



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Religious Studies

RST3G

(Specification 2060)

**Unit 3G World Religions 1: Buddhism
Hinduism
Sikhism**

Report on the Examination

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General comments

The majority of students for this paper took the Buddhism section, with Hinduism and Sikhism having equal numbers constituting about one third of the total cohort.

Section A Buddhism

Question 1 *Themes in Mahayana Buddhism*

- 01** Most students had a sound and clear understanding of the concept of bodhisattva but less so of the concept of bodhicitta, which included the notion of buddha nature in each person as well as the intention to take the bodhisattva vow. Those who examined these concepts in relation to each other and referred to the stages of becoming a bodhisattva through the ten perfections gained the higher levels of marks.
- 02** Most students answered this question well by referring to other distinctive features of Mahayana Buddhism and the variety of forms and emphases within Mahayana Buddhism. The best answers presented a well balanced response which recognised the ways in which the bodhisattva and bodhicitta concepts are the most distinctive feature in Mahayana Buddhism because it contrasts with many Theravada teachings as well as containing many other teachings within these concepts.

Question 2 *Aspects of Buddhist philosophy*

- 03** This was a popular question with students from some schools and colleges, most of whom performed well. Since the Tibetan Wheel of Life contains so many possible teachings, students needed to exercise careful selection and conciseness to ensure their answers remained focused and accurate.
- 04** This question was less well answered as students tended to write generally about the complexity of ideas in the Tibetan Wheel of Life rather than dealing with the law of karma as a determining factor affecting the way Buddhists live their lives.

Question 3 *Meditation*

- 05** Some students did not address the first part of question very well and tended to describe the process of meditation rather than its importance for Buddhists in developing positive mental states and insight and wisdom in the path towards enlightenment as indicated in the eightfold path. With regards to metta meditation there was little comment on how this practice can contribute towards more kindness and harmony in human relationships and in the community.
- 06** This question required a general appreciation of the relationship between meditation practice and attitudes and behaviour in everyday life as well as the particular usefulness or otherwise of developing metta (loving kindness). Those who grasped the notion that although meditation can produce good feelings this does not always result in good actions, and yet the positive mental states often lead to good actions in daily life, gained the higher levels.

Question 4 *Buddhist ethics*

- 07** This was the most popular question in this section and was generally well answered. The higher levels were awarded to those who chose appropriate applications of each precept and their relationship to fundamental Buddhist concepts such as ahimsa and dana.

08 Most students were able to present arguments and evidence for the impossibility of fully adhering to the precepts in society but the better answers included a contemporary dimension as implied in the word 'today' in the question.

Section B Hinduism

Question 5 *Foundations of Hinduism*

09 Some excellent answers were presented including a comprehensive and detailed examination of the social and religious features of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

10 Good arguments were presented against the statement that 'it is impossible to understand Hinduism without a knowledge of the Indus Valley Civilisation', but not many made the case for the ways in which an understanding of the ancient origins of such features as ritual bathing and worship of the goddess contribute to a deeper knowledge and appreciation of Hinduism.

Question 6 *Hindu dharma*

11 Although most students showed a sound knowledge of the meaning of Sanatana Dharma not many examined the importance of the way in which a belief and commitment to Sanatana Dharma upholds essential Hindu values. Living by these values and principles also ensure a better reincarnation or liberation.

12 Some students presented a longer more in-depth answer to this question than to question 11. They wrote about all the duties of caste and stage of life in varnashrama dharma when the answer required a response to the general principles. Although the relativist ethics implied in varnashramadharma appears to contradict the more absolute values of Sanatana Dharma they are also complementary in their purpose of creating and preserving order and stability in society.

Question 7 *Hinduism and society in the modern world*

13 This question was not answered by many students. Those that attempted it showed sound and basic knowledge of the ways in which Gandhi attempted to reform Hinduism, with particular reference to his work with 'untouchables' and his raising of ahimsa to a supreme moral principle.

14 Some good debate was presented about the legacy of Gandhi in both practical and ideological terms.

Question 8 *Hindu philosophy*

15 Variable answers were presented in response to this question ranging from a thorough understanding of key aspects to vague and uncertain analysis of Advaita Vedanta philosophy.

16 Some very good arguments were presented in response to this question, recognising both the inappropriateness of worship of deities for non dualists and also the value of worship as a preliminary stage to liberation.

Section C Sikhism

Question 9 *Sikh identity, marriage and family life*

- 17** Most students were able to define the terms amritdhari, keshdhari and patit but the better answers related this to the issue of Sikh identity.
- 18** Some very well expressed views were presented in support and against the statement 'Only amritdhari Sikhs are true Sikhs.' Those who gave good arguments and evidence that in order to be a true Sikh outer signs of identity were less important than inner faith and commitment gained the higher levels.

Question 10 *Key concepts and beliefs*

- 19** This was not always well answered as some students did not have a clear and accurate understanding of each of the concepts of mukti and haumai and the relationship between them.
- 20** Those who did not answer 19 well experienced difficulties with 20 as well. However some did provide well expressed arguments that living the Sikh life based on these beliefs gives more meaning and purpose than having faith alone.

Question 11 *Sikh ethics and conduct*

- 21** Reasons for the publication of Rahit Maryada not well presented although there was some has a very good knowledge of its contents.
- 22** Some good debate was presented in support of the view that 'It is impossible to follow Sikh ethics in a secular society', especially by those who recognised the implications of 'secular' in the question.

Question 12 *Equality and sewa*

- 23** This was the least well answered question in this section as most students gave very generalised answers to the first part of the question on outlining the teachings of the gurus on gender. They needed to refer to specific teaching of Guru Nanak and the actions of Gurus Amar Das and Guru Gobind Singh in raising the status of women and admitting women to be members of the Khalsa.
- 24** Answers to this question were very variable, ranging from those who recognised that the inequality of Sikh women was due as much if not more to cultural rather than religious factors, to those who simply asserted that all Sikh women enjoyed equality.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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