaining at least two marks. Some students did not go further than describing the Tri-murti – they wrote what they knew about the term. In this case, they could not gain more than half the available marks as the question requires explanation of how that belief influences a believer – what it makes them think/say/do/feel/further believe. Where a student focused only on the influence, ie did not explain the belief, they could gain full marks, and often did. It is not necessary to explain the belief if, on reading the response, what is written about influence clearly flows from the belief.

1.4

Few students found this question on the teaching about karma difficult. Most could gain at least three marks, more usually four. Most students linked karma to samsara and/or moksha as part of their explanation. Those who discussed the atman or dharma, indirectly answered the question and so could not be awarded full marks. A small number of students wrote their responses with a Christian influence, believing that God (or Brahman) uses karma to judge people and then assign their new lives – this is not the case, as karma is a self-regulating natural law in Hindu teaching.

1.5

For many students, this was a very straightforward essay question – comparing the importance of belief in avatars with every other Hindu belief. Around 10% of responses were awarded Level 4 (10-12) marks, with approximately 50% of students attaining than half the available marks. Whilst most responses referred to Rama and Krishna, it is clear that many centres do teach about all ten avatars of Vishnu. Their students were able to strengthen the point of view as they were able to give a wider range of arguments.

The most common comparisons were with belief in Brahman, the atman, dharma and samsara, showing that many students have a very broad understanding of Hinduism as a whole. The best responses showed how belief in avatars was actually a sub-set of belief in other things (Brahman, the Tri-murti), and so having argued strongly for the primacy first of avatars, and then of other beliefs, they summed up by clarifying the hierarchy overall.

It was noticeable that a significant number of students had little sound understanding of what an avatar is – references to the Tri-murti, to other deities, and even to Brahman as being/having avatars was common in these responses. Common was the claim that Vishnu's avatar helped Gajendra, or Prahlad – in both cases, it was Vishnu directly. Additionally, some students mistook avatars for ahimsa, atman or antaryami, often then being unable to gain any marks at all. Some students tried to contrast avatars with holy books or practices, limiting their response to 6 marks at best, as it became a one-sided response. The statement used the term 'most important', and this had to be clearly addressed for responses to gain Level 4 marks.

Those students who explain in good detail and exemplify the points they make do gain better marks; using appropriately applied teachings and references also improves marks. Those students who weigh

up the evidence, explaining why one point of view is stronger than another (more persuasive, compelling etc) usually do better.

2.1

Most students answered this question about the term used to refer to a statue of a deity correctly.

2.2

This question asked why rivers, hills and lands were used for worship, so responses answering how they are used, ie the activities done there, were not creditable. However, a majority of students were able to gain full marks.

2.3

The focus of this question was on ways in which Hindu charities support women's rights, as noted in the specification. This was a poorly answered question with under a third of students gaining full marks. Many students had no specific ideas about how Hindu charities have worked in this field, so many gained marks by giving generic ideas, such as campaign and protest; that charities might help any group in society which is subject to discrimination and inequality. This often meant their answer was limited to the level of 'simple explanation'.

Better answers often wrote about the provision of education, addressing period poverty, small business set up, and helping women escape abuse. Naming of charities, and descriptions of how good they are did not in themselves usually gain any marks.

2.4

Most students were able to give good responses and gain high marks on this question requiring the purposes of Hindu pilgrimage. Students could easily give, explain and illustrate numerous reasons why Hindus go on pilgrimage. Less common was the ability to provide a relevant teaching with its named source of authority, and so many responses reached four marks only. A small number of students did write about specific pilgrimages, providing a description of the place and its importance. It was usually possible to glean some valid ideas within these responses, and so some limited credited could be given.

Commonly used misquotes included 'Varanasi is the gateway to moksha' and 'Varanasi – the birthplace of death' – not found in any Hindu scriptures; rather these come from a BBC series. It is creditable that teachers try to bring to life their students' studies by using multi-media sources, but it is important that students can still distinguish religious authority from media description. The use of programmes about religions such as Hinduism to show the religion in real life are very valuable to learning, and are to be encouraged, especially since for many students their only access to this religion is otherwise via a textbook.

2.5

Most students were able to access this question as to whether Holi was the most important festival. Most attempted it and could provide a balanced answer, albeit dependent on level of detail. Most students compared Holi with Diwali, and showed they knew a lot about each – it is clear that teachers teach these festivals in depth. A small number offered other festivals, such as Navaratri, Ganesha Chaturthi and Raksha Bandhan. These are not required by the specification but help to add depth and richness to a student's demonstrated knowledge about Hinduism and provide other reasons for asserting importance. For example, Navaratri and Dashera are both festivals which last much longer than Holi, which could suggest their primacy over Holi.

Many students gave answers which were very AO1 biased, in that they wrote descriptions of the origins and/or celebrations linked to a festival. Whilst this was credited, it was necessary to then explore the relative importance of each festival for a response to gain Level 3/4 marks. The best answers used the information about origins and celebrations to illustrate importance, exploring the symbolism and the messages within them, rather than just describing origins and celebrations. To reach Level 4 marks, an answer had to explore the idea of 'most important', so a number of responses which only looked at why one or another festival had any importance did not meet this criteria.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.