



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8062/14 Paper 1: Hinduism
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Centres have again prepared students well for this exam. The best students demonstrated a coherent and holistic, wide-ranging knowledge of the religion, used specialist language freely and appropriately, and made excellent use of a wide range of teachings to support the points they made. They articulated arguments and evaluated well. The weakest students lacked in all of these areas, but were still able to show a fair level of knowledge of the religion. Most students were able to attempt all questions on the paper.

For most students, the Practices section proved more accessible than the Beliefs section. Beliefs covers abstract ideas, and so is more complex. 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 look to strengthen their teaching of the Beliefs section, and build links back to it when they deliver lessons on practices. This will strengthen student performance on the paper. The best students do this automatically in their answers.

There was a good standard and wide range of knowledge of religious teachings shown, and these were used appropriately. The quotation, 'Brahman is all' was used frequently and in a variety of contexts; however, it was refreshing to see students continue to use the wide range of teachings and use them appropriately. Centres are clearly linking topics to teachings, giving strong religious foundations to answers.

The use of technical language by students continues to be a strength on the paper. However a small minority struggled to understand some key terms. 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 be able to attempt all questions with confidence. This year, samsara proved a difficult term for some, as did the phrase 'personal virtues'.

Some students are writing, 'Hindu scriptures / texts teach...' as an introduction to a teaching. This does not achieve the 'source of authority' mark. For this mark, the source must be named, eg Bhagavad Gita, Swami Vivekenanda, etc. When the source is named, with its relevant and appropriate teaching, the mark is gained. Students need to understand that to achieve the fifth mark on .4 questions, the naming of the source is required.

Question-based comments

Beliefs

1.1

This question concerning karma tested key knowledge. Few students had problems giving a correct answer. The vast majority of students gave the correct answer; those who did not usually chose 'thoughts'.

1.2

This question again tested key knowledge. Students either knew it or did not, meaning that nearly half failed to gain any marks. Many students did not seem to know the terms Sanatana dharma and Varnashramadharmas and only approximately a third of students secured full marks. Some students understood dharma to mean duty, so then gave what they believed to be two duties, eg achieve moksha and ahimsa. As the question asked for two forms of dharma, this did not gain any credit. Many students confused the dharmas with ashramas (stages of life) or yogas (paths to union with the divine). If they gave two ashramas, they were credited a single mark since Varnashramadharmas governs the ashramas.

1.3

Nearly half of the students gained full marks on this question. This was in spite of many struggling with the term saguna. However, the question gave a way in to those not recognising the term, so they worked on the idea of God with form, and correctly worked out it could refer to murtis (images of the divine in form). This allowed them to write about devotion and worship, and so gain credit. Most responses did focus on the idea that Saguna Brahman gave Hindus a physical form which facilitated worship as one of their points. There were also some good references to avatars and their importance as a virtue.

A small number of students confused saguna with nirguna, so that their answers were usually not valid. For example, they wrote about Brahman's transcendence where there is no form.

It is crucial in this question to show how belief influences Hindus, that is to say, how what a Hindu believes affects what they say / do / think / feel / believe. Where centres directly focus on this assessment objective in their teaching, their students find it easier to score well on the question. Those students who focus only on explaining the belief cannot gain more than half marks.

1.4

Most students recognised the term, samsara, and could give good teachings to support their explanations. A significant issue for the question is the use of 'Hindu scriptures / texts' as the name of the source of authority this is not sufficient. This question relies on the **naming** of a relevant source of belief, teaching or authority to gain full marks, including providing two beliefs, each explained. Approximately 20% gained full marks; though many more than that used relevant teachings, failing to name a source cost them the extra mark. Even so, almost 60% of students gained four or five marks on this question.

A number of students wrote about karma or moksha rather than samsara. Where their answers were purely about karma / moksha, they could not gain any credit. Centres should ensure students recognise and understand each of the three key terms in its own right.

A small number of students answered this question as if it were an influences question. This usually did not help them in their quest for full marks as the actual task was to explain the teachings, rather than to discuss their impact.

