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Introduction

These exemplar answers have been chosen from the summer 2017 examination series.

OCR is open to a wide variety of approaches and all answers are considered on their merits. These exemplars, therefore, should not be seen as the only way to answer questions but do illustrate how the mark scheme has been applied.

Please always refer to the specification (http://www.ocr.org.uk/Images/242912-specification-accredited-as-level-gce-religious-studies-h173.pdf) for full details of the assessment for this qualification. These exemplar answers should also be read in conjunction with the sample assessment materials and the June 2017 Examiners’ Report to Centres available on the OCR website http://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/.

The question paper, mark scheme and any resource booklet(s) will be available on the OCR website from summer 2018. Until then, they are available on OCR Interchange (school exams officers will have a login for this).

It is important to note that approaches to question setting and marking will remain consistent. At the same time OCR reviews all its qualifications annually and may make small adjustments to improve the performance of its assessments. We will let you know of any substantive changes.
Question 1

Critically discuss the importance of Gurus in Hinduism.

AO1 Level 4 - 11 marks  AO2 Level 4 - 10 marks

1. Hinduism’s foundations come from the Holy texts: Mahabarat, Rig Vedas and Bahagvad Gita. Gurus give their lives to study these texts in as much depth as they can and develop a clear understanding of every foundation that is laid out for Hinduism by these texts. Gurus are viewed as inspiring by many Hindus and many believe I therefore believe that Gurus are of very high importance in Hinduism.

Gurus have given devoted their life to practise Hinduism and live solely by the rules set out in them. Hindu Gurus live and breathe Hinduism; a very big sacrifice to make is giving up your freedom which they have chosen to do. This shows their true level of devotion to their religion and people within it. People understand this and Gurus therefore have a good and solid reputation within.
Hindu communities and there are high levels of respect towards what they do within the practise of their faith.

Gurus don’t solely practise Hinduism for themselves but also to teach and influence those around them. Gurus deliver services and develop new ideas within Hinduism. Like any other religion, the understanding of Hinduism is constantly changing and many of the new understandings and discoveries are presented outward by Gurus within Hindu communities. This is a main reason for my opinion that a Guru’s importance in Hinduism is very high.

Advice that you can trust and guidance that you can rely on can be very hard to find, however Gurus offer this. Through their study of smruti and shruti literature, Gurus will learn ways in which to deal with different situations and goals. Due to this, they are a very reliable source of information; they can guide you on the right path to reach Moksha for your caste or give you advice on love and morals through smruti literature. Their in-depth knowledge means they will always have the ability to provide an answer.

The understanding of Sanskrit is also an advantage of Gurus. Many Hindus don’t practise the language of Sanskrit and so there are a lot of the Hindu Holy texts that
many do not understand. The majority of
Gurus do however understand Sanskrit and
so they are able to translate this for their
people, providing them with a wider
insight into the Hindu religion. Moreover
As well as this, some say that Gurus
have the most personnel (metaphorical) contact
with the deities in Hinduism. Through
their greater understanding of the
teachings and the religion in general, they have
deepen knowledge of what the God and
Goddesses expect of those in the Hindu
religion. Therefore, gaining them more
importance within Hinduism.

There could however be a disadvantage
for Gurus in Hinduism which would
Weaken their potentially lessen their
importance. Gurus interpret and present
their teachings subjectively. This could
therefore confuse people or even cause
conflict through the lack of contrast
of opinion and understanding. There
are no set rules in Hinduism and
many beliefs are particular to one person.
The mix of interpretations may cause
people to act in different ways and not
everyone would agree on what is right and
what is wrong. This could be blamed on
the different teachings of Gurus.

Overall, there are more reasons to
acknowledge the importance of Gurus
in Hinduism. Many people base their
lives on what they are taught and
Examiner commentary

Although candidates write a single response to a single question, the total marks available are allocated to the two Assessment Objectives of Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) and Analysis and Evaluation (AO2) and this commentary is likewise divided. The response is always read as a whole, and the level descriptors used to relate that response to the question that has been asked; elements like the structuring of the response and clarity of the candidate's reasoning form part of the AO2 assessment criteria.

This response overall sits at the borderline between Level 3 (satisfactory) and Level 4 (good) - what could be described as the top of the middle. The candidate has demonstrated a reasonable knowledge of Hinduism in its own right, as opposed to a generalised understanding of world religions, and they are clearly aware of diversity and difference within the various Hindu traditions. However, they lack facility with subject-specific language and technical terminology and there are places where the development lacks depth and reflective discussion.

