



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

Religious Studies

RSS09

(Specification 2060)

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

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

There was a wide range of ability entered for this examination. Section A Buddhism is the most popular section with three – quarters of the entry, and with roughly equal numbers taking Hinduism and Sikhism.

Section A Buddhism

Question 1 *Samsara and the three marks of existence*

This was the most popular question on the whole paper.

- 01** Whilst most candidates were able to examine the concept of dukkha very well with reference to the various forms of dukkha in relation to the three characteristics of existence (i.e. dukkha-dukkha, dukkha-anicca and dukkha-anatta), not all linked to the Buddhist attitude to life. Those who referred to the acceptance of suffering as a natural result of karma, or the intention to reduce suffering by living life in accordance with the noble Eightfold Path, especially morality, gained the higher levels.
- 02** This was well answered by most candidates as they recognised that although dukkha might be simple common sense as it is an obvious fact of existence it is also true that it is a profound concept and requires the development of wisdom through meditation and insight in order to fully understand it.

Question 2 *The Four Noble Truths*

- 03** Some candidates repeated the same information as in Question 1. Although there is a slight overlap in the reference to the cause of suffering, this question should have focused on the three kinds of craving, i.e. for sensual pleasures, for existence and for non-existence, and then an explanation of how each of these three forms can lead to suffering. This second aspect was not very well dealt with by most candidates. For example, in response to the craving rooted in sensual pleasures they needed to explain that this leads to suffering because it can never lead to fulfillment and satisfaction as the senses are rooted in the defilements of greed and delusion.
- 04** Most candidates recognised that although there is a considerable emphasis on suffering in Buddhist teachings, there are other emphases such as the perfection of human nature and nibbana.

Question 3 *The Eightfold Path*

- 05** Performance on this question varied considerably. Less received higher level marks on this question as they did not appear to fully understand the precise focus and distinction between right view and right understanding as the aspects of wisdom in the Eightfold Path. Right view is the dhamma or teachings of the Buddha and wisdom is the full and deep understanding of the central teachings such as the four noble truths and the three marks of existence. Right understanding is right motive, intention and the emotional basis of thought with particular reference to compassion.
- 06** This part of the question was well answered as most candidates recognised that although wisdom could be considered the most important aspect of the Eightfold Path as it provided meaning and purpose, the other aspects of morality and meditation each have their essential nature and purpose.

Question 4 *The Sangha*

- 07** This was the least popular question and those who answered this well recognised the significance of sangha as a concept and a practical reality. As one of the three jewels, is a source of truth and happiness and provides the structure of society in Buddhist countries. Most were able to explain the fourfold sangha and the interdependence and harmony between each part.

- 08** Many good arguments were presented in response to 08 in showing how the monastic life is an escape from worldly concerns but also presents a new set of responsibilities and discipline which is equally if not more demanding than lay life.

Section B Hinduism

Question 5 *The Hindu concept of God*

- 09** The higher level answers for 09 provided detailed and relevant characteristics of both Rama and Krishna and responded well to the trigger 'examine' by explaining some of these characteristics, e.g. the moral qualities of Rama as a role model for Hindus and the loving qualities of Krishna which evokes love and devotion in his followers.
- 10** Some excellent answers in which some candidates explained the psychological needs of human beings in giving human characteristics to God but at the same time realising that it is beyond this kind of characterisation. The symbolic and devotional importance of personal deities was widely appreciated.

Question 6 *Means to liberation in Hinduism*

- 11** This question was answered very well by most candidates, especially those who examined fully the concepts of Brahman and atman and then clearly expressed the relationship between them using some images from the scripture or quotations such as 'thou art that', 'sat, chit, ananda', knowledge consciousness, bliss. Some candidates referred to the various interpretations in some schools of philosophy in which there are different degrees of union between Brahman and atman. These gained the highest marks.
- 12** This part of the question was less well answered as only a few recognised the issue at the centre of the quotation. The different forms of yoga offer various ways to realise the nature of Brahman and atman, which can include bhakti yoga and karma yoga. Some candidates explained very well how these other forms of yoga produce self realization or moksha.

Question 7 *Worship in Hinduism*

- 13** This was quite well answered but not all candidates responded to the word 'importance' in the question.
- 14** Not many candidates recognised the full implications of the question as it was not asking if puja in the home was more important than the temple but how far it is the basis for the Hindu way of life. This is true in relation to the home as the source and inspiration for religious practice, but as there is also far more to the Hindu way of life than worship the obvious role of moral values and dharma duties needed to be included.

Question 8 *The Hindu way of life*

- 15** Not many candidates answered this question on temple priests and again candidates did not notice the word 'importance'. Priests have a key role in Hindu rituals and the correct performance of them and are seen as essential for making offerings and transferring blessings from the gods.
- 16** This part of the question was well answered, and the issue of the relative importance and responsibilities of the householder stage of life and the path of the holy man was understood and recognised.

Section C Sikhism

Question 9 *The Gurus*

- 17** The contributions of Guru Har Gobind and Guru Tegh Bahadur were usually well described, but the better answers offered some comment and explanations as implied in the trigger 'examine' as this gave scope for some comparison and recognition of the distinctive contributions of each guru, e.g. Guru Har Gobind for introducing the two sword concepts of miri and piri and Guru Tegh Bahadur for representing the more spiritual aspects of Sikhism.
- 18** Many candidates argued that the human gurus are even more important today than in the past as they provide high moral and spiritual qualities, give good example and inspiration on how to live today, and are often remembered and celebrated in festivals.

Question 10 *Festivals*

- 19** Those who chose to answer this question had a good knowledge of the ways in which gurburbs are celebrated but were less secure on expressing the reasons for these celebrations in relation to reinforcing Sikh identity and values.
- 20** In response to this part of the question, most candidates were able to sustain an argument and present more than one point of view.

Question 11 *The Guru Granth Sahib and the Gurdwara*

- 21** This question was answered well by most candidates, who had a good factual knowledge of the uses of the Guru Granth Sahib by Sikhs today. Higher marks were awarded to detailed and accurate accounts with a full acknowledgement of the very varied ways in which the Guru Granth Sahib is an integral part of the daily life of Sikhs.
- 22** The better answers to this part of the question referred to the value of faith and devotion to the words of the gurus as they are heard and listened to in hymns and readings in an attitude of trust and reverence even though the words are not fully understood. Others argued that understanding the meaning is essential and in accordance with the purpose of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Question 12 *Diwan and Langar*

- 23** This was a very popular question and whilst most candidates had a good general knowledge of the practice of sewa, those who gave detailed contemporary examples such as Khalsa Aid and also examined the concept in relation to the development of selflessness and destroying egoism, gained the higher level marks.
- 24** Some excellent answers were given in response to this part of the question which is a fundamental issue in many religions about the relative importance of good deeds and faith.

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