

AS LEVEL
Sample SAM Taster Booklet

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

H173
For first teaching in 2016



AS LEVEL

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Our new GCE Religious Studies specifications provide a dynamic, contemporary and exciting opportunity for students to engage with the world around them.

Our Sample Assessment Material (SAM) taster booklet introduces you to the style of assessment for our new qualification.

The booklet features the questions and mark schemes for the three assessments that make up this qualification. The complete set of sample assessment materials is available on the OCR website <http://www.ocr.org.uk/religiousstudies>

SUBJECT SPECIALIST SUPPORT

OCR Subject Specialists provide information and support to schools including specification and non-exam assessment advice, updates on resource developments and a range of training opportunities.

You can contact our Religious Studies Subject Specialists for specialist advice, guidance and support.

Meet the team at ocr.org.uk/religiousstudisteam

CONTACT THEM AT:

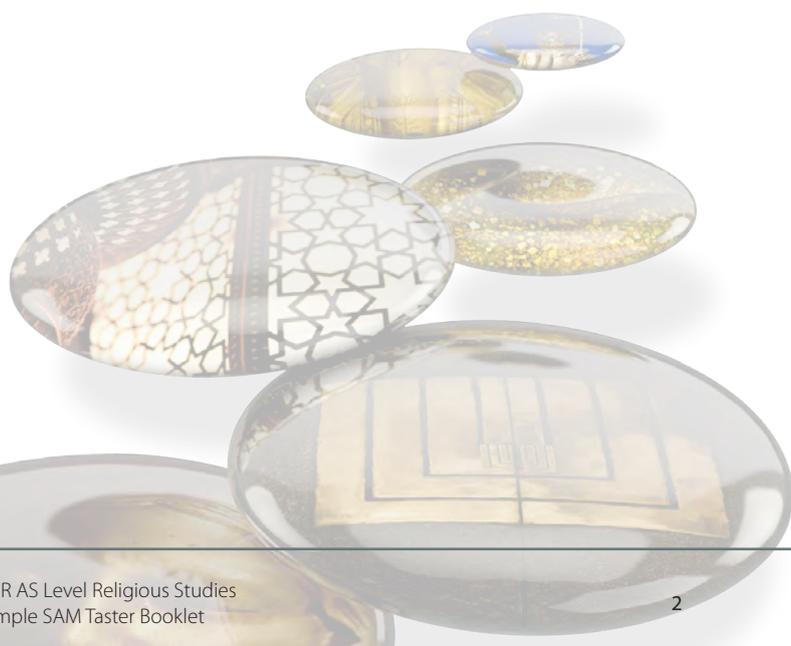
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WHAT TO DO NEXT

- Sign up for regular updates, including news of our autumn calendar of events: <http://www.ocr.org.uk/updates>
- Book onto a free GCSE reform training event to help you get to grips with the new qualification: <https://www.cpdhub.ocr.org.uk/>
- View our new range of resources that will grow throughout the lifetime of the specification: www.ocr.org.uk/religiousstudies



H173 AS LEVEL IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

For OCR's AS Level in Religious Studies learners will study **three** components that are externally assessed, these are:

Philosophy of religion (01)

Religion and ethics (02)

Developments in religious thought (03–07) for which learners will study **one** from:

Christianity (03)

Islam (04)

Judaism (05)

Buddhism (06)

Hinduism (07)

Each paper will contain three essay questions, with the learner choosing two out of the three to answer. Questions can target material from any area of the specification. Two questions might be set from one specification section, or all questions might be from different sections. In order to guarantee access to the full range of marks for the assessment all specification content should be covered. Each essay will be worth 30 marks and will test both AO1 and AO2.

Time allowed: 1 hour and 15 minutes

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

There are two assessment objectives:

	Assessment Objective	
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching • influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies • cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice • approaches to the study of religion and belief 	50%
AO2	Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief including their significance, influence and study	50%

AO WEIGHTINGS IN AS LEVEL IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Component	AO1	AO2
Philosophy of religion (H173/01)	16.6	16.6
Religion and ethics (H173/02)	16.6	16.6
Developments in religious thought (H173/03–07)	16.6	16.6
	50	50

LEVELS OF RESPONSE

Questions in all papers are marked using a levels of response grid, when using this grid examiners must use a best fit approach. Where there are both strengths and weaknesses in a particular response, particularly imbalanced responses in terms of the assessment objectives, examiners must carefully consider which level is the best fit for the performance.

