



# **Examiners' Report**

## **June 2023**

**GCSE Religious Studies B 1RB0 2E**

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## **Introduction**

This paper contributes to 50% of the overall award. The paper includes four questions, each covers a section of the specification. Candidates are expected to answer all four questions. There is no element of choice on the paper. The details of the assessment content is provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification rather than other published resources when planning and teaching the course content. The examination is set from the specification .

This paper allows an in depth study of Hinduism, as a lived religion, and its beliefs and teachings on life specifically about the issues of peace and conflict and crime and punishment. This unit engages the interest of young people, as it addresses many Hindu beliefs and teachings in addition to some issues affecting young people today.

## Question 1 (a)

(a) questions require the candidate to give three pieces of information, and the most common command word is 'Outline'. Candidates need to put their three pieces of information into a sentence or phrase.

This response was awarded 3 marks.

1 (a) Outline **three** Hindu beliefs about spiritual worlds.

(3)

Hindus believe that when they escape Samsara they will go to a spiritual world. Hindu's also believe that spiritual worlds are pain and anxiety free. Another belief is the material world is full of Maya where as the spiritual world is real.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This question proved challenging for many candidates, with some choosing not even to attempt an answer. A wide range of responses was accepted – most of which were not on the mark scheme.



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Examiner Tip

Keep your answers to (a) questions short and to the point. You do not need to use all of the lines provided; give yourself more time to answer the longer questions.

## Question 1 (b)

(b) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea.

This response was awarded all four marks.

(b) Explain **two** beliefs about the nature of Hindu cosmology.

(4)

One belief about the nature of Hindu cosmology is that in Kali Yuga is the last yuga. In Kali Yuga it is believed that people will have to flee their home countries and leaders will become aggressive.

Another belief about the nature of Hindu cosmology is that there are four yugas in total - Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. In Satya Yuga the human lifespan is around 1 million years and there is less sickness and pain.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Many candidates did not understand the word cosmology and so were unable to access the marks for this question. Responses based around prakriti, the yugas and the various creation stories were all credited.



Pay close attention to the command word, in this case *explain*. Here, we don't just want to know what the thing is, but something about it. To get the full marks you need to be able to give two different explanations *and* be able to develop them; in other words, to give an additional bit of information that adds to that explanation.

In this example we are told "...that the Kali Yuga is the last yuga" and this is developed by a description of what the Kali Yuga is like. We are also told that there are four yugas and this is developed by the list of what the four are.

Although Kali Yuga is mentioned in both parts of the answer, it's not a repetition, so both parts of the answer can be credited.

## Question 1 (c)

(c) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. In addition, either of the two ideas presented, if it is developed by reference to a Source of Wisdom and Authority (SOWA), can be awarded an additional mark.

This question was awarded all 5 marks.

(c) Explain **two** Hindu beliefs about the three aspects of the Divine.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

One aspect of the divine is *Antaryami*, which is the belief that ~~is~~ Brahman is within the *atman* (soul), which is further supported by the quote "Brahman is in all".

Another aspect of the divine is *Bhagavan*, which means Brahman is beyond the material world and also resides in the spiritual world.



The question was originally designed to test candidate's knowledge of the three aspects of the Divine listed on the Specification; Brahman, Bhagavan and Antaryami. In practice, just as many candidates answered the question using the Trimurti and this was accepted as a reasonable interpretation of the question. Some candidates chose to answer about Saguna and Nirguna Brahman. Here it was decided that this was not a reasonable interpretation of the question, since there are only two aspects here, not three. Answers that used Saguna or Nirguna as developments of a more general point about Brahman were credited.

Sometimes candidates put the development before the belief; we still credit these as developed ideas.



The wording of questions is taken from the exam specification. When you are revising, use the specification to help structure your revision – it will help you in the exam if you have already had to think about what you know in the words that we use.

## Question 1 (d)

There is no one single formula for answering a (d) question. Two answers can get the same mark and look completely different. That said, there are some key things that we are looking for. Let's start with the basics.

