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# **GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS**

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**GCSE  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2  
CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM  
3120U30-1**

**SUMMER 2023**

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# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 2 CHRISTIANITY

#### General Comments

The paper proved accessible to candidates and the full range of marks were awarded across the paper. There was a range of knowledge of Christianity demonstrated in this examination. This ranged from excellent to weak. There was evidence of some candidates not engaging in the demands of the questions and therefore wrote brief responses. However, there were some excellent responses where candidates had demonstrated their knowledge of Christianity and used sources of authority to support their answers.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.1 (a) What do Christians mean by 'reason'?**

Most candidates were able to give a definition of the key concept or some form of definition of the key concept. When candidates gained full marks, they were able to define reason as 'doing something' and including some development.

**(b) Describe what happens at a Christian Infant Baptism ceremony.**

There were a range of marks for this question. When candidates responded well and scored in high bands, they used religious language appropriately to support their response. However, some candidates misread the question and wrote about why Infant Baptism takes place. Some answers were very brief and there was some evidence of candidates writing about Believers Baptism rather than Infant Baptism. Disappointingly, few candidates made reference to the use of the font in their response.

**(c) Explain ways in which Christians use the Bible.**

There were some excellent responses about how Christians use the Bible. Some candidates wrote a list, without any explanation. When this happened, the responses were brief, and the description did not contain any explanation. It is important that candidates explain the points they make in order to achieve higher marks. However, it was pleasing to see many candidates using examples to explain the points they made. Where this happened, candidates used religious language extensively, accurately, and appropriately.

**(d) Belief in the afterlife is the most important Christian belief**

There were a range of responses to this question. Some candidates did not fully engage with the belief in the afterlife being the 'most important' belief, so they did not achieve the higher bands. The more able candidates were able to fully analyse and evaluate the importance of the afterlife and provided alternative beliefs as a comparison. Unfortunately, some candidates wrote about what Christians believe about the afterlife and some referred to reincarnation and atheist views in their response.

**Summary of key points**

It is important that candidates understand the demands of the questions and use religious language appropriately. The 'describe' questions require religious language and a response that is excellent and coherent. For the 'explain' questions, it is important that candidates give a detailed explanation for the points that they make. In the evaluation responses, it is important that candidates fully engage with the demands of the statement. Linking points made, to the statement, ensures that candidates are more evaluative in their response. The use of connectives also helps candidates to structure and unpack arguments.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 2 HINDUISM

#### General Comments

The questions proved accessible to candidates and the full range of marks were awarded across the theme. The questions set reflected the scope and range of the specification. Candidates' knowledge of Hinduism demonstrated in the answers varied from outstanding to superficial. It was pleasing to see that most of candidates attempted all questions. It was encouraging to see an increase in the number of candidates making use of Hinduism specific religious language and sources of wisdom across the questions. Some of the responses particularly in the d responses were very brief, candidates disadvantaged themselves in terms of achieving higher marks.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

**Q.2 (a)** What do Hindus mean by 'Holi'?

Most candidates were able to show an understanding of Holi as a festival. The best candidates were able to correctly recognise that it was a spring festival and say something about what happened in the festival. Unfortunately, a number of candidates mixed Holi with Diwali.

**(b)** Describe how Hindus might show respect for the environment.

There were some outstanding answers where candidates described in detail how Hindus showed respect to the environment. These candidates made use of the Chipko movement and the forests Vrindavan to support their descriptions. On occasions candidates were overly general on how Hindus show respect for the environment, talking about recycling and using less cars without focusing on Hinduism. Unfortunately, a number of candidates focused on 'why' Hindus show respect for the environment instead of 'how', this greatly affected the marks gained within the question.

**(c)** Explain Hindu beliefs about karma.

Excellent responses showed a detailed explanation of karma. Within these answers there was a focus on the variety of understanding of karma, how it affects reincarnation and how karma is collected. Some candidates were able to explain the origins of karma with its establishment in the Vedic religion. Most candidates responded well to the question with many gaining a good standard within the rubric of the question. Unfortunately, some candidates gave a very brief response with a degree of repetition, thus disadvantaging themselves.