Note that candidates can achieve different levels in each assessment objective, for example a Level 3 for AO1, and a Level 2 for AO2.

To use these grids:

Determine the level: start at the highest level and work down until you reach the level that matches the answer.

Determine the mark within the level: consider the following:

Descriptor	Award mark
On the borderline of this level and the one below	At bottom of level
Just enough achievement on balance for this level	Above bottom and either below middle or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
Meets the criteria but with some slight inconsistency	Above middle and either below top of level or at middle of level (depending on number of marks available)
Consistently meets the criteria for this level	At top of level

Level (Mark)	Levels of Response for AS Level Religious Studies: Assessment Objective 1 (AO1) <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching • Approaches to the study of religion and belief 	Note: The descriptors below must be considered in the context of all listed strands of Assessment Objectives 1 (AO1) and the indicative content in the mark scheme.
5 (13–15)	<p>A very good demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on the precise question throughout • very good selection of relevant material which is used appropriately • accurate, and detailed knowledge which demonstrates very good understanding through either the breadth or depth of material used • accurate and appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. • a very good range of scholarly views, academic approaches, and/or sources of wisdom and authority are used to demonstrate knowledge and understanding 	
4 (10–12)	<p>A good demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • addresses the question well • good selection of relevant material, used appropriately on the whole • mostly accurate knowledge which demonstrates good understanding of the material used, which should have reasonable amounts of depth or breadth • mostly accurate and appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. • a good range of scholarly views, academic approaches, and/or sources of wisdom and authority are used to demonstrate knowledge and understanding 	
3 (7–9)	<p>A satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generally addresses the question • mostly sound selection of mostly relevant material • some accurate knowledge which demonstrates sound understanding through the material used, which might however be lacking in depth or breadth • generally appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. <p>A satisfactory range of scholarly views, academic approaches, and/or sources of wisdom and authority are used to demonstrate knowledge and understanding with only partial success</p>	
2 (4–6)	<p>A basic demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • might address the general topic rather than the question directly • limited selection of partially relevant material • some accurate, but limited, knowledge which demonstrates partial understanding • some accurate, but limited, use of technical terms and appropriate subject vocabulary. • a limited range of scholarly views, academic approaches, and/or sources of wisdom and authority are used to demonstrate knowledge and understanding with little success 	
1 (1–3)	<p>A weak demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • almost completely ignores the question • very little relevant material selected • knowledge very limited, demonstrating little understanding • very little use of technical terms or subject vocabulary. • very little or no use of scholarly views, academic approaches and/or sources of wisdom and authority to demonstrate knowledge and understanding 	
0 (0)	No creditworthy response	

Level (Mark)	Levels of Response for AS Level Religious Studies: Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study</i>	Note: The descriptors below must be considered in the context of all elements of Assessment Objective 2 (AO2) and the indicative content in the mark scheme.
5 (13–15)	A very good demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and convincing argument • successful and clear analysis and evaluation • views very well stated, coherently developed and justified • answers the question set competently • accurate and appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. • a very good range of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority used to support analysis and evaluation Assessment of Extended Response: There is a well–developed and sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant and logically structured.	
4 (10–12)	A good demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • argument is generally successful and clear • generally successful analysis and evaluation • views well stated, with some development and justification • answers the question set well • mostly accurate and appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. • a good range of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority are used to support analysis and evaluation Assessment of Extended Response: There is a well–developed line of reasoning which is clear, relevant and logically structured	
3 (7–9)	A satisfactory demonstration of analysis and/evaluation in response to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some successful argument • partially successful analysis and evaluation • views asserted but often not fully justified • mostly answers the set question • generally appropriate use of technical terms and subject vocabulary. • a satisfactory range of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority are used to support analysis and evaluation with only partial success Assessment of Extended Response: There is a line of reasoning presented which is mostly relevant and which has some structure.	
2 (4–6)	A basic demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some argument attempted, not always successful • little successful analysis and evaluation • views asserted but with little justification • only partially answers the question • some accurate, but limited, use of technical terms and appropriate subject vocabulary. • a limited range of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support analysis and evaluation with little success Assessment of Extended Response: There is a line of reasoning which has some relevance and which is presented with limited structure.	
1 (1–3)	A weak demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very little argument attempted • very little successful analysis and evaluation • views asserted with very little justification • unsuccessful in answering the question • very little use of technical terms or subject vocabulary. • very little or no use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support analysis and evaluation Assessment of Extended Response: The information is communicated in a basic/unstructured way.	
0 (0)	No creditworthy response	

