



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Religious Studies (2060)**

## **RSS09 World Religions 1**

**(either Buddhism  
or Hinduism  
or Sikhism)**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## **General Comments**

The entry for this examination this year was of a generally good standard and the scripts revealed a wide range of ability.

Around 85% of candidates were entered for Buddhism, 10% were entered for Hinduism and 5% for Sikhism. The questions proved to be accessible for all candidates and some excellent answers were received.

## **Section A Buddhism**

### **Question 1 *Samsara and the three marks of existence***

#### **Part 01**

The Buddhist teaching on suffering was the most popular question on the paper – nearly all those taking the Buddhism section answered this. It was very well answered by most candidates as they were able to relate dukkha to the four noble truths and the three characteristics of existence. Those who provided detailed and accurate analysis of the three types of dukkha as well as the causes of dukkha gained the higher levels.

#### **Part 02**

Part 02, the AO2 part of the question required a balanced evaluation of the emphasis on suffering or freedom from suffering in Buddhism. This was very well answered by most candidates who provided evidence and arguments for both sides of the issue.

### **Question 2 *The Four Noble Truths***

#### **Part 03**

This is a new area of the specification dealing with the experience of the arahant in this world and beyond death. About 15% of the candidates in this section answered this. Most were able to examine the nature of the arahant as one who had obtained nibbana. However they tended to go into some detail about the experience of nibbana rather than refer to the various stages of arahant, i.e. stream enterer, once returner, non returner. Not many fully appreciated the phrase “and beyond death” which required an understanding of the concept of paranibbana. Those who failed to address this aspect were unable to gain the highest marks.

#### **Part 04**

This was quite well answered as many were able to present sound argument for the challenge and difficulty of becoming an arahant. Fewer were able to argue the other side of the issue in which it could be said that this was possible through many life times and was realistic in the long term view.

### **Question 3 *The Eightfold Path***

#### **Parts 05 and 06**

This was the least well answered question both in this section and in the whole paper. This was because not many candidates were able to provide a clear and detailed explanation of the meaning of right mindfulness and right concentration. Both are part of the meditation section of the Eightfold Path and the former refers to the qualities and faculty of giving full and clear attention to chosen objects including the breath, kasinas and other selected objects. There are four kinds of mindfulness, body, feelings, thoughts and consciousness and it is applied to all actions including sitting and walking meditation as well as other actions. Right concentration is the skill of one pointedness of mind and the development of a mind which is not distracted or unfocussed. Some reference to the forms of meditation such as samatha and vipassana which illustrate these aspects of the Eightfold Path would have helped to provide further details. Not many referred to the importance of these aspects of meditation in the overall Eightfold Path and how meditation both enhances and informs morality and wisdom.

### **Question 4 *The Sangha***

This question was answered by about 20% of the candidates in this section.

#### **Part 07**

Part 07 was reasonably well answered but required some detailed illustration of how the monastic and lay communities depend upon one another. Whilst most candidates explained the general aspects of lay support for monasteries and how the monastic sangha provides spiritual guidance and teaching, many needed more examples. Also the role of generosity (dana) and merit making as part of the Buddhist way of life could have been recognised more fully. The more current role of the monastic sangha in providing community projects related to environmental and health issues and social welfare could have been mentioned.

#### **Part 08**

This was well answered by those who were able to present good arguments and evidence for both sides of the view. It is clear that the monastic sangha provides good example and guidance for lay people in their goal of enlightenment. However it can be debated whether this is essential for other people's enlightenment.

Some also referred to the fact that Theravada Buddhism insists that it is by one's own efforts alone and the development of good karma which really determines future outcomes.

## **Section B Hinduism**

### **Question 5 *The Hindu concept of God***

This was the most popular question in the Hinduism section and was well answered by most candidates.

#### **Part 09**

Those that used some technical vocabulary to explain the concept of Brahman i.e. guna and naguna (without attributes) transcendent and immanent, were able to gain higher levels. Some had a very sound understanding of the personal forms of Brahman and how it is represented in the *Om* symbol as well as certain schools of Hindu philosophy. Not all candidates realised that the personal forms of Brahman needed to be explained in relation to a range of deities, most notably the trimurti of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva as well as the avatars of Vishnu, Krishna and Rama.

#### **Part 10**

This was well answered as most candidates were able to argue both for and against the claim that 'the impersonal form of god is of little relevance to most Hindus'. Those who fully understood and explained that the notion of Brahman is fundamental to all Hindus' understandings of God provided the strongest arguments.

