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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

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Paper 5 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 5 is the Hinduism: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices paper. It assesses knowledge and understanding of key elements which are part of Hinduism as it is practised in the contemporary world as well as the ability to discuss and evaluate the impact of Hindu belief and practice on different groups of Hindus.

All questions and sections of questions are compulsory. In this session, a significant number of candidates did not attempt Questions 1 (c) and 2 (a).

Candidates who performed well on this paper generally demonstrated strong examination skills, including effective use of their examination time, careful reading of exam questions and the application of their material to the specific question that had been asked. Their responses showed not only knowledge of a range of relevant material but understanding of the demands of a question; for example, they were aware that more than a sentence offering a personal opinion would be required to deal adequately with the part (e) questions.

Less successful responses often confused different specialist terms from within the study of Hinduism; a significant example is Question 2 (d) where 'trigunas' was treated as a synonym for 'trimurti'. These responses were also more restricted in their discursive responses to part (e) questions, usually demonstrating relevant knowledge and an ability to organise it into opposing views but without progressing from there to discussion and/or analysis.

It should be noted that the part (e) questions do not demand opposite views, but rather different ones. However, the identification of distinct sets of views does not automatically amount to a discursive engagement sufficient for higher level marks. Candidates who deployed their knowledge in the form of arguments, offering justifications, counter-arguments and/or critique of the justifications were better able to demonstrate the skills of evaluation and analysis necessary for the highest level marks.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding of specialist Hinduism-specific terminology • showed understanding of how this material related to the specific questions asked • were able to apply their understanding of diverse Hindu paths, such as the margas, to identify and explore common and divergent perspectives on the questions asked.	• showed confusion over meaning of technical terms used in the question, preventing successful application of knowledge • demonstrated little discursive engagement with the material • showed confusion over the distinction between Dvaita and Advaita philosophies (knowledge of these is not required by the specification) and the relevance or application of these philosophies to the questions asked.

Question 1 (a)

1   **(a)**   What is the mahayuga?

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.... **[3]**

Most candidates answered this question well, demonstrating familiarity with and understanding of the term.

These points-marked questions award marks for discrete points of correct, relevant knowledge, points of development of that knowledge and/or relevant exemplification. Candidates were therefore able to gain a mark for defining the term directly or for describing it as a collective term for the four yugas. Descriptions of the cyclical nature of time in Hindu thinking were also relevant.

Misconception

?   Where candidates did not gain all 3 marks, it was most commonly because they had mistaken 'mahayuga' for the name of one of the four ages and could not therefore develop the response with correct material.

Question 1 (b)

(b)   Give **three** items necessary for puja.

1 ....

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2 ....

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3 ....

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[3]

Candidates demonstrated good knowledge on this question, identifying a full range of items involved in puja from murti to offerings of food or flowers. Some candidates did not give three responses, thereby restricting the number of marks available to them.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Outline the Hindu part of the Assisi Declarations.

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.... **[3]**

> This question proved problematic for many candidates, with many leaving it wholly un-attempted and many of those who did offer a response being clearly unsure what the Assisi Declarations were, so few marks were gained this way. Marks were given for correct Hindu views about caring for the environment, since this is the essence of the declarations.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Describe Hindu beliefs about how maya prevents liberation.

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.... **[6]**

> Almost all candidates attempted this question and demonstrated a confident understanding of maya, meaning 'illusion', developed with reference to it as a distraction from spirituality or ultimate truth. There was some confusion as to what it is that is illusory, and this led some candidates away from a focus on the question into a consideration of the difference between Advaita and Dvaita philosophy which they then struggled to relate back to the question asked.

Assessment for learning
Maya is commonly translated as 'illusion' but the illusion referred to is not the material world itself; rather, it is human understanding of the nature and importance of that world. The most common view is that maya deludes the atman into misunderstanding its true nature, seeing itself as the same as or part of the material world when it is not. Some candidates were confused about what the nature of the illusion is and were led by this into responses explaining that, since the world is unreal, everything done within it is irrelevant or pointless, including any of the paths a Hindu might take to liberation. This is not really a Hindu view, because maya does not mean that the world is wholly unreal, it is simply less real or less important than the reality which lies beyond it.

Question 1 (e)

(e) 'Animals should have the same rights as people.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Hinduism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.   **[15]**

✏ Spelling, punctuation and grammar **[3]**

There was a high level of subject knowledge demonstrated in response to this question, with candidates bringing in concepts such as ahimsa, atman, vahanas and goshalas. Most candidates demonstrated good understanding of the cycle of samsara and the involvement of animal rebirth within this. There were also some strong opinions on the issue evident in many candidate responses and most candidates were also able to recognise alternative views and perspectives.

It is important to note that, while a discussion begins with identifying and justifying differing views on an issue, the level descriptors against which these responses are marked require more than this for the higher levels. Responses often needed to expand their detailed explanation of how a position on the issue might be justified into a more critical analytic or evaluative reflection on that position.

Exemplar 1

This Statement Says " ~~~~ animals should have the same rights as people " I ~~~~ disagree with this Statement.

One reason I disagree is because animals don't have the same intelligence as a human, so I think an animal wouldn't be able to look after itself after awhile.

However, if a hindu doesn't complete the cycle of Samsara and is Stuck in the cycle birth, death, rebirth - then maybe a Hindu could of been reincarnated as an animal, which makes me think maybe animals should have the same rights.