COMPONENT 01 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

QUESTION

Assess the effectiveness of Aristotle's four causes in explaining the world.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious and philosophical thought and teaching
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief (in a philosophical context), including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following materials:

- explanation of Aristotle's approach to causation as a whole
- reference to Aristotle's reliance on knowledge gained by observation and experience of the world around us
- explanation of Aristotle's approach to understanding of the world in terms of motion and change, potentiality and actuality
- contrast with his teacher Plato's dualist approach
- explanation of each cause as a different kind of explanation for the existence of something:
 - the material cause is what something is made of, providing one kind of explanation of an object
 - the efficient cause is what has brought the object about; the activity which changes something into what it is
 - the formal cause is the characteristic shape of the object and is integral to that object; candidates may successfully avoid misunderstandings relating to blueprints, which might lead to a mistaken confusion with Plato's Ideal Forms
 - the final cause is the purpose, end or goal (telos) of something
- explanation of the final cause which extends to recognising Aristotle's view of nature was teleological
- explanation that the Prime Mover, an unembodied mind, is the goal and ideal of all heavenly motions might be used, but is not a requisite part of explanation of the final cause
- explanation of Aristotle's own example of a statue of Athena made by Pheidias in bronze to adorn the Temple
- explanation of alternative approaches to explanation of the world.

AO2 15 marks

Candidates may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through the use of some of the following arguments;

- they might argue that Aristotle's approach to causation is successful, to some extent, in explaining the world:
 - Aristotle's empirical approach and his reliance on the evidence of observation, leading to his understanding of the four causes, might be put against Plato's rationalist mistrust of the senses, and be found to be more successful
 - understanding of the Prime Mover as final cause of nature might be used to provide some kind of argument in favour of theism as an explanation of the world
- candidates might choose to argue to the contrary, for example, that Aristotle's acceptance of the evidence of the senses or that his use of causation do not provide satisfactory explanations of the world:
 - Aristotle's view of causation might be shown to be unsatisfactory by use of scholarly critiques
 - Aristotle's view of the eternity of the world might be criticised, either from a theological or scientific standpoint; the world as initiated by God's creation, or using scientific views which identify the universe as finite (for example having a beginning with the Big Bang)
 - Aristotle's assertion of natural things possessing a final cause were criticised, the argument might be supported by evolutionary theory.

COMPONENT 02 RELIGION AND ETHICS

QUESTION

Assess the view that euthanasia is always morally wrong.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious and philosophical thought and teaching
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief (in a philosophical context), including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following materials:

- explanation of concept of sanctity of life (human life is made in God's image and is therefore sacred in value)
- explanation of concept of quality of life (human life has to possess certain attributes which give it value)
- the autonomy that a person has over their own life and medical decisions made about their life and its application to euthanasia
- discussion of voluntary euthanasia; that a terminally ill patient's life is ended at their request or with their consent
- discussion of involuntary euthanasia; that a terminally ill patient's life is ended without their consent but with the consent of someone representing their interests
- discussion of medical intervention to end a terminally ill patient's life and its application to euthanasia.
- discussion of medical non-intervention to end a terminally ill patient's life and its application to euthanasia