1.5

There were some excellent, thoughtful and well-argued answers to this question which asked students to evaluate 'For Hindus, love is the most important of the personal virtues'. These responses showed a good understanding of the Hindu personal virtues and were able to present two points of view often referring to other virtues- ahimsa, respect, empathy, mind / sense control or humility. For a large number of students, it was clear that they did not recognise the term 'personal virtue'. They could write about love as they were able to consider it in various contexts. Weaker responses wrote about love in terms of married and sexual love, whilst the best answers recognised love for the divine, and selfless love as well. Not understanding the term 'personal virtues' meant their alternate point of view used guesswork. Students offered Hindu beliefs, the yogas, the ashramas, the four aims of life, worship and more. This approach did not gain as much credit as their answers one-sided (L2; 6 marks maximum).

It was clear that some students, who referred to kama in their answers, understood kama as sexual pleasure. Kama is sensual pleasure, including much more than just sex, and is not about every sense to excessive levels. A small number of students equated love with married life and sexual relationships and this limited their response. It also led sometimes to a mistake in discussing the ashramas as the second point of view.

A small number of students described Brahman as benevolent, the God of love – somewhat more akin to the Christian idea of God. Had they been writing about Vishnu, or better still Krishna, they could have achieved credit in explaining the virtue of love.

Practices

2.1

Around 80% of students got this answer on the definition of a murti correct.

2.2

Students seemed to recognise the idea of the four paths to the divine, and most could give two of them. They tended to use the Hindu terms, eg karma yoga, raja yoga, rather than their English definitions. Just under 70% got full marks. Where they failed to get full marks, it was usually because they offered beliefs, such as moksha, rather than yogas.

2.3

There was a huge range of acceptable points made in answering this question. Many purely cultural activities were described, which usually gained credit as the increasing commercialisation of the festival has made them part of it. The influence of British celebrations on British Hindus was also credited through the idea of giving and receiving gifts and cards. Similarly, general ideas such as 'going to worship' were credited.

Many students seemed to know only about throwing coloured powder (usually written as paint) or only referred to activities of the second day of Holi. However, the story of Prahlad and Holika, when used, gave more options for the answers to this question. Examiners did see some excellent references to Prahlad, and to Krishna.

Over a third of students gained full marks and approximately 90% gained at least one mark for the question. A number of students linked the throwing of powders to 'childish behaviour'. Where students failed to get full marks, it was usually because their whole answer related to the story behind Holi (ie why it is important), or (more commonly) listing many activities rather than explaining just two. Some students mixed up Diwali and Holi, choosing activities only found at Diwali, or explaining activities found at both in Diwali terms.

2.4

Most students found this question straightforward to understand and answer. They were able to give a range of reasons why Hindus use different places for worship. The most popular combination was home and temple, but the idea of being able to worship anywhere because 'Brahman is all' was commonly stated.

As with 1.4, there was some reference to 'Hindu texts' rather than naming a source, and thus not gaining the fifth (source) mark.

A small number of students just described / explained different places for worship rather than explaining why they were used. This often, but not always, affected the mark. More students got a higher mark for this question than they did on 1.4. with almost 80% gaining four or five marks.

2.5

As the last question on the paper, the Practices evaluation is usually the weaker of the two evaluation questions and students need to be sure they have left sufficient time for this last 12 mark question. However, overall, this question performed slightly better than 1.5. Over half the students obtained a Level 3 or Level 4 mark. The question asked students to evaluate the statement, 'For Hindus, pilgrimage is the best way to show devotion to God.'

The better answers revealed students reaching into all areas of their knowledge and understanding of Hinduism in their answers. Expression of key beliefs as well as their influence on practice were seen. This holistic understanding of the studied religion was characteristic of the best responses seen. For example, a clear focus on the idea of 'showing devotion', often exploring the link to bhakti yoga and to Krishna.

Most students contrasted different places of pilgrimage, eg Varanasi and Kumbh Mela, as one point of view with home / temple worship as the second. A significant number contrasted the

benefits of pilgrimage with its deficits, successfully explaining how pilgrimage is not always a good show of devotion, but rather a privileged experience.

In many answers seen there was a significant amount of descriptive detail, which was not credit worthy. Helping students to understand differences between descriptive and evaluative statements will be of benefit in the extended response questions.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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