AO1

This response is structured so that each paragraph identifies an aspect of what Gurus are, or what they do, in the context of Hinduism and then notes why that particular thing might be important. The different paragraphs cover scriptural interpretation and the preservation of sacred language, the teaching of others about the religion, the provision of spiritual guidance, Gurus as examples of bhakti practice and closeness to the divine. This is not a complete list of possibilities, and the expression is sometimes simplistic. Technical terms are used sparingly - for example the descriptions of gurus as teachers do not reference ashrama, and the description of personal devotion does not identify this as bhakti. However, the candidate's understanding is sufficiently clear for the relevance of their selected material and its application to the specific question to be evident. None of the knowledge displayed is inaccurate, and where technical terms are used they are used correctly. Importantly, the candidate clearly understands that ‘Guru’ can describe more than one thing; this is implied throughout and noted explicitly towards the end where they observe that Hinduism is a diverse religion without a single universal set of rules.

At a first glance, the response clearly meets all the requirements to achieve Level 3 (satisfactory) - the question is directly addressed, the knowledge deployed is accurate and the candidate's understanding of the Guru concept is clear. What may require further explanation is what shifts this response from Level 3 into Level 4. The difference between 'satisfactory' (Level 3) and 'good' (Level 4) is based, according to the level descriptors, in the selection of material from the entire pool of knowledge relating to the topic and the specific application of this knowledge in relation to the question. Depth of development, rather than the simple recounting of knowledge, is also important. This candidate has used a good range of material, reflective of the range covered in the mark scheme although expressed with less technical language. They clearly recognise that Guru is not a simple concept with a single meaning, implying an understanding which is more than just satisfactory, and they have selected their material to both illustrate this and relate it to the role of Gurus in the lives of other Hindus. Overall it appears that their understanding of the concepts slightly exceeds their facility with subject-specific and technical language. The response thus 'addresses the question well', with a good and appropriate selection of material (as required by the level 4 descriptors). However, it cannot achieve higher in the level due to a lack of depth and development of the material deployed in the response.

AO2

The AO2 requirement of the question is 'critical discussion' and the candidate aims to do this throughout, with each of their paragraphs on one part of Guru-hood concluding in an attempt to weigh up the importance and/or contribution of that to the religion of Hinduism. As with AO1, although the language used is not complex the candidate's attempt to consider each point they make in light of the specific question they have been asked is clear throughout. The level descriptors for Level 4 require a 'generally successful' argument and analysis of points along with some development justification for views; both these things are intermittently present in this response - the candidate observes, for example, that differing teachings from Gurus contributes to the complexity of Hinduism and it is possible that diversity of practice based on these teachings might cause conflict - but there are other places which read more as a statement of opinion than a critical analysis. Recognising differing opinions is the beginning of critical discussion, and supporting those opinions also contributes, but top-level discussion go beyond this to evaluate justifications and nuanced views.

The discursive material is sufficient to lift the response above Level 3 (satisfactory) because what is given is successful and clear as well as directly focussed on the question. It does not achieve higher than the bottom of the level because it lacks depth and, in places, discursive engagement with the complexity of the issue. Overall, the candidate needed to draw out their consideration of the 'importance' element at each point rather than moving immediately to their next piece of knowledge.

Exemplar Candidate Work

Advices by Gurus which demonstrates the deep connection that they have to their people and their religion, making them a vital part of Hinduism.
Gurus are very important in Hinduism as they traditionally teach, guide, and help individuals understand and live according to the principles of Hinduism. Gurus are revered and respected for their knowledge, wisdom, and guidance. They are considered to be divine messengers, and their teachings are considered to be the path to salvation.

Many Hindus seek guidance from Gurus in times of crisis, seeking advice and assistance in their daily lives. Gurus are also important in the performance of rituals and ceremonies, as they are considered to be the conduits through which the divine energy can be channeled. In many cases, Gurus are also responsible for the education and spiritual development of their followers, teaching them the principles of Hinduism and helping them to live a righteous life.

In conclusion, Gurus are an essential part of Hinduism, providing guidance, support, and wisdom to their students. They are revered and respected for their role in the spiritual and moral development of their followers, and their teachings are considered to be the path to salvation and enlightenment.


We ahmically and up\-

ly (Cand) life. In order for her to recover,

the Guru must show them how to accomplish thi,

and often out of a sense of pride and religious duty.

The material world, that act as 7 pada, energy

which is representative of our Guru

and teachers, to show their appreciation towards

this is evidence of how sacred and important the devi-

ity is.

Furthermore, in the 6th adharma of life man-

i) becoming a religious figure, seeking to focus on

their spiritual needs. They wish to break free

from Maya and the curse of samsara and reach

moksha by returning their attention to Brahman

or the by requiring the unity of the deities. However,

Brahman, Vishnu says 'pleased it from here',

seems like a far-off point, but it brings us nearer

to the end. Many Hindus come to this realization

during this stage of life, some are from the

worldly possessions, family, and material to

reach moksha. Many renunciates become Sadhus

or Sadhiks, and some become one at an easy

stage of life. A Sadhu/Sadhik joins a sect (which

could be dedicated to Shiva and a Yoni) and

learns from the Guru and per follow the Guru’s

ways of puja and yaga. It is in this way that

Guru have gained importance, so may be essentially

helping many Indians reach moksha, which is the

ultimate goal of Hindus and want to find

Supreme reality.
The Law of Manu (Dharma Sutra) contains the basis for Hindu ethics and morality and are the rules and regulations on how to live dharmically. It is the basis of law in India and the Kshatriyas and contains details of the duties of each Varna and the duties of worlers.