**(d)** 'The varna (caste) creates a fair society'.

Majority of candidates knew what Varna (Caste) and were able to satisfactorily discuss and evaluate the importance of Varna for Hindus, particularly around the rights and wrongs of Varna. The more able candidates were able to fully engage with the whole of the question analysing and evaluating as to whether Varna creates a fair society. Unfortunately, some candidates disadvantaged themselves by overly focusing on the Dalits and debating the rights and wrongs of the treatment of the Dalits as well as identifying them as part of the Varna (caste) system. It was pleasing to see that most candidates were making use of appropriate specialist language from within Hinduism. Most candidates evaluated their answers from within Hinduism only which reflects the requirements of the question. Candidates could have made greater use of sources of wisdom to support the lines of discussion presented.

**Summary of key points**

Answers in the extended writing parts questions, particularly d questions, were lacking in detailed evaluation.

Candidates need to ensure they fully engage with the focus of the evaluation question to gain the higher bands.

Candidates would benefit from a greater understanding of the different requirements of 'how' and 'why' questions within b questions.

It is pleasing to see the increased use of appropriate religious language.

# RELIGIOUS STUDIES

## GCSE

Summer 2023

### UNIT 2 ETHICS

#### General Comments

#### Questions 3 and 4 – Religion and Ethical Themes

The paper proved to be accessible to candidates and the full range of band descriptors and marks were awarded across the paper. This section of the paper (Q3 and Q4) required candidates to answer some questions from two perspectives or select the religious perspective they wished to write about, namely Christianity and a second religious tradition. At times, there was a noticeable difference in the quality of the responses from different religions when put side by side. Candidates sometimes confused ideas between the two religious traditions or tended to favour one more than the other, where their understanding of the religion and its traditions/beliefs was shown to be stronger. This was more noticeable in (c) responses.

Many candidates appeared confident in their use of key terminology in this section of the paper and were able to offer insight and understanding into the meaning of key terms. It was also pleasing to note across the paper in Q3 and Q4, an increased use of reference to sources of wisdom and authority and in some cases, successful interpretation of their meaning or recognition of diversity of religious views in their interpretation. There was no requirement in this paper for candidates to include reference to non-religious traditions in their responses to the (d) questions although many chose to do so and did this effectively, offering a moral, philosophical or ethical alternative perspective. At times, however, it appears that views were underdeveloped or tokenistic as though candidates were following a rubric rather than thinking for themselves of whether the viewpoint was relevant to the question posed. Some candidates also struggled to show specific understanding of the key elements of the demands of each question style; for example, distinguishing between a (b) question where description is required and a (c) question where explanation is required. It was also concerning to see that a number of candidates chose not to attempt some questions or gave very brief and underdeveloped responses.

The provision of 'Summer 2023 advanced information' proved to be very useful to candidates in their revision and preparing for the highest tariff AO2 questions in this section of the paper. These were answered more fully with many candidates giving detailed extended writing responses.

#### Comments on individual questions/sections

#### PART B – Relationships

##### Q.3 (a) What is meant by 'responsibilities'?

The majority of candidates were successfully able to offer understanding of this term, specifically linking it to ideas of duties or obligations that need to be carried out. The best answers also qualified this by adding a relevant example. A small number of candidates confused the terms of 'responsibilities' with 'roles' and some chose not to attempt this question.

- (b) Describe, from Christianity or Hinduism, the purpose of marriage.**  
Candidates appeared to be confident in answering this question with many able to talk meaningfully about the purpose of marriage and give multiple ideas, often related also to the nature of marriage; all were credited. It is encouraging to note that very few candidates answered this from both religions meaning they understood the requirement of this style of question. Furthermore, often religious terminology and teachings were specific and relevant to the religion chosen by the candidate which is very pleasing. Weaker responses tended to simply state understanding of marriage being the correct context to have children or be 'together forever', but more developed responses which achieved the higher bands, reference multiple further ideas and described how these beliefs were shown in the views of marriage from the religious tradition.
- (c) Explain Christian and Hinduism teachings about the nature and purpose of sex.**  
There was a full range of responses seen to this question; the best answers took each religious tradition separately and fully explained its teachings, making use of reference to relevant and appropriate sources of wisdom and authority. It was good to see on occasion, awareness of diversity of views within a religion or multiple interpretations of teachings. Weaker answers tended to focus more on just one religion, usually Christianity, or take both religions together and show similarity between them without always stating the evidence of both views in a balanced way. Some answers unfortunately simply described beliefs or teachings without development.
- (d) 'It is difficult to be married to someone from a different religious tradition.'**  
Responses to this question were mixed with a significant number of candidates simply focusing on similarities and differences between the actual marriage ceremonies of two religions and identifying why this may make it easy or difficult for a couple to marry. More developed responses successfully identified specific issues that may arise for a couple from different religions (or even if one partner was non-religious) that were relevant to the religions they were studying. The best responses, which were awarded the top marks, used a multitude of arguments varying from issues interfaith marriage may cause within the extended family group, specific challenges such as raising children and in contrast, how couples may overcome these issues so they wouldn't cause problems within the relationship/marriage. Many candidates offered extended answers in response to this question and were able to evaluate views given in order to come to some conclusion about the diversity of views on this statement.

