



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 2:
CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM**

SUMMER 2019

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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UNIT 2: CHRISTIANITY AND HINDUISM

General Comments

Answers, especially in the extended writing parts of the question, were lacking in detail. Knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and concepts were superficial in certain areas and this in turn had a detrimental effect on the standard of the evaluation question. However there were some examples of very good scripts showing thorough knowledge and understanding of religious belief and content and being able to evaluate in a mature and intelligent way the influence of religious belief on practice.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Christianity

- Q.1 (a)** Most candidates were able to score one or two marks on this question. Responses referred to infant baptism or adult/believer's baptism, or both. Some attempted to describe a baptism ceremony: the content covered usually hit some points relevant to the question, but the length of such answers, and the time spent on them were unnecessary.
- (b)** Many candidates were able to talk about Heaven and Hell, with basic statements of criteria for getting there and what those places might be like. However, this is not likely to achieve more than a Band 2 / 2-3 marks ('a good, generally accurate description').

For candidates who have been taught to self-assess their answers (not a bad skill to teach and practise with them), they should be aware that marking does not rely on 'penny points' which, on a question like this one, could quickly accumulate five such points; but is based on bands of response, where the top band refers to 'excellent, coherent' and 'awareness and insight'.

A key point here is the need for candidates to know a range of key words/concepts to provide the skeleton of the answer. They should not restrict the answer to the basic and obvious ideas – bearing in mind those requirements of the top band.

- (c)** Candidates did well on this question. They were able to explain ways in which the place of worship held meaning for them, enabled them to participate in worship, provided aids to worship, support of others, guidance from leaders and opportunities to serve others, both within and beyond the church/chapel.

Where some candidates tripped up was in treating this as an evaluation and discussing why one doesn't really need to go to a place of worship. This unfortunately, guided them away from what the question was asking them to explain.

In context of such an evaluative response, some candidates offered alternative places where God could be worshipped, such as at home or going on pilgrimage. Where these were just used as an example to back up the evaluative point, they were not credited, as they miss the clear emphasis of the question. However, where a candidate developed the point, for example, with a place in the home specifically given over to private worship, or a designated place of worship attended on pilgrimage (such as the Church of the Nativity, or St David's Cathedral) credit was given. However, such answers, by their nature, tended to be limited – and candidates always run that risk when they choose to veer away from what is the more obvious point of the question (which will have been chosen with the mark tariff for the question in mind).

- (d) The full range of marks were awarded for this question. Candidates appeared to find it a relatively easy question to access.

Good answers contained discussion and counter arguments, recognising that the statement is not about the Bible, it's about ways to 'live their life for God'. The Bible is a helpful place to start, and can give them lots to say, but the best 'd' responses will always be the ones that break away from a simple assessment of the pros and cons of a single idea, to a discussion that shows detail and analysis across a range of ideas.

Some appeared to rush their reading of the question and so ended up focusing on the wrong things; focusing on individual parts of the statement rather than understanding it as a whole:

- E.g. just seeing 'Bible' – rather than 'Bible's teachings' – so they took it as 'reading the Bible', which got a thumbs down as being too passive. Others clearly didn't understand that 'teachings' often focus on what one does/how one lives (the rest of the statement - 'are all a Christian needs to live their life' - does make that clear) and so rejected the statement as resulting in Christians doing nothing (other than, again, just reading the Bible).
- Again, many candidates seemed to have poor awareness of what the teachings of the Bible might include. Quite a few thought that Christians should ignore the Bible and concentrate instead on following the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Jesus!
- Others just saw 'to live their life' – so the statement is rejected because it can't teach you important skills for life, like how to cook, or drive, or how to get a good job.
- Others simply reacted against the idea that one should live their life for anyone else and took great pains and time to argue this. Candidates must accept that there may be certain 'givens' built into the question. This question takes it as a given that a Christian will in some way and to some extent try to live their life for God. There were candidates who threw away time and marks by wanting to argue the point that no-one should have to live for someone else, God wouldn't want us to, he gave us free will so we wouldn't have to etc. They simply showed their lack of understanding of the effect of having a religious belief.
- Too many had a limited appreciation of how a believer's perspective, commitment and choices might be affected. They seemed unable to conceive that someone would, or should be expected to, live their life for anyone other than themselves. After all, we only have one life! – forgetting what they had already written about Christian beliefs for question 'b'.

Again this year, some candidates still thought they were required to include the views of other religions, and non-religious beliefs. Candidates are not penalised for this, but neither do they gain credit. Time and marks are wasted unnecessarily. Candidates' jottings showed that they were often working to rubrics and acronyms that included a requirement for this type of response.

One concept that centres might consider revisiting is that of 'free will'. Too often, candidates use it as a cop out: a glib conclusion to a point, which side-steps a proper analysis of conflicting ideas. It is commonly used, but not often well understood. Many use it as if it means you have permission to do as you please; rather than as bearing responsibility for one's choices.

SPaG

This question, 1d, is the one question on the paper where spelling, punctuation and grammar are specifically assessed.

It is hoped that candidates take full advantage of up to six bonus marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is strategically attached to their first extended writing question, so that they can be assessed while they are still thinking straight, are not yet worn to a frazzle and aren't yet involved in a mad dash against the clock.

However, too many candidates showed little sign of being aware to target those extra six marks here. These avoidable errors were far too common:

- Capital letters (especially to start sentences) and full stops should be a minimum expectation for the vast majority. Names, and especially titles, were regularly not given a capital letter.
- Examiners are bound to pick up on misspellings of key subject words such as religion / religious, believe / belief / believer, Christian / Christianity, priest, knowing when to use pray and when to use prayer (a very common error).
- Over-long sentences that lose meaning, or have no internal punctuation. An assessment of spelling, punctuation and grammar does not just spot-mark errors, but takes account of how overall meaning is affected.
- This year, it often seemed that answers showed little evidence of candidates making a conscious effort to be at their best on this question. Choosing short-cuts, such as writing numbers as numerals rather than words, or putting a simple cross instead of writing the word 'and' were common evidence of this.
- Quotes were often inserted into sentences with no thought as to how one should punctuate their presence. Or they appeared as a stand-alone sentence, even if the quote only amounted to a phrase.

