



GCSE

Religious Studies

8062/14 Hinduism

Report on the examination

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General comments

Centres have again prepared students well for the exam. The best students demonstrated clear and coherent knowledge and understanding, which was both wide-ranging and holistic. They understood and freely used a wide range of key terms. They demonstrated good understanding in their responses, often 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. However, it is the case that most students were able to attempt all of the questions.

Students performed better overall in the Practices section as a contrast to performance in 2024. The best students performed equally well across the whole paper and were able to use beliefs and teachings in their explanations for the Practices section. They have a holistic knowledge and understanding of the religion and demonstrate this well.

Students continue to use a wide range of teachings, as well as a wide range of technical terms. It is often the case that teachings are directly appropriate to the topic in question, which shows that centres are taking a robust approach to the teaching of different elements of the Specification. It is the case that key terms used in questions are sometimes found challenging by some students, for example, many students wrote about devotion in general rather than bhakti yoga in question 2.5.

The source of authority mark is gained by naming an appropriate and accurate source of authority for a belief or teaching presented. This might be the holy book from which a quotation (or its approximation) is taken, or a religious leader whose message/pronouncement on a topic is given, or the sacred writing from which a general message comes. It is important that students give the accurate source to the content they describe, and some students fell afoul of this this year, so failed to gain the fifth 'source' mark. Student handwriting is an ongoing issue, with many students writing in a way which challenges the reader. This makes it difficult to judge whether spelling is good and makes general reading difficult. At times, it will have affected the award of the SPaG mark.

Question specific comments

Beliefs section

Question 1

Three-quarters of students were successful in answering this question.

Question 2

A third of the students gained full marks on this question. It was common to see the idea of free will being linked to choice, and of the use/abuse of free will. Some students suggested that only Hindus have free will, that Brahman grants free will, that everything has free will – none of these ideas were credited, as all are inaccurate in Hinduism.

Question 3

The key element of a correct response to this question is to say what the belief in maya influences believers to say/think/do. Whether by explaining the belief and how it influences, or just focusing on writing about the influence, there were many very good answers. Often the best responses wrote about how Hindus are influenced to try to see past maya as part of their spiritual quest, and there were many references to the snake and rope story. It is the case that some students do not address 'influence', rather they simply explain the belief – these answers could only gain credit at 'simple explanation' level. Responses had to focus on maya, so those writing about moksha without reference to maya gained no credit. Some students wrote about how maya impacts on people, which gained limited credit. A small number of students personified maya, writing about maya as if an actual (evil) being, akin to the devil of Western traditions – this is inaccurate. Some other students got confused by 'illusion' and wrote about dreams and hallucinations – gaining no credit.

Question 4

This was a very straightforward question for many students, with a great number of appropriate teachings used in illustration of points made. Half of the responses gained four or five marks. There were some excellent responses which contrasted explanations of Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. Some students did confuse Brahman with Brahma, which affected their mark. This year, a number of students answered this question as if it were an influences question. This meant that the explanatory part of each point they made was not actually relevant to the question. Centres must take care to ensure students do not write in this way as it is a guarantee of lost marks. It was the case that a number of responses gave inaccurate sources of authority in this question, for example, attributing quotes about reincarnation to the Vedas.

Question 5

To gain Level 4 marks, a response had to address the idea of 'most important' and more than one in ten of responses successfully managed this. The best responses argued well using each of the four aims, and particularly moksha, to present a series of points of view. Many students did not know what the four aims are, and so their answers were only indirectly linked to the answer. Some students wrote about ahimsa as an aim, which is not accurate unless used in the sense of 'ahimsa is the highest form of dharma' (Gandhi). Ahimsa is part of dharma, not

itself an aim of life for Hindus. In this case, the argument was read as part of the 'agree' point of view. Some students focused on Sanatana versus Varnashrama dharma for their whole essay – given these are both forms of dharma, this meant a ceiling of L2:6 marks for such answers.

Practices section

Question 1

Most students gave the correct option for this question.

Question 2

Students were able to give a range of reasons why temples are important in Hinduism, and so most students gained full marks for this question.

Question 3

This was a straightforward question, and a third of all students gained full marks. It was good to see the wide range of examples used in responses. Most students chose to write about holy lands or hills or rivers, rather than as a generic whole (nature). Both ways were credited. A number of students wrote about Varanasi, which was not credited – it is a city, whereas the question was focused on natural elements. Where an answer focused on activities carried out at these places, credit was limited, as the response did not answer the question of 'why'. Some explanations about the importance of some of these places were inaccurate, for example, that Kumbh Mela occurs where drops of Brahman were spilled (it was immortality), and that the Ganges is the hair of Vishnu or Brahman (it is Shiva). As with 1.4, we saw inclusion of how these places influence Hindus, which was often not a valid answer.

Question 4

Just over half of students gained four or five marks. Many students used examples effectively to illustrate their points, especially Kumbh Mela, Vrindavan and Varanasi. For source of authority it was common to see two quotes, 'The Guru is a skilled helmsman', and 'Without faith, one merely takes a bath'. Neither of these come from Hindu scripture, and the second was originally said about Christian baptism, and so were not creditworthy. Centres must take care to teach authentic content.

Question 5

Performance in 2.5 was similar to that of 1.5. To reach L4 marks, students had to address 'best way'. Credit was given to discussion of any practices to try to attain moksha, for example, fulfilling one's dharma. The majority of students in writing about bhakti yoga, just described common religious practices, ie they wrote about how Hindus show devotion, rather than being able to explain bhakti yoga. Hence it was unusual to see the argument that, at its best, bhakti yoga demands participation in all other forms of yoga. Those students who did know about bhakti gave very authoritative arguments. The case for astanga/raja yoga encompassing other yogas was made more frequently and often given as the reason for its pre-eminence. Whilst most students could say something about karma yoga, it was usually more about karma, than the yoga. Most students could make arguments for and against the statement, outlining each different yoga and its value. A small number of students understood yoga in

terms of a keep fit activity, and so significantly restricted their marks. Centres are advised to teach the yogas in greater depth and precision.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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