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GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625
For first teaching in 2016

J625/05 Summer 2022 series

Contents

Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers are also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

Advance Information for Summer 2022 assessments

To support student revision, advance information was published about the focus of exams for Summer 2022 assessments. Advance information was available for most GCSE, AS and A Level subjects, Core Maths, FSMQ, and Cambridge Nationals Information Technologies. You can find more information on our website.

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Paper 5 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies J625/05 Hinduism: Beliefs and teachings & Practices paper. It assesses knowledge and understanding of key elements which are part of Hinduism as it is practised in the contemporary world, as well as the ability to discuss and evaluate the impact of Hindu belief and practice on different groups of Hindus.

All questions and sections of questions are compulsory. Most candidates attempted the entire paper, with 1(c) being the question most commonly missed out.

Candidates who performed well on this paper generally demonstrated strong examination skills, including effective use of their examination time, careful reading of exam questions and application of the material to the specific question that had been asked. Their responses showed not only knowledge of a range of relevant material but understanding of the demands of a question; for example, applying their knowledge to the stimulus to present and support different perspectives on the issue.

Candidates who did less well had often confused different specialist terms from within the study of Hinduism. They were also often those who were restricted in their discursive responses to part (e) questions, often demonstrating relevant knowledge and an ability to organise it into opposing views but not progressing from there to discussion and/or analysis. It should be noted that the part (e) questions do not demand opposite views, but rather different ones. However, the identification of distinct sets of views does not automatically amount to a discursive engagement sufficient for higher level marks. Candidates who deployed their knowledge in the form of arguments, offering justifications, counter-arguments and/or critique of the justifications were better able to demonstrate the skills of evaluation and analysis necessary for the highest level marks.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
• demonstrated clear understanding of Hinduism specific concepts and terminology • showed understanding of how this material related to the specific questions asked • showed awareness of how religious belief and practice connect.	• showed difficulty in relating understanding of common and divergent views to the issue in the question • showed confusion over meaning of technical terms used in the question, preventing successful application of knowledge • demonstrated little discursive engagement with the issues.

Question 1 (a)

1   **(a)**   What is the Trimurti?

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.... **[3]**

Most candidates gained all the available marks for this question. There was a small number of responses giving only the names of the three deities which make up the Trimurti; this was creditable but could not gain full marks as the question is about the collective concept.

Question 1 (b)

   (b)   Give **three** places darshan might take place.

1. ....

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2. ....

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3. ....

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[3]

This question is very broad in scope and a wide range of responses were creditable. Most candidates gained all 3 marks, with the most common responses identifying mandirs, home shrines and religious sites such as the Ganges.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Outline the role of Avatara in Hinduism.

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.... **[3]**

While most candidates who attempted this question gained at least some of the marks there was some confusion around the meaning of the term 'Avatara'. Some responses treated it as a synonym for God and gave responses around