There should be an argument for, an argument against and a conclusion. The arguments for and against should demonstrate religious understanding – not just knowledge.

Ideas within the arguments should be organised into logical chains of reasoning (x happens, this is because of y, which means z).

Lastly, if you've presented an argument, is it a good one? Why is it a good one? Here, the biggest pitfall is candidates who say "this is a strong argument because..." and then give another reason that could just as easily have gone into their argument. This is a strong reason because it is taught in the Vedas/Upanishads/Bhagavad Gita is a good start (if it actually is!), but then why does the Rig Veda matter? Is the Bhagavad Gita more, or less, authoritative than the Rig Veda? If Gandhi taught it, why does that matter? Does it matter more or less than it being taught in Manusmriti, for example.

This response was placed in Level 2.

\* (d) "Moksha gives meaning to a Hindu's life."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

statement as it is stronger because moksha is one of their main goals in life is to escape samsara

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

(15)

Moksha is what hindus achieve when they escape samsara. They do this through having good karma.

Some people may disagree with this statement as moksha is important to Hindus. However, they have other aspects of their life. They may believe that moksha is not their aim and they want to be a good hindu for selfless reasons. Hindus believe that it is bad karma to do a good deed for someone else in order to achieve moksha.

Another reason people may disagree with this statement is because hindus believe that brahman is everywhere. Therefore he will decide if they should achieve moksha a Hindus main goal should

be doing good deeds without any personal gain in their mind.

~~They~~ Hindus may agree with this statement as moksha is the result of them being a good Hindu. Moksha is a Hindu's goal in life as they get to be enlightened and join ~~god~~ Brahman ~~the~~. As they believe that this material world ~~can't offer~~ is nothing compared to where the divine live. They also believe that once they achieve moksha then they will be at peace.

Another reason that Hindus may ~~disagree~~ <sup>agree</sup> with this statement is that achieving moksha is one of their main teachings. Hindus are taught that if they do good things for others then they will gain good karma. This will allow them to escape the cycle of samsara and achieve moksha where they will be enlightened. There atam will be ~~the~~ release. \*

(Total for Question 1 = 27 marks)



Key to accessing Levels 3 and 4 is the appraisal of the arguments presented. A straightforward for and against argument, even with the conclusion that this response lacks, but that lacks any appraisal is likely to be a Level 2 response. Even an exceptional for and against, without appraisal is unlikely to do more than nudge into Level 3. The candidate tells us that moksha is important to Hindus, they could improve on this – how do we know that? What texts or teachings tell us that? Better yet, how reliable are those texts or teachings? How authoritative are they? Some schools have taught this by presenting their students with the arguments for and against and then asking them to focus on appraising the merits of them.



In (d) questions, the most important thing to demonstrate is not that you can present a for and against argument, but that you show that you understand how good the arguments are.

## Question 2 (a)

(a) questions require the candidate to give three pieces of information. The most common command word is 'Outline'. Candidates need to put their three pieces of information into a sentence or phrase. Where a candidate merely gives a list they can only get one mark – and then only if all three elements of the list are correct.

This response was awarded all three marks.

**2 (a) Outline three Hindu beliefs about justice.**

(3)

Hindu's believe justice is important when implicating punishment. They also believe that without justice, criminals could run free and innocent people could be in jail. Another belief is justice is necessary for keeping an order in society.



Most candidates were able to secure three marks when answering this question. Often this was through extended answers. Some candidates reflected the contradictions between different Hindu traditions, for example between retributive and rehabilitative justice.



It can be tempting to write a list of beliefs like "Retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation." Lists only get one mark, and only if all three are correct. Short phrases are all it takes to make this into a three mark answer. "Hindus believe in retribution. They believe in deterrence. They also believe in rehabilitation." The answer doesn't need to be elegant to get full marks.

## Question 2 (b)

(b) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. Sometimes this might be a definition, other times an extra detail.

This response was awarded four marks.

(b) Explain **two** Hindu beliefs about how good actions are rewarded.