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- Learners might argue that euthanasia is always morally wrong based on some of the following arguments:
 - if it is believed that human life is sacred, then it should not be ended by euthanasia.
 - some might argue that certain types of euthanasia are always wrong, for example, involuntary euthanasia, as the person making the decision is not the person dying but someone representing them, and we can never be 100% sure that this person accurately represents their wishes
 - some candidates may also use normative theories they have studied to answer this question, for example:
 - the application of Aquinas's four tiers of law; euthanasia breaks Divine Law – the law of God revealed in the Bible particularly in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount – and therefore is always wrong
 - the view of Aquinas's natural law that human life has a telos and that euthanasia prevents this being reached
 - the view of Aquinas's natural law that euthanasia goes against one of the five primary precepts; preservation of life
 - the view of Fletcher's situation ethics that in a particular situation, euthanasia may not be the way in which agape is best served for the person, their family and their friends.
- Learners might argue that euthanasia is not always morally wrong based on some of the following possible reasons:
 - the view supported by quality of life (human life has to possess certain attributes that give it value); if the attributes are not there, life should be ended by euthanasia as it lacks value
 - the view that a person's autonomy over their own life supports euthanasia because decisions made about their life should include decisions about when and how to die; this might be linked to ideas about the difference between voluntary and involuntary euthanasia
 - some candidates may also use normative theories they have studied to answer this question, for example :
 - the conclusion of Fletcher's situation ethics that in a particular situation, euthanasia may be the way in which agape is best served for the person, their family and their friends
 - the view of the second of Fletcher's four working principles – relativism – that the absolute laws of Christian ethics revealed in the Bible – particularly in the Ten Commandments – should be made relative, which means that euthanasia is not always morally wrong
 - the use of Fletcher's principle of personalism; in allowing euthanasia, one is putting the person at the heart of the decision and allowing them to make a decision for themselves and considering their best interests; banning it outright puts rules before people, which Fletcher rejected.

COMPONENT 03 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – CHRISTIANITY

QUESTION

Critically assess Augustine's teaching on Original Sin.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including
 - knowledge and understanding of religious thought and teaching
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, societies and communities
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following materials:

- Augustine takes the Bible (for example Genesis 3) as the foundation of his argument, and his interpretation of this text leads to the beliefs and teachings he puts forward
- Augustine explains that before the Fall (Genesis 3) the soul and will have been in perfect harmony with the body but post-Fall the soul's relationship to the body is now unbalanced and uncontrolled
- Augustine states that the evil will preceded the evil act
- because of their rebellious action God places Adam and Eve outside Eden, and this is one theory as to why humanity now resides in an imperfect world
- the soul now lacks control of the body; this is a chief characteristic of Original Sin
- Augustine describes the effect of Original Sin on the individual: post-Fall the soul is self-centred, divided and rebellious; its two elements, the obedient and the deliberative, are constantly at war with each other.
- the balance of love (caritas) and self-love (cupiditas) is no longer maintained and human nature is essentially self-seeking. Augustine gives many examples, some of these might be referred to and used as explanation for human action
- Original Sin is passed on through sexual intercourse which is always the result of lust, discussion of the implications of this for teaching and belief about sex might be included
- the effects of Original Sin may be seen collectively in society where law is always necessary to control human behaviour.
- counter arguments (such as the idea that as God would never command the impossible, we cannot have inherited a flawed nature, sin must be deliberately chosen, not inherited) might be given as reasons why one may reject the beliefs and teachings of Augustine
- non-literal interpretations of the account of the Fall explain original sin either entirely in symbolic terms or in mythological terms, as pointing towards one individual moment of falling from grace, such interpretations would produce different beliefs and teachings to those of Augustine

CONTINUED

COMPONENT 01 PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (CONTINUED)

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- some learners might argue that Augustine's presentation of Original Sin is unconvincing because:
 - humans are neither good nor bad but create their relationships according to their choices
 - there is no essential nature to corrupt
 - some philosophers argue that humans are born free with no prior nature (good or bad) but create their own personalities through the choices they make
 - it is very unlikely that there was an original moment in history when humans fell from grace
- some learners might argue that Augustine's presentation of Original Sin is convincing because:
 - left to their own devices humans are selfish, cruel and fail to act in their own best interests
 - Augustine is right to stress how lust and the sex drive are the sources of power and destructive behaviour
 - philosophers have frequently noted how emotions can be stronger than reason
 - collectively humans act very differently than individuals do; group hysteria is a good example of Original Sin
 - Original Sin doesn't have to be an event in history but rather a description of the way in which each person progresses from a state of innocence to moral knowledge
- some candidates may combine these views and argue that the origins of sin do not need to be an original historic event but an important description of the state of all humans.

