



General Certificate of Education

Religious Studies (2060)

RSS09 World Religions 1

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

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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General Comments

A considerable proportion of the candidates sitting this examination were taking it as a re-sit. A large majority of the scripts were on Section A Buddhism.

Comments on candidates' performance are offered only on those questions, which were answered by several candidates.

Section A *Buddhism*

Question 1

Part (a)

This was the most popular question with more than half the candidates answering it. It was quite well answered by most candidates. Buddhist teachings on death and rebirth required a sound understanding of the concepts of samsara and karma. Higher levels were awarded to those candidates who were able to explain the factors which determine the nature of rebirth and the various forms and levels of rebirth. Those who were able to explain the continuous cycle of birth, death and rebirth in the process of samsara and the need to be liberated from this process gained higher levels.

Part (b)

Not all candidates fully appreciated the issues and teaching behind the question. This asked them to assess the view that the Buddhist teaching on rebirth has little effect on the way that Buddhists live their lives. Many simply stated that it did have an effect if Buddhists took the teaching seriously. However they needed to argue the case that the teaching on rebirth had a profound effect on present existence because it was determined by moral actions and the development of meditation and wisdom. The counter argument could have been that other factors such as compassion might be more potent in affecting the way Buddhists live their lives.

Question 2

Part (a)

This was less well answered, mainly due to the fact that candidates did not fully examine the concept of tanha and often did not address the second part of the question which asked them to explain how tanha leads to suffering. The answers should have included the two forms of tanha, i.e. the desire for existence and the desire for non-existence, as well as the implication of these forms of tanha in the Buddhist attitude towards life. The way in which tanha leads to suffering is that it operates like a drive or instinct which can not easily be satisfied leading to increased and more powerful desires, craving and selfishness. Some candidates linked this part of the question to truth of impermanence (anicca) to explain how craving leads to suffering.

Part (b)

This part was reasonably well answered as some candidates recognised that ignorance and hate were also fundamental causes of suffering, but on the other hand tanha could be seen as the root of both of these.

Question 3

Part (a)

This was the least well-answered question on the Buddhist section as most candidates only had a very general knowledge of right understanding and right thought as aspects of the Eightfold Path and did not refer to the idea of purpose at all. Right understanding should have referred to an acceptance of the fundamental teachings of Buddhism including the four noble

truths, three characteristics of existence, law of karma, samsara and nibbana as the basis of an understanding of the purpose of this human life. Right thought refers to the emotional basis or intention and motivation for following the Buddhist path based in compassion and loving-kindness.

Part (b)

The answers to this part were better than (a) as candidates were able to argue quite well that all aspects of the Eightfold Path gave it meaning but without an understanding of the reasons for morality and meditation it would be difficult to follow it.

Question 4

Part (a)

Not many candidates answered this question. Those that did were able to examine the nature of the lay and monastic communities within Buddhism. However not many examined the nature of Sangha as a refuge. For this they needed to refer to the Sangha as a source of guidance, interpretation, support and encouragement for following the Buddhist path. Both the lay community and the monastic Sangha are different forms of refuge within themselves and for each other.

Part (b)

Some good evaluations were presented of the relative importance of the lay Sangha as opposed to the monastic Sangha and well-balanced views were in evidence.

Section B *Hinduism*

Very few candidates took this section.

Section C *Sikhism*

Approximately one sixth of the total entry answered questions in this section.

Question 9

Part (a)

This was quite well answered although most answers were very descriptive. The better ones explained how the contribution of Guru Arjan and Guru Har Gobind made a difference to the development of Sikhism.

Part (b)

Some sound evaluations of the significance of the achievements of these two gurus were presented here.

Question 10

Part (a)

The better answers addressed the second part of the question fully. It required candidates to explain the significance of the festival of Vaisakhi for Sikhs with the establishment of the khalsa and the rituals of initiation.

Part (b)

Some of the expression of views and arguments in response to the statement, 'Vaisakhi has lost its religious meaning' were very well stated and balanced. Although the celebration of this festival has a strong social dimension, candidates pointed out that did not mean it had lost its religious significance as the social aspects could strengthen the religious meaning.

Question 11

Part (a)

This was the most popular question in this section. The higher levels were awarded to those candidates who dealt with both aspects of the nature and role of the gurdwara. 'Nature' referred to the form and features of the gurdwara and what it was used for; 'role' referred to the various aspects of religious and social life, which goes on in the gurdwara.

Part (b)

Some very good evaluations in the relative importance of religious and social roles of the gurdwara were presented here.

Question 12

Part (a)

Candidates showed a sound and detailed knowledge of the meaning of sewa and how it is practised today.

Part (b)

Some very good answers to the assessment of the view 'there is nothing more important in Sikhism than sewa'. The development of a god-centred life through the practice of sewa was fully appreciated as well as the value and importance of all the other teachings in Sikhism, which guide Sikhs in their lives.