

A-LEVEL RELIGIOUS STUDIES

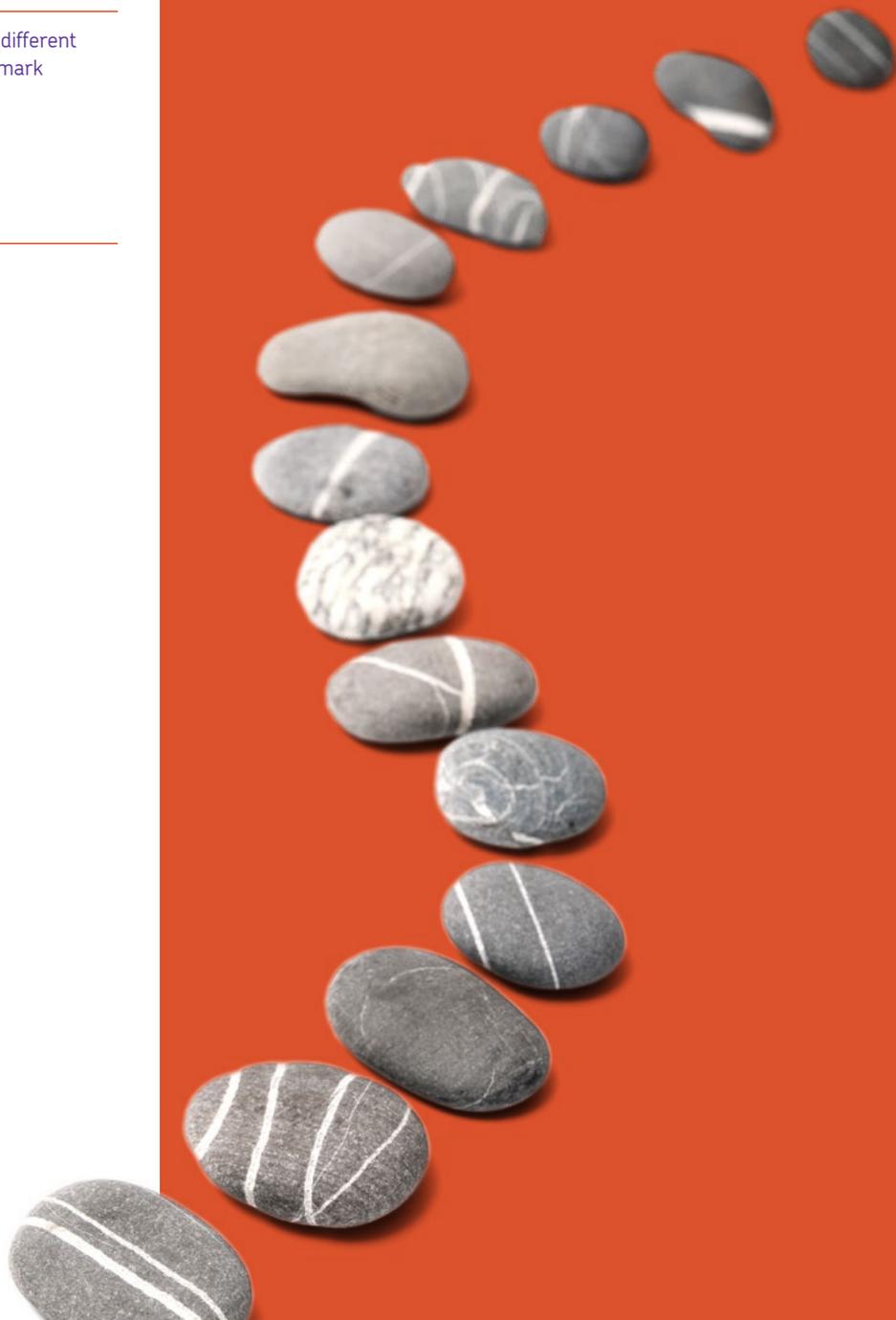
(7062)

Example responses and commentaries Paper 2C Hinduism

See a range of student responses that demonstrate how different levels are achieved and understand how to interpret the mark scheme.