COMPONENT 04 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – ISLAM

QUESTION

'Different approaches to interpreting the Qur'an lead to completely different views of God.' Discuss. [30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:
 - knowledge and understanding of religious thought and teaching
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, societies and communities
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following materials:

- learners might give details of a the variety of ways the Qur'an can be interpreted and the views this gives of God, for example:
 - a God which possesses a plurality of attributes
 - a God which is simply a singular and undivided essence
 - a God with features that can be characterised in human language as a 'hand' or 'face' or 'movement'
- learners might choose to describe each major theological school (Ash'arism, Hanbalism, Mu'tazilism), explaining how its decision to go with literal or metaphorical interpretations of the Qur'an led to their distinct positions regarding the interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses in the Qur'an
- other answers might frame the discussion thematically, exploring each major theme in theology while showing why each school decided to adopt its position and justified it by taking a particular approach to reading scripture
- another way learners might answer this question is by dividing the discussion into different types of interpretation (literal or metaphorical), then explaining which schools adopted which and how this impacts on the view of God

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- learners might agree with the statement because the different approaches to reading the Qur'an (literal, metaphorical) lead to varying and irreconcilable views:
 - some candidates might point out that there are significant differences between belief in a God that possessed a plurality of attributes, belief in a God which is simply a singular and undivided essence, or a God with features that can be characterised in human language as a 'hand' or 'face' or 'movement'
 - such answers might point to historical instances of theological persecution or declaration of theological opponents as 'heretics' or 'infidels' as proof of this
- learners might disagree with the statement because:
 - while there are substantial differences between the different theological schools, they were all advocating more or less similar idea about Abrahamic monotheism
 - with the exception of a number of instances of persecution, there are more examples of tolerance of a plurality of views throughout Muslim history: such an answer might also refer to the views of figures such as Ghazali, who argued that a plurality of views and interpretations could be tolerated so long as they were not advocating complete rejection of three key beliefs: the unity of God, the reality of prophecy, and the existence of the afterlife.

COMPONENT 05 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – JUDAISM

QUESTION

'Jews should spend more time studying the Tenakh than the Talmud'. Discuss.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:
 - knowledge and understanding of religious thought and teaching
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, societies and communities
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

Candidates may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following:

Tenakh:

- the historical context of the Tenakh and how it is viewed by both scholarship and different groups within Judaism, how this impacts on belief, teaching and practice
- an outline the content of the Tenakh and historical-critical discussion as to whether it is history, myth, divine revelation, redacted by humans etc, how different interpretations of its nature lead to variance in belief, teaching and practice
- purpose of the Tenakh/ Written Torah: a record of G-d's interaction with human-kind, divine revelation, basis of belief and practice etc

Talmud:

- the historical context of the Talmud – that it is a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs, and history
- an outline the two components of the Talmud – the Mishnah and the Gemara
- an explanation of the different dates, places of origin and the different contexts and contents of the Talmud(s)
- purpose of the Talmud: making clear and completing the revealed Torah, to elucidate and clarify the teachings of the Written Torah
- purpose of the Talmud: used in a very practical sense in order to expand upon and explain the teachings found in the Written Torah and to help in their application to everyday life
- how the Talmud is viewed by modern Judaism and the different authority given to the Talmud by the different divisions within Judaism, how this impacts on belief, teaching and practice
- content of the two versions of the Talmud: the religious laws, that they are compilations, that they include Hagaddah, Mishnah and Gemara etc.

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- candidates might discuss whether or not the Torah is the word of G-d written down by Moses and forms the Written Law and therefore must be seen as unchanging and unchangeable
- if the Nevi'im and Ketuvim are also inspired texts then the Tenakh should be placed at the centre of Jewish teaching
- the Talmud, as a record of rabbinic discussion, might be seen as less important than the revealed Written Law
- conversely, rabbinical discussions might also be seen as the revealed word of G-d
- the Torah and Talmud might be argued to have differing relationships of status dependent upon the perspective of the various divisions within Judaism

COMPONENT 06 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – BUDDHISM

QUESTION

Evaluate the importance of the three fires/poisons to Buddhists.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:
 - knowledge and understanding of religious thought and teaching
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, societies and communities
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