On the other, if someone ~~~~ where to reincarnate as an animal it would be ~~~~ their on fault for not building enough good actions from their past life.

However if someone is reincarnated into an animal, ~~it is~~ it is ~~their~~ ~~their~~ their own fault for not building enough good karma in their past life.

Animals and humans aren't the same if you looked on a food chain you would see humans are above animals.

Overall, I think it animals and people had the same rights it would chaos. So I think it is better how it normally is.

Exemplar 1 shows a response which has clearly organised knowledge and opinions, but which lacks development beyond a simple statement of the evidence on which the opinion is based. For example, the third paragraph offers the possibility of rebirth as an animal as evidence in support of giving animals extra rights. This is certainly relevant, but it needs to be made more than a statement if the response is to gain a high level mark. This could take a range of forms such as considering how likely human rebirth is in comparison to animal rebirth, reflecting on the causes of an animal rebirth for an atman that has been human and whether those reasons have any impact on the idea of animal rights, or looking at the role of animals in the material world and whether equal rights would impact on this in a negative way. Any of these approaches would expand the paragraph from a stated position with a piece of evidence to support it into a reflective consideration open to critique, evaluation or counter-response.

Question 2 (a)

2   (a) Name **three** of the purusharthas.

1 ....

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2 ....

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3 ....

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[3]

Most candidates gained all available marks here, with three correct responses.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline **one** custom associated with Raksha Bandhan.

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.... **[3]**

Most responses demonstrated knowledge of this festival as involving sibling relationships and the exchange of gifts between siblings. Some candidates mixed up the giver and receiver of the bracelet.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Why is Varanasi a site of pilgrimage for Hindus?

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.... **[3]**

There were a wide range of possible approaches to this question and responses demonstrated all of them. Some candidates recounted specific stories related to the site and some described the connection between dying on that site and the removal or karma. Others focused on connections to specific deities and or on the broader range of spiritual experiences and intentions associated with pilgrimage.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Describe how the trigunas are involved in the creation of the material world.

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.... **[6]**

Many responses began by identifying the trigunas by name. A similarly large number did not and instead the idea of the trigunas was conflated with the trimurti, sometimes with an explicit statement saying that they mean the same thing but most often without, followed by a description of the involvement of the trimurti in the cycle of creation and destruction. While connections can certainly be made between the trimurti and the trigunas they are not synonyms, so many of the responses that took this approach demonstrated insufficient understanding of the concept to gain any marks.

Where understanding of the trigunas was clear response were often descriptive of an overall philosophy, lacking a focus on the specific question. Exemplar 3 demonstrates this: the trigunas are clearly linked with both the concept of prakriti and the idea of individual qualities but, instead of considering creation, the response expands into a broad description of how this philosophy explains the entrapment of atman in the cycle of rebirth. This is good knowledge of Hinduism, and some of it is relevant but it does not answer the question that has been asked and therefore it cannot achieve high level marks.

Exemplar 2

Brahma is the creator and created everything that is around us He is the ultimate idea. He made a world for us to live in so we can be happy. Vishnu is the preserver and is keeping the Earth going and making sure sure we have everything we need to live. Shiva is the destroyer and will destroy the world at the end of the cycle. This will then happen over and over again

Exemplar 2 illustrates this: there is a clear description of the three deities of the trimurti and their roles as creator, maintainer and destroyer, but no reference at all to the trigunas.

Exemplar 3

sattva
rajas
tama

7

Describe how the trigunas are involved in the creation of the material world.

Pakriti is represented in the form of the trigunas. They are the characteristics and tendencies that shape ones personality. Throughout a Hindus life they will experience all three tendencies. ~~Some at once the same time and some on their own.~~ They may experience all characteristics at once or may experience them separately. The trigunas are Sattva (purity), rajas (action) and tamas (destruction, darkness). The material world contains these pains and pleasures whereas purusha doesn't. This portrays how the materialistic world ~~relates~~ (pakriti) ~~relates to the~~ contain mixed characteristics and tendencies whereas the universe beyond physics (purusha) doesn't. It portrays peace and union **[6]**

Where understanding of the trigunas was clear, responses were often descriptive of an overall philosophy and lacked a focus on the specific question. Exemplar 3 demonstrates this: the trigunas are clearly linked with both the concept of prakriti and the idea of individual qualities but, instead of considering creation, the response expands into a broad description of how this philosophy explains the entrapment of atman in the cycle of rebirth. This is good knowledge of Hinduism, and some of it is relevant but it does not answer the question that has been asked and therefore it cannot achieve high level marks.

Misconception	
?	Connections are sometimes made between the trimurti and the trigunas, with each of the deities being associated with a particular guna. However, the two concepts are not synonyms.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* 'Bhakti yoga is the easiest way to attain liberation.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Hinduism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.   **[15]**

Most candidates demonstrated good knowledge of the different margas and their role within Hinduism. There was often quite a detailed description of the practices associated with each and how these relate to the idea of liberation.

As with Question 1 (e), it is important to note that while a discussion begins with identifying and justifying differing views on an issue, the level descriptors against which these responses are marked require more than this for the higher levels. Responses often needed to expand their detailed explanation of how a position on the issue might be justified into a more critical analytic or evaluative reflection on that position.

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