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EXAMPLE RESPONSES



10 mark questions: A01

Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate, relevant and fully developed in breadth and depth with very good use of detailed and relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, good knowledge and understanding of the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion is demonstrated• Clear and coherent presentation of ideas with precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 4 7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is accurate and mostly relevant with good development in breadth and depth shown through good use of relevant evidence which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate.• Where appropriate, alternative views and/or scholarly opinion are explained• Mostly clear and coherent presentation of ideas with good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 3 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is generally accurate and relevant with development in breadth and/or depth shown through some use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, there is some familiarity with the diversity of views and/or scholarly opinion• Some organisation of ideas and coherence with reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 2 3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is limited, with limited development in breadth and/or depth shown through limited use of evidence and/or examples which may include textual/scriptural references where appropriate• Where appropriate, limited reference may be made to alternative views and/or scholarly opinion• Limited organisation of ideas and coherence and use of subject vocabulary
Level 1 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge and critical understanding is basic with little or no development• There may be a basic awareness of alternative views and/or scholarly opinion• Isolated elements of accurate and relevant information and basic use of appropriate subject vocabulary
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

0 2 . 1

Examine the changing role of ashrams in Hinduism.

[10 marks]

In Hinduism, ashrams were traditionally places of learning and development for the Hindu elite – only particular male Brahmins could enter an ashram. However, nowadays ashrams are open to all Hindus, so many different people can attend an ashram in order to learn more about Hinduism and develop their spirituality. It is evident how the role of ashrams has changed since ancient times when one considers Gandhi's ashram, which was a more cosmopolitan and inclusive space. Gandhi emphasised ahimsa and peaceful protest using satyagraha or 'truth-force' so these were the main teachings at his ashram.

Additionally, there seems to have been a shift from ashrams being a place of exertion and yoga development to more of a retreat and a place to relax. The root of the word ashram means 'to toil' so traditionally, Hindus were expected to work hard on self improvement while at an ashram. Nowadays ashrams are more relaxing spaces; for example ISKON defines an ashram as 'a place of spiritual shelter,' which implies that it is a safe space to seek refuge. An example of a modern ashram is Skanda Vale ashram in Wales which is a calm and peaceful place, situated in the countryside, which is open to people of all faiths who want to take a break and relax.

It can also be observed that modern ashrams such as Skanda Vale focus more on pluralism and interfaith harmony than traditional ashrams. Not only does Skanda Vale welcome people of any faith to attend puja, they actually celebrate other religious services such as Christian Mass to make non-Hindus feel welcome. Therefore, some modern ashrams take on the important role of promoting community cohesion.

Another development is that many Hindus no longer view ashrams as important. In the past a visit to an ashram was an important 'step in journey of life' but now many Hindus may develop their spirituality without ever visiting an ashram. Jacobs suggested that visiting specific sites is no longer necessary due to the modern phenomenon of 'virtual puja' or 'e-darshan', so nowadays some ashrams take on the duty of providing puja for people around the world who are connected via video link.

Each of the paragraphs in this answer clearly focus on the question.

- The first centres in the change from a place of learning for Brahmins to the more cosmopolitan appeal of Gandhi's ashram.
- The second on the development from a place of spiritual exertion to a relaxing retreat, which is then further explored in paragraph 3 using the example of Skanda Vale ashram in Wales.
- The final paragraph illustrates the role of ashrams in the digital world.

The answer is a good length, around 360 words, and matches the Level 5 descriptor. It makes very good use of evidence to develop and support its points, gives a clear and coherent presentation and uses subject vocabulary effectively.

Level 5, 10 marks

15 mark questions: A02

Levels of response mark scheme

Level and marks	Description
Level 5 13-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A very well-focused response to the issue(s) raised• Perceptive discussion of different views, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought with critical analysis• There is an appropriate evaluation fully supported by the reasoning• Precise use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 4 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A well-focused response to the issue(s) raised• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought, with some critical analysis• There is an appropriate evaluation supported by the reasoning• Good use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 3 7-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A general response to the issue(s) raised• Different views are discussed, including, where appropriate, those of scholars or schools of thought• An evaluation is made that is consistent with some of the reasoning• Reasonable use of the appropriate subject vocabulary
Level 2 4-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A limited response to the issue(s) raised• Presentation of a point of view relevant to the issue with some supporting evidence and argument• Limited attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary
Level 1 1-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A basic response to the issue(s) raised• A point of view is stated, with some evidence or reason(s) in support• Some attempt at the appropriate use of subject vocabulary
0	No accurate or relevant material to credit

0 2 . 2

'Hinduism's attitude to other faiths is generally positive.'