It also contains how the rules should govern society and the roles of women and men duties as well as the duties to the gods.

The Law of Manu (Dharmasutra) is a huge responsibility, as they will be teaching kindles the fundamentals of being a Hindu: dharma, virtue and ethics. Living dharmically with good virtue and ethics is central to being a Hindu. And in this way the Gurus are important.

On the other hand, some may say that the Brahmin and the priest are more important, as they are the models on how to live dharmically and lead worship and perform rites of passage. They are seen as the 'priest' of all the castes and are looked up to by all the Hindus. However, the Gurus are more approachable and arguably best for more time in order to teach them the values of the Vedas, amongst other things.

In conclusion, although some may say priests are more important, it is evident that Gurus form a significantly important part of the lives of many Hindu people. They are guided to become good moral people and better they teach values of the
Examiner commentary

Although candidates write a single response to a single question, the total marks available are allocated to the two Assessment Objectives of Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) and Analysis and Evaluation (AO2) and this commentary is likewise divided. The response is always read, and the level descriptors used to relate that response to the question that has been asked; elements like the structuring of the response and clarity of the candidate’s reasoning form part of the AO2 assessment criteria.

Overall this is a high-level response, with the candidate achieving almost full marks for AO1 and the top of Level 4 for AO2. Looked at alongside the other question 1 example, it clearly demonstrates the rank order, with this response offering not only clear knowledge focused on a specific question, but a greater depth of understanding and more developed evaluative thinking on that question.

AO1

The introductory paragraph offers a direct translation for the term Guru (as ‘teacher’) and sites gurus within the system of ashrama as well as connecting them to deity in the form of Shiva. This introduction is built upon with an exploration of the role and practices of Gurus and of other ways of being a holy person and/or a source of religious authority with a consideration of Brahmins. The candidate demonstrates detailed knowledge of some concepts which Gurus may teach to individuals during the brahmacharya ashrama, including the importance of dharmic living, not just for the individual but for the universe. In addition, the candidate examines another possible connection between Gurus and ashrama by considering whether Gurus themselves might be understood within that system. Although the connections between the concepts of Guru and Sadhu could have been explored more explicitly, the candidate has dealt well with the complex concept of renunciation and the role of gurus in helping others towards moksha.

The response demonstrates selection and application of relevant material from across the entire course of study. The candidate’s explanations demonstrate some depth of understanding, with recognition of the complex and diverse nature of the concepts under discussion and the religion within which they are found. Technical vocabulary is used with confidence and understanding of the terms is evident through the contexts in which they are presented. The response does not quite reach the top of the level, because some of the development becomes repetition rather than expansion (for example the consideration of the Manusmriti relies on the issue of dharma which has already been examined, rather than developing ideas of scriptural interpretation or morality) and because of the previously mentioned ambiguity about concepts of Guru and Sadhu. This should not be read as implying that a perfect or complete response is required for full marks, but rather as a requirement for consistent clarity, depth and quality throughout.

AO2

As with the other Q1 example, the candidate has attempted to address AO2 throughout the question by weighing up the centrality of each point they make about Gurus to Hinduism as a whole. This approach ensures that AO2 is not forgotten, but it also carries the risk that the candidate will present justified views without developing those different views into an evaluative argument. The level descriptors require the examiner to consider both elements in awarding the marks, distinguishing justified and/or developed view points from successful analysis.
and evaluation. In this example, the candidate gives clear perspectives at each point, and justifies them well in relation to the point they have raised for that paragraph. This is done in most places with sufficient depth and clarity to meet the ‘generally successful’ requirement of Level 4 in regard to both analysis and justification of viewpoint, however there are other areas where statements are made without any real justification - such as the observation that the part of the sacred thread which represents the Guru demonstrates ‘how sacred and important they are’; this may indeed be the case but the statement is not justified by the limited material about the sacred thread which the candidate has included.

Overall all the points made in the Level 4 descriptors are met by the response. It is structured and carries a line of reasoning throughout, with the arguments clearly made and the analysis which is present being ‘generally successful’. However, the arguments are not all ‘coherently justified’ or developed and elements of evaluation and analysis are not present throughout. To really meet these criteria the candidate needed to engage more directly and discursively with the viewpoints they offered as arguments - for example the view that living dharmically is central to being a Hindu does, as the candidate suggests, speak to the importance of the role of gurus in so far as they teach other Hindus to do so; this offers an argument which contributes to the question. But the candidate could have gone further in analysis by challenging whether all Hindus would agree with that assessment of dharma, or considering whether all gurus make such a contribution and what the implications for the argument are if they do not. Again, these comments should not be taken as implying there is only one appropriate way to approach a question such as this, but rather as illustrations of how additional evaluative depth can be built onto the presentation of a justified viewpoint.
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