(4)

Good actions are rewarded by good karma, which lightens the atman and brings Hindus ~~at~~ closer to achieving moksha and escaping the cycle of samsara.

Good actions also increase the ~~amount~~ amount of sattva (goodness) in the soul, which improves the atman and helps Hindus to escape re-incarnation and samsara.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

Many candidates were successful in answering this question. The example shows a deeper level of understanding than was typical and each answer is developed multiple times. This was advantageous for this particular candidate since the first development in each half of their answer was, effectively, a repetition.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

In (b) and (c) questions it is important that you don't repeat your main idea, or your development. In this example 'lightens the atman' and 'improves the atman' are basically the same idea – it is the parts that follow that allowed this to get full marks.

## Question 2 (c)

(c) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. It is not necessary to quote a source of wisdom and authority verbatim, the reference just has to be recognisable to the examiner.

This response was given five marks out of the five available.

(c) Explain **two** Hindu beliefs about punishment.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

Hindu believe that is important to forgive people so both parties can get comfort. So they can both move towards their journey of enlightenment.

Hindu believe in ahimsa, ~~or~~ which is non violence as they believe that punishment doesn't always help and can make things worse. "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind".



As with Q02a, candidates were able to address this in multiple ways, expressing the divergence of views in the Hindu tradition regarding punishment; both for and against corporal and capital punishments. A pleasing number of candidates were quite specific in referring to the categories of punishment mentioned in Manusmriti. Of those who used a quote to support their answer – the rod of punishment and an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind were the most common.



If you can't remember where a particular quote comes from, it is always best to give the quote and not say where it is from. In this case, if the candidate had said that the quote was from Manu, rather than Gandhi, they would not have been given a mark for it.

## Question 2 (d)

A (d) question should have an argument for, an argument against and a conclusion. The arguments for and against should demonstrate religious understanding – not just knowledge.

Ideas within the arguments should be organised into logical chains of reasoning (x happens, this is because of y, which means z).

Lastly, is the argument a good one? Why is it a good one? What are the weaknesses of the case that has been presented?

This response was placed in Level 3.

These arguments are strong because Hindus should follow ahimsa and choose the kindest action - 'Ahimsa is the highest duty' therefore it is a must that they forgive if they want to follow their dharma. Also, a Hindu cannot be freed from suffering if they waste time on vegetables. All Hindus want to achieve moksha however they must fully devote themselves to Brahman to do this and so by not forgiving they hold themselves back from escaping samsara.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The candidate makes an attempt at appraisal in the clip shown – it was not the only one in the whole answer. Use of the quote "Ahimsa is the highest duty" helps make the case for the argument being a good one. Attributing it to Gandhi, or highlighting its origins in earlier Hindu scripture, and then explaining how authoritative that makes it, would have improved this still further.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Whatever arguments you bring into your answer, tell the examiner if they are good arguments, or not. Why are they good arguments? Would all Hindus accept that they are good arguments? Are some arguments more convincing than others? Why?

### Question 3 (a)

This question was easily misunderstood, or misinterpreted. The question specifically wanted ways that Hindus show that some animals are sacred – in other words, things that they do. Reasons why, were not credited.

This question was awarded two of the available three marks.

**3 (a) Outline three ways Hindus show some animals are sacred.**

**(3)**

Not eating cows. Secondly they volunteer at cow retirement homes. Lastly they have the belief that Brahman is in everything so they should respect it.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This question produced a range of responses. Reflecting the sensitivities around the issue, the mark scheme avoided referring to animal worship of any kind, but these responses were credited since it is a legitimately held view. Particularly with reference to the cow, we accepted any act of reverence or special treatment as a way that its sacred character is shown.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

Read the question carefully. The first two points answer the question, but the third point, about Brahman being in everything, is a *reason why* rather than a *way*.

### Question 3 (b)

(b) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. You can use quotes as development in (b) questions, just like you can in (c) questions.

This response was awarded four out of four marks.