Evaluate this claim.

[15 marks]

It is clear that the claim that Hinduism's attitude to other faiths is generally positive is completely valid due to the pluralist nature of the Hindu tradition.

In support of this, a prominent Hindu scholar Ramakrishna applied the traditional Hindu idea that Brahman is all-pervading to the concept of different religions, stating that 'all religions are true'. This clearly shows a positive attitude to other faiths and encourages Hindus to accept them as equally valid. Ramakrishna explained that no one religious tradition can express the totality of the divine, but all religions are partial expressions of the one Truth. This was practically applied by Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna mission who maintain a very positive attitude to other faiths and even showed this through worshipping Jesus and Mary on their shrine on Christmas eve 2018. Therefore many Hindus have a positive approach to other faiths.

However, it would be irrational to believe that all Hindus accept this view. Jacobs suggested that many Hindus are not comfortable with the notion that their religion is only a partial expression of the truth, and this can be seen in the Hindutva movement, which promotes Hindu supremacy. In India groups with Hindu nationalist attitudes have considerable public support, and due to this, Kanungo suggests that Christians, Muslims and anyone else who doesn't accept India as their Fatherland and holy land 'in one stroke are excluded.' Because of this, it can be observed that many Hindus actually have quite a negative attitude towards other religions.

Despite this, it can still be maintained that Hindus have a generally positive attitude to other religions. It is certain that the Hindutva movement is just one ideology and that Hinduism as a whole is a pluralistic tradition. This is supported by scriptural evidence: Krishna affirms in the Gita that 'all paths' lead to him, which suggests that all faiths are equally valid ways to reach God/liberation. Even more convincing is a passage from the Rig Veda which states that 'many priests and poets with words make into many that which is but one.' When interpreted in the contexts of different faiths, this can be seen as a reminder that different religions are simply trying to express the one ultimate reality in different ways. As this passage is taken from Shruti literature, many Hindus accept it as infallible due to its divine origin. So they must be open to the idea that all faiths are valid. This interpretation was supported by Vivekananda, who suggested that rituals, books and other specific religious practices were secondary details.' All religions aim to express the truth about God/reality and it is only in their expressions which they differ, not in the Truth which they are trying to express. For Hindus who follow this pluralist ideology, it is obvious that they must take a positive attitude to other faiths.

Ultimately, although some Hindus would rather suggest that their faith is supreme and above others, the general attitude of Hinduism, a pluralist faith, towards other religions is one of not just tolerance, but positive fellowship.

The, very successful, structure of this answer is:

- Point of view.
- Support for this view.
- Counter to the view.
- Counter to the counter-argument
- Conclusion.

Be aware that starting an answer with a definite point of view does not always help students to debate two sides to the argument, or with debates in which there may be various conclusions in a single answer depending on the meanings attached to a key term. Here, however, it is entirely successful.

The answer is fully focused on the question.

Both the evidence in support and against the view is detailed.

There is critical analysis of both arguments – because there is debate between them.

The final paragraph puts the preceding argument in context.

It is a good length, estimated at around 500 words and is fully focused on the issue.

Level 5. 15 marks.

25 mark questions

Target: AO1:4: Knowledge and understanding of approaches to the study of religion and belief. (10 marks)

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study. (15 marks)

Material related to AO1 and AO2 may be presented discretely or holistically within the answer. Markers must read the whole of the response before either mark is awarded.

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'It is reasonable for Hindus to believe in Brahman.'

Critically examine and evaluate this view with reference to the dialogue between Hinduism and philosophy.

[25 marks]

It is completely reasonable for Hindus to believe in Braham, due to the vast scriptural, philosophical and scientific support for their belief.

The concept of Brahman in Hinduism can be viewed in different ways. One conception of Brahman is saguna or with attributes; this means that Brahman is a personal God who Hindus can worship for example as avatars. This is supported by scriptures such as the Ramayana which details the life of Rama the seventh incarnation of Vishnu the preserver. Hindus can see avatars as ideal role models for how to be the perfect brother, husband or soldier and scriptural stories about saguna Brahamn also allow them to understand the attributes of God – for example God is loving and fights to overcome evil.

