



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2011**

Religious Studies

RSS09

(Specification 2060)

**Unit J World Religions 1: Buddhism, Hinduism,
Sikhism**

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

Section A Buddhism

The January entry showed a wide range of ability with the majority of centres entered for section A Buddhism

Question 1

- 01** This was by far the most popular question and most candidates were able to examine the concepts of anatta and anicca. A significant number were able to give sound definitions of these terms. In relation to anatta further explanations were given by some candidates by referring to the contrast with the Hindu notion of an eternal self. Others explained the Buddhist notion of the ever changing interaction between body and mind in the 5 skandhas. In relation to anicca, the transitory nature of both material and mental realities and the relationship of both anicca and anatta to the teaching on dependent origination was explained in higher level answers. Most candidates stated that a realisation of these truths was essential for enlightenment.
- 02** Answers varied in the extent to which the candidates appreciated the issue of understanding the concepts of anicca and anatta both intellectually and experientially. The better answers recognised that a full understanding of these truths required intellectual investigation as well as some trust in the dhamma and experience alone was a limited source of understanding.

Question 2

- 03** Most candidates were able to present a list of the Four Noble Truths but the better answers examined the structure or framework with reference to the notion of diagnosis and cure. The fourfold structure was acknowledged with two truths asserting the nature and cause of suffering and the other two providing the hope and the means of transcending suffering. Most candidates mentioned that the process of both understanding and following the truths could lead to enlightenment.
- 04** Some very good answers were offered in 04 when the candidates noticed and responded to the word 'fully' in the quotation. They recognised that some understanding of these truths was necessary in order to follow the Buddha's path but full and complete understanding was one of the fruits of enlightenment.

Question 3

- 05** In response to this question not all candidates referred to the three aspects of the path including right action, right speech and right livelihood. Although this question was quite straightforward it was surprising how many candidates did not have a full and detailed knowledge of each of these three aspects and how they linked together.
- 06** Some well balanced arguments were presented in support of the view that the essential basis of morality before the other path factors could be developed. Some also acknowledged the fact that meditation and wisdom are equally important and interdependent.

Question 4

- 07** This was quite a popular question for some centres but candidates needed a more detailed and precise knowledge of the various rules observed by the monastic sangha in order to gain higher levels. The word 'nature' in this question required a comment on the purpose of the monastic sangha as role models and exemplars of Buddhist teaching within Buddhist society.

- 08** The better answers referred to both the great respect for the monastic sangha and the opportunity offered by the monastic life style to gain enlightenment but also the potential for avoidance of worldly responsibilities and even lack of moral integrity which can occur in the monastic sangha. Other views referred to the challenges of lay life and the possibility of enlightenment in the lay state as well as variations within Buddhist traditions about the relative status of lay and monastic sanghas.

Section B Hinduism

There were not many centres entered for this section.

The most popular question was Question 6 on the various forms of yoga. Although the differences between bhakti and karma yoga were recognised, the similarities in relation to self discipline and self surrender of ego and selfishness and the common goal of moksha was not so clearly realised. In response to 12 the debate on whether yoga is essential in Hinduism was not very well argued. The practice of yoga has a broad as well as specific application, the former being any form of spiritual practice, the latter being a specific discipline or commitment to a particular way of attaining moksha.

Answers to Question 7 on worship in Hinduism were often too descriptive and an examination of the role of temple was not always fully addressed. So the reference to the importance of temple priesthood for performing certain rituals and acting as an intermediary between the deity and the worshipper, the notion of darshan, the effect of congregational worship and festivals and the special was needed.

Section C Sikhism

Question 9

- 17** This was very popular and although candidates wrote at considerable length about the life and teaching of Guru Nanak, not all organised and selected their knowledge and understanding in a coherent way.
- 18** Some confusion was evident in answers to 18 when candidates simply repeated what they had written in 17 with little comment or evaluation about the extent to which Guru Nanak challenged the religious culture of his time or actually drew on it and incorporated it into his own teaching and the Sikh way of life.

Question 10

- 19** Many candidates got carried away with a description of the historical events of the formation of the Khalsa and wrote little about how it is celebrated today.
- 20** Better answers were evident here when candidates argued that Vaisakhi made a very significant contribution to Sikh life and faith in its through the key events and ceremonies performed on that day. They also commented on the commercialisation of this festival and its popularity as a social event.

Question 11

- 21** Not many answered this question but there were some very good answers which not only described the key features of the Golden Temple at Amritsar but explained their purpose and meaning e.g. entrances in four directions to show openness to all comers and the guru's bridge as a symbol of the soul's journey after death.

- 22** Some well balanced answers were presented here which argued strongly for the increased relevance of the Golden Temple for Sikhs in the UK who need a potent symbol for their faith as well as the remoteness and lack of relevance for third generation of Sikhs of a sacred building in another country.

Question 12

- 23** Some answers were very simplistic in explaining the meaning and practice of langar because they described how langar was organised and applied without giving its meaning in relation to the development of selflessness, humility and a sense of equality.
- 24** In response to this question some more perceptive candidates presented very balanced arguments with different views in support and against the statement. They referred to the different social and economic conditions that prevail today especially in the UK. This could mean that the purpose of the langar should change from its original intentions. However the recognition of the principles of equality and sewa are just as important now as it was at its inception.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.