## **PART B – Human Rights**

- Q.4 (a) What is meant by 'absolute poverty'?**  
This question was generally attempted and well answered by the majority of candidates who were able to identify that 'absolute poverty' was a complete lack of basic necessities. The best responses qualified this by offering an example such as food or water. A small minority of candidates offered a very brief understanding of this phrase focusing on a 'person having nothing' without any development and a few confused 'absolute' poverty with the phrase 'relative poverty'.

- (b) **Describe how religious believers promote human rights.**  
This question tended to be approached by candidates in one of two ways; they either focused on offering a general understanding of generic actions religious believers have done such as campaigns, petitions, using the media, etc *or* by focusing specifically on examples of people who have promoted human rights such as Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Malala, etc. Both these approaches were credited using the band descriptors. Candidates generally coped well with this question and were able to identify a multitude of ways that religious believers have promoted human rights; the best answers offered a description of each way before moving onto the next although weaker candidates tended to list ideas or simply state them without any sort of context. A small number of candidates appeared to misinterpret the question and focused on *why* religious believers promoted human rights rather than *how* they acted.
- (c) **Explain how a Christian and Hinduism charity work to reduce poverty.**  
This question appears to have been misunderstood by many candidates with a significant number focusing on charitable *actions* performed by religious believers rather than the work of a *specific charity* in each of the two religions studied; both have been credited in application of the band descriptors. Many candidates talked generally about how religious believers work to help others through reducing poverty and used religious teachings to support the reasons for the actions they performed. The best answers stated the name of a religious charity and went on to explain the work of that charity as well as identifying the motivation and religious teaching behind the work, doing this for both religions of study. Some weaker candidates only stated basic actions and did not develop their responses beyond basic description. A number of candidates chose not to offer any answer to this question.
- (d) **‘Religious believers should do more to stop prejudice and discrimination’.**  
Some responses to this question wasted time at the start of their response offering definitions of ‘prejudice’ and ‘discrimination’ which were the terms used in the statement, rather than offering arguments linked to the statement. Weaker responses from candidates tended to simply focus on religious beliefs about prejudice and discrimination, often stating these from the two religions they had studied before suggesting this was why religious believers should challenge prejudice and discrimination in the world. Some good answers did make explicit reference to individuals who had stood up and fought against prejudice and discrimination, such as Martin Luther King. The best responses to this question were those that showed awareness of the work done by religious individuals and groups and used this as a basis to suggest religious believers *should do more or couldn’t do any more* to help, often referring to the fact that some religious believers in the past had lost their lives due to their fight or that everyone/the government perhaps needed to do more.

## Summary of key points

- Candidates must be encouraged to learn all key terms and use them not only when required to give definitions, but also within all responses where terminology can be used to reflect understanding of key ideas.
- Candidates should be reminded to read the words of the question carefully and use the wording of the question in their responses to help direct their answers towards success. They should also make sure that they try not to 'blanket' content and focus on what the question is asking to be able to access the higher bands.
- Candidates need to respond to the specific demands of each style of question; in (b) style questions, candidates are required to give only a **description** whereas in (c) style questions candidates are required to give an **explanation**. Often inclusion of the word 'because' in c style responses will help to develop explanation skills beyond descriptive responses.
- Furthermore in (c) style responses in Q3 and Q4, candidates should be reminded of the need of 'balance' between the two religious traditions they have studied; responses where the demand is to know the content from two religious traditions should do so in equal measure.
- In all d style responses, candidates must remember to include a range of views with appropriate lines of arguments that they should reflect on, to offer a critical evaluative approach to the statement provided. Use of connectives and evaluative language in responses will help to achieve this. For Q3 and Q4, candidates should be reminded to offer *different* views which may, or may not necessarily be, agree and disagree.



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