A contracting idea about Braham is Brahman nirguna, or without attributes. This view of Brahman is described as 'intangible, formless ... all-pervading'. This representation sees Brahman as an energy or eternal force which sustains the universe and is favoured by Hindus who follow Advaita Vedanta school of thought.

In support of the claim that it is reasonable to believe in Brahman, the existence of Brahman can be proven through rational argument, Shanbara put forward a version of the design argument to prove God's existence, explaining that the 'racana' or evidence of complex design we can observe in the world suggests that it was designed and created by Brahman. This is supported by Paley's analogical design argument in which he compared the world to a watch found upon a heath – 'the inference' play argument, 'is inevitable... that the watch must have had a maker,' therefore the world must too have had a maker – God who designed complex structures such as the human ear and the solar system and put them together in creation. In light of these arguments it is clear that belief in Brahman is reasonable because it is backed up by rational inductive logic.

However the philosopher Hume gave a convincing criticism of design arguments by suggesting that they prove that there was some designer or creator, but do not show that this is a loving God. Hume suggests that the world is more like a vegetable which simply grows, so perhaps Paley's watch analogy should be rejected. Additionally Hume called upon Epicurus traditional problem of evil which is the idea that an omnibenevolent and omnipotent God cannot exist if evil is present in the world. Therefore, if Hindus view Brahman as a loving and all powerful God perhaps their belief is not reasonable.

But Hindus are able to overcome this philosophical challenge due to the alternative ways to view Brahman. Rather than a personal loving God, many Hindus, particularly in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, see Brahman as a formless force. This notion is supported by the Shruti texts the Upanishads where Brahman is described as 'intangible' and 'all-pervading'. Surely if Brahman is an energy rather than a person it makes complete sense that Brahman is the origin of the world? Nirguna Brahman is also compatible with scientific knowledge which suggests that energy cannot be created or destroyed and an explosion of energy caused the universe. Therefore, if we consider Brahman as nirguna, it is completely reasonable to believe in Brahman.

However, even the concept of nirguna Brahman can be criticised by Flew's falsification principle. Flew suggested that when theists do not allow their beliefs to be falsified despite evidence against them, and instead simply change their idea of God to be a formless intangible being, God dies a death of a thousand qualifications. Through his parable of the gardener he showed that a gardener or God with no attributes is really no different to the idea of no God at all. In the context of nirguna Brahman this means that by suggesting that Brahman is a formless force beyond comprehension, Hindus are in fact rendering their belief in Brahman meaningless so it is no longer a reasonable belief.

Despite this, other theories of religious language can be used to support belief in Brahman, such as Hick's theory of eschatological verification. Hick suggested that statements theists make about God are cognitive and meaningful because they can be verified in the afterlife. He told the parable of the celestial city to demonstrate that a theist's beliefs are very meaningful to them because they affect the way they live their entire life. Hindus lives are greatly affected by their belief in Brahman and Hick's logic can be applied to this idea: perhaps once Hindus reach liberation, their beliefs about Brahman will be verified. Because of this, their belief in Brahman must be reasonable.

Ultimately it can be observed that there are many ways for Hindus to prove or support their belief in Brahman, and due to the different representations of Brahman, it is possible to find one which is completely compatible with reason.

The, very successful, structure of this answer is:

- Point of view
- Exploration of the concept of Brahman
- Argument in support – design argument
- Counter to this – Hume's objections
- Counter to the counter-argument: Brahman as nirguna
- Counter-argument to this – falsification principle.
- Counter-argument to this – eschatological verification.
- Conclusion.

The answer is a very good length, around 800 words, and fully focused on the issue. It critically analyses all the arguments presented and reaches a conclusion supported by the arguments presented, which links the idea of 'reasonable belief' to one compatible with reason.

AO1 = Level 5, 10 marks

AO2 = Level 5, 15 marks

Get help and support

Visit our website for information, guidance, support and resources at [aqa.org.uk/subjects/7062](https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/7062)

You can talk directly to the subject team

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