(b) Explain **two** beliefs about Hindu kirtan.

(4)

Kirtan is the name for Hindu hymns, and is an important way of worshipping the deities to become closer with Brahman and achieve moksha. Kirtan is also an expressive way of worship, which allows Hindus to show devotion through unique hymns and songs.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

This was the question that fewest candidates attempted, reflecting their uncertainty over the meaning of kirtan. Some creative candidates deduced that, whatever it is, it was probably the case that some Hindus would believe that it is a means of gaining good karma and making it more likely that one would attain moksha.



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Examiner Tip

This part of the specification has a number of words that are less common. You can find them in section 3 of the specification, sections 3.1, 3.4 and 3.5. It would be a good idea to know all of these before the exam.

### Question 3 (c)

(c) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. In addition, either of the two ideas presented, if it is developed by reference to a Source of Wisdom and Authority (SOWA), can be awarded an additional mark. If the SOWA is misattributed, it is not credited.

This response was awarded five out of five marks.

(c) Explain **two** reasons many Hindus think it is important to celebrate festivals.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

one reason Hindus think festivals are important to celebrate is because it brings everyone together to celebrate something special. Also feel closer and more connected to Brahman, 'Brahman is all' which strengthens their faith.

Holi is the festival of colour which celebrates forgiveness this is important as it allows Hindus to let go of the negatives and start a new beginning. This is important for Hindus as they can become more connected with their religion and ~~to~~ feel closer as a community.



There were many excellent responses to this question. The intention with the question was to allow candidates to comment more generally on the importance of celebrating festivals, or to comment on the importance of celebrating specific festivals. In practice, many candidates did both. For those who commented on the communitarian aspect of festivals it was common to find the quote "Brahman is all" being used. For those commenting on specific festivals it became a little challenging, as not all were able to refer back to sources of wisdom and authority in their responses.



There are many useful quotes that you can learn to support your ability to answer the (c) questions, but try choosing just a few that you know that you can use in different circumstances. If you can't think of an exact quote in the exam, remember that you can make a more general reference to it and, if the examiner recognises it, you can still get the 5th mark.

### Question 3 (d)

A (d) question should have an argument for, an argument against and a conclusion. The arguments for and against should demonstrate religious understanding – not just knowledge.

Ideas within the arguments should be organised into logical chains of reasoning (x happens, this is because of y, which means z).

Lastly, is the argument a good one? Why is it a good one? What are the weaknesses of the case that has been presented?

This candidate's response was placed in Level 2.

Another reason to disagree is that Hindus believe that Brahma is in everything. Therefore Hindus shouldn't have to go somewhere special to be close to God. People like worshipping in different ways so ~~the~~ every hindu shouldn't go if they don't believe it will benefit their relationship with god.

In conclusion the disagree argument is stronger as all hindus are loved by God regardless of how they worship them.



The best responses to this question considered the benefits of going on pilgrimage, the lack of authoritative, scriptural, evidence that one should go on pilgrimage in the conventional sense, the communitarian benefits as well as the spiritual, the other ways that one might gain those same benefits.

In this example you can see that the only attempt at appraisal comes right at the very end of the answer, as a standalone paragraph. Ideally, we would see the appraisal woven through the answer; each element appraised as it comes. The reason that 'all Hindus are loved by God regardless of how they worship him' isn't really appraisal, it is another reason that could have gone into the main body of the answer.



Each time you present an argument in your answer, make sure that the examiner knows if you think that it is a good, or bad, argument – and why. Don't leave this all to the conclusion.

## Question 4 (a)

(a) questions require the candidate to give three pieces of information. Candidates need to put their three pieces of information into a sentence or phrase.

This candidate was awarded three out of three marks.

4 (a) Outline **three** Hindu beliefs about the conditions of a Just War.