### **Question 6 *Means to liberation in Hinduism***

#### **Part 11**

This question was not answered by many candidates. Those who did this usually had a good understanding of karma yoga as the way of action and deeds but a less clear understanding of jnana yoga as the way of meditation and insight.

#### **Part 12**

This part of the question required an appreciation and evaluation of the role of these two yogas in the Hindu way of life. Karma yoga is clearly an essential aspect of the Hindu way of life with its attendant responsibilities and duties. However jnana yoga points to the essential aspect of spiritual life and renunciation which is equally part of the Hindu way of life in relation to holy men and the sannyasin stage of life.

### **Question 7 *Worship in Hinduism***

This was the second most popular question on the Hinduism section of the paper and was reasonably answered by those who attempted it.

#### **Part 13**

In this part of the question, the best answers provided a detailed and accurate account of puja in the home as well as a clear examination of its purpose in making blessed the domestic home and life within it, providing a daily reminder of the presence of God in their lives and strengthening family unity in beliefs and values.

## **Part 14**

There were some sound responses to this question in which the debate about the relative importance of worship in the home and worship in the temple was carefully evaluated.

## **Question 8 *The Hindu way of life***

This question was answered by a small number of candidates.

## **Part 15**

Most answers presented a sound factual account of the grihastha and sannyasin stages of life. However they did not always examine the importance of the stages in the Hindu way of life. They were required to refer to the social dimension of the grihastha stage in creating a stable and harmonious society and the spiritual aspects of sannyasin in enabling Hindus to give priority to renunciation and spiritual life.

## **Part 16**

Not many seemed to grasp the key issue in this part of the question in which the role of grihastha is claimed to be the complete opposite to the role of sannyasin. In a social sense they are opposite as one engages with society and the other turns away from society. However they are the same in the sense that when these roles are fully undertaken they are the fulfilment of dharma and lead to liberation (moksha).

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## **Section C Sikhism**

### **Question 9 *The Gurus***

This question on the formation of the Khalsa elicited some of the best answers seen across the whole paper.

#### **Part 17**

Most candidates knew the material very well and were able to select appropriate facts and explain the way in which the Khalsa was formed and the reasons for its instigation. Those who only commented on 'how', rather than 'how and why' were not able to gain the highest marks.

#### **Part 18**

There was some good debate presented in response to this question about the issue whether Sikhism would have become a significant religion without the formation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. The best answers were able to look at the distinctive contribution made by the formation of the Khalsa, and to weigh this up against the contribution of the actions of the earlier Gurus, especially Guru Nanak.

### **Question 10 *Festivals***

#### **Part 19**

Answers here dealt quite well with the ways in which Diwali is celebrated, but often less with its significance. Many needed to make more explicit the importance of Sikh heroism and willingness to risk their life to save others and the defence of other faiths. The inclusion of such ideas would have gained candidates higher marks.

#### **Part 20**

The evaluation of the importance of festivals for the unity of the Sikh community was well done by those who attempted it. Some weaker answers tended to focus on the importance of festivals without addressing the issue of keeping the community together.

### **Question 11 *The Guru Granth Sahib and the Gurdwara***

#### **Part 21**

This was not always well answered because candidates needed more detailed and accurate knowledge about both the formation and content of the Guru Granth Sahib. This required reference to such features as the Mul Mantra, Japji, and Sohila, the compositions of Guru Teg Bahdur, the role of Guru Angad in writing down hymns and the development of the Gurumukhi script, the compilation of the Adi Granth by Guru Arjan. The content could include reference to devotional hymns and poetry, vars (traditional ballads) and shabads from non-Sikhs including Muslims and Hindus.

#### **Part 22**

This was quite well answered by most candidates and the evaluation of the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib for many Sikhs today was well argued. However the argument that it may be of little importance to some young Sikhs in non Sikh cultures who are unable to read or understand the Guru Granth Sahib might have been made more clearly.

## **Question 12 *Diwan and langar***

### **Part 23**

This was the least well answered question on this section as most candidates did not have a detailed or accurate knowledge of the nature of worship in the home. There should have been more reference to particular features such as readings from sections of the Guru Granth Sahib and particular morning and evening prayers.

### **Part 24**

Although candidates were able to assess the view that, in Sikhism, worship in the gurdwara is important, they did not always present an equally convincing argument that it is important in the home, where it applies to all aspects of life and ensures that Sikh faith is integral to thinking and behaviour at all times.