- learners will probably explain what the three fires are – greed, hatred and ignorance – the primary causes of unskillful action
- ways in which these can be seen as “powering” Samsara and rebirth might be explained; acting out of greed, hatred and delusion causes karma, which causes rebirth, which keeps us trapped in Samsara and therefore suffering
- learners may mention the status of these as the root of all impure mental states
- the link between the three fires and suffering may be developed, the way in which acts motivated by the three fires cause suffering for us and others
- equally the reduction of these is considered central to practice within the eight-fold path, and within Buddhist ethics
- some might show how the teachings link to the attainment of nibbana and show that nibbana means ‘blowing out/ extinguishing’ which can refer to the blowing out of the three fires, not, as some have mistakenly argued, the ‘blowing out/ extinguishing’ of one’s life/soul
- some learners may mention the need within Buddhism to cultivate the opposite, wholesome mental factors as part of practice; wisdom, detachment and loving kindness

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- learners might begin by explaining what is meant by important, and the extent to which something is important, in terms of their response for example:
 - if it is the key teaching from which others stem
 - without it other teachings will not make sense
 - the extent to which it influences other Buddhist teachings
- learners might build on the links between the three fires and nibbana and how these concepts are key to understanding how to overcome suffering and attain enlightenment, the goal of the Buddhist path, showing that the three fires are very important to Buddhists
- learners might suggest that there are other teachings which are more important than the three fires, for example the four noble truths which teaches that the three fires emanate from craving and it is overcoming craving in all its forms will lead to nibbana
- some might suggest that teachings on meditation might be more important because they give practical guidance on how to overcome suffering and develop wisdom.

COMPONENT 07 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – HINDUISM

QUESTION

'Brahman is beyond human understanding.' Discuss.

[30]

In all your responses, you should:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:
 - knowledge and understanding of religious thought and teaching
 - influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, societies and communities
 - cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice
 - approaches to the study of religion and belief
- analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.

SUGGESTED RESPONSES

The following is a description of possible content only; all legitimate answers and approaches must be credited appropriately. Learners are expected to make use of scholarly views, academic approaches and sources of wisdom and authority to support their argument.

AO1 15 marks

- there are different ways of presenting the concept of Brahman including:
 - as the Absolute or Ultimate Truth
 - as the reality that underlies everything perceived within samsara
 - as a more personal form of God (Ishvara)
 - as the Supreme Soul (Paratman/Bhagvan)
- the relationship between Brahman and atman offers a way of approaching an understanding of Brahman, including:
 - Brahman and atman are identical
 - Brahman and atman are formed of the same substance but are distinct entities
 - Brahman and atman are wholly distinct
- different ideas about Brahman and atman create different understandings of the concepts of samsara and liberation (moksha)
- Brahman can be understood as nirguna Brahman (without attributes) and saguna Brahman (with attributes/qualities)
- the concept of nirakara (formless) Brahman
- different ways of explaining or conceiving Brahman include:
 - sat-chit-ananada (being-consciousness-bliss)
 - tat tvam asi (that thou art)
 - neti-neti (not this, not this)
 - Ishvara-chit-achit (God-consciousness-no consciousness)

CONTINUED

COMPONENT 07 DEVELOPMENTS IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT – HINDUISM (CONTINUED)

AO2 15 marks

Learners may demonstrate evaluation and/or analysis through the use of some of the following:

- learners might argue that Brahman is beyond human understanding based on some of the following reasons:
 - in order to fit titles such as the Absolute or the Supreme Brahman must be beyond the direct grasp of humanity, by definition, as anything humans can grasp fully is not sufficiently great to be described in this way
 - conceptualisations such as *tat tvam asi* and *neti neti* are partial attempts to grasp something fundamentally ungraspable; what they mostly communicate is that Brahman is something greater and other than the things that can be directly encountered and experienced
 - the worship of so many different named personal deities in Hinduism and the popularity of *bhakti yoga* as a path supports the view that Brahman cannot be directly understood by human beings.
- learners might argue that Brahman can be understood by human beings based on some of the following reasons:
 - the existence of other yogas as well as *bhakti* might be seen as indicative of different ways to approach and understand Brahman; for example, since the goal of the *Jnana* path is to overcome ignorance and reach a true knowledge of reality Brahman must be graspable
 - it is possible to reach an approximate understanding of some of the qualities Brahman as a personal deity might have through the negative '*neti neti*'
 - even a partial or inadequate understanding allows people to come closer to liberation, and once liberation is achieved a complete understanding will be possible.

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