(3)

one condition is it must not harm any civilians. A second condition is it must be approved by the highest authority. A third condition is there must be a valid and justified reason behind it



The conditions of a Just War were well-known by most candidates. One minor, recurring, feature however was reference to a Just War having to be fought under United Nations authority. Given that the question is specifically about Hindu beliefs about the conditions of a Just War, this did not seem reasonable – whereas the idea of it being sanctioned by a legitimate authority clearly is.



This is a good example of how your (a) answers don't have to be stylistically perfect. It could even be shorter than this. "It must not hurt civilians. It must be approved by the highest authority. There must be a valid reason behind it." would have got all three marks.

## Question 4 (b)

(b) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. If you use a technical term in your main idea, defining that term can count as development.

This response was awarded two out of four marks.

(b) Explain **two** Hindu attitudes to Holy War.

(4)

Hindu can only fight if it is their dharma, if they kill someone when it isn't their dharma they will get bad karma



We will always make an effort to read a candidate's response in the light of the question that has been asked – "Hindu can only fight [in a Holy War] if it is their dharma..."

It's likely here that the candidate did not know very much about Holy War, told us what they knew that was relevant to war in general, and their response was credited.



We don't take marks away if you write something that isn't correct. If you are not sure, it is always better to attempt a question than to leave it blank. Here, the candidate says something that applies to war in general, but it can still be credited.

## Question 4 (c)

(c) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate – not a completely new idea. In addition, either of the two ideas presented, if it is developed by reference to a Source of Wisdom and Authority (SOWA), can be awarded an additional mark. The SOWA does not have to be a quote, or paraphrase, from scripture; it can be a reference to a known event or story. On this paper, it is often a reference to something Gandhi did, or to Krishna's dialogue with Arjun.

This response was awarded five marks out of five.

(c) Explain **two** reasons why peace is important to Hindus.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

(5)

It supports the ~~principle~~ principle of Ahimsa as there is no war or conflict, which was highly supported by Gandhi as he said "Ahimsa is the highest duty". Working towards peace can result in good karma, which is what Hindus want to achieve moksha and escape re-incarnation to be one with Brahman.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Comments

The question was intended to offer candidates the opportunity to talk about peace, in the sense of the opposite of war and conflict. A surprising number of candidates chose to talk about the importance of inner peace as well. The wording of the specification does not preclude this possibility, so answers that took this approach were credited too.



**ResultsPlus**  
Examiner Tip

This is an excellent example of how brief your answers can be if they are well-structured. In fact, the candidate had got all five marks without needing to include the last eight words.

#### Question 4 (d)

A (d) question should have an argument for, an argument against and a conclusion. The arguments for and against should demonstrate religious understanding – not just knowledge.

Ideas within the arguments should be organised into logical chains of reasoning (x happens, this is because of y, which means z).

Lastly, is the argument a good one? Why is it a good one? What are the weaknesses of the case that has been presented?

This response was placed at the top of Level 1.

Some may agree with this statement as hindus believe in ahimsa mean no violence

~~In conclusion~~

Another reason is gandhi said 'an eye for an eye makes the whole world blind'

In conclusion the disagreeement is stronger as it show why they should fight



This example is included to help centres in gauging responses in the lower levels. There are two short chains of reasoning in the first part of the answer – two linked ideas – and even these are not factually robust. In the second part of the answer there are disparate ideas. Overall the response lacks structure and purpose. It is a good Level 1, but doesn't make it into Level 2.



However hard you find it, writing something could get you marks and writing nothing guarantees you a 0. Think about what you know on the topic. Can you build an answer that links ideas together? Can you come to a reasoned conclusion? If you can do those things, then you can access at least some of the marks.

## Paper Summary

Based on their performance in this paper, students should:

- Write concise answers to (a) questions
- Ensure that (a) answers are written in short sentences or phrases
- Make sure that developments in (b) questions are clearly linked, or related, to the main idea they present
- Avoid repeating the same development in (b) and (c) questions
- Use sources of wisdom and authority to develop (c) answers, not as a 'bolt-on' at the end
- Carefully consider what exactly it is that makes the arguments in their (d) questions strong or weak; eg how authoritative is the source they cite?

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