A good SPaG score can rescue a mediocre answer. Also, any attempt that scores at all for content, can receive up to the full SPaG mark, if the answer provides enough evidence.

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices - Hinduism

- Q.2 (a)** Most candidates either scored the full two marks or scored no marks. Candidates who failed to score offered either no answer or a wide range of answers that covered almost every area of Hindu belief.
- (b)** Most candidates were familiar with Diwali and there were some good descriptions of how a Hindu might celebrate. However, some candidates over explained some aspects and as a result lacked a range of knowledge to gain the full five marks.

Some candidates focused on the more general and generic aspects of Diwali and lacked the use of Hindu specific aspects e.g. re-enacting to stories of Rama and Sita and the importance of Lakshmi. There were numerous candidates who mixed up Diwali and Holi festivals. However, it was pleasing to see higher level candidates referencing activities such as the gambling gods.

- (c) A few candidates answered this question very well and focused on why karma is important to Hindus giving specific examples such as the law of cause and effect, positive karma (punya) and negative karma (papa) determining status of reincarnation and good fortune due to good actions in this or previous life. However, a number of candidates focused on the wording 'what goes around comes around' and then progressed to describe different actions that would be seen as good and bad karma and showed little understanding that the present life can be affected by numerous lives.
- (d) Generally, this was not a well answered question mainly for the reasons outlined in the opening paragraph. Knowledge and understanding of festivals was very patchy and some candidates had little understanding of the term festivals. To gain the higher bands, candidates needed to engage with the wording 'the most important'. This was poorly done with little consideration as to whether festivals were the most important practice within Hinduism compared with other practices such as puja, pilgrimage or social action and responsibility. Weaker candidates resorted to an explanation of Diwali and Holi and did not evaluate the importance of festivals. Most arguments were superficial and lacked supporting evidence from within Hinduism such as a teaching tool for children and society and a way to strengthen their religious faith and practice.

PART B – Religious Responses to Ethical Themes

It was pleasing to see candidates' engagement with both Christianity and Hinduism throughout the paper and good use was made of Hindu concepts and teachings within Part B of the paper which certainly benefited candidates.

- Q.3**
- (a) Most candidates knew the meaning of 'adultery' with many gaining full marks.
 - (b) This question required candidates to refer to 'attitudes' to same sex relationships. Responses from a particular religion were credited. Many candidates focused on same sex marriage which limited achievement. Responses tended to be generic and lacking in reference to sources of wisdom. A number of candidates ignored the word 'or' and tried to give Christian and Hindu attitudes.
 - (c) There were many generic responses with a lack of specific religious language, teachings and sources of authority. Candidates generally understood the term 'contraception' but lacked detail in the differing views within both Christianity and Hinduism on its use. It was good to see candidates engaging with both religions and showing consideration of both within their answers.
 - (d) Most candidates attempted this question which was pleasing to see. Many answers focused on the lack of equality between men and women instead of 'equal roles within worship'.

There was a focus on generic and general statements that were not supported by evidence within Christianity or Hinduism. Better candidates made good use of Hindu concepts within their answers but needed to develop the points more in order to achieve the higher bands.

Candidates benefited from engaging with both Christianity and Hinduism within their responses. Some responses were formed using a range of acronyms which restricted the discussion and overall response, the weaker responses focused on the acronym and lost focus on the discussion and the better responses were restricted in the analysis and evaluation of the discussion.

- Q.4**
- (a)** There were some disappointing responses to this question with many candidates focusing on the term 'poverty' instead of 'relative poverty'.
 - (b)** Many candidates answered this question well, in particular candidates that focused on Hinduism where good use of sources of authority and appropriate religious language was used. Many candidates also gained marks for generic responses linked to the use of wealth but could have improved their standard by making greater links to specific religious teachings and beliefs.
 - (c)** There were many generic responses with a lack of specific religious language, teachings and sources of authority. Candidates generally understood the term 'discrimination' but lacked detail in the differing views within both Christianity and Hinduism on its use. There was a tendency to generalise some religious teachings, in particular Hinduism and care needs to be taken to ensure a clear understanding of the changing and differing views within and across both Christianity and Hinduism. It was good to see candidates engaging with both religions and showing consideration of both within their answers.
 - (d)** Many candidates attempted this question which was pleasing to see but often the responses were lacking care and detail partly due to timings within the paper. Many answers focused on the importance of having freedom to express their religious beliefs but lacked the consideration of the effect of having that freedom both positively and negatively. There was a focus on generic and general statements that were not supported by evidence within Christianity or Hinduism.

Better candidates made good use of the dangers of freedom to express their religious beliefs and the dangers of extremism and lack of tolerance that can develop as a result of too much freedom. Candidates benefited from engaging with both Christianity and Hinduism within their responses. Some responses were formed using a range of acronyms which restricted the discussion and overall response, the weaker responses focused on the acronym and lost focus on the discussion and the better responses were restricted in the analysis and evaluation of the discussion.

Summary of key points

- Candidates need to make greater use of specific Hindu teachings within their responses.
- Greater use and understanding of religious specific terms would be beneficial.

- Greater awareness of the differing trigger words within the questions, particularly the difference between describe and explain.
- Candidates need to include supporting evidence from within Hinduism for 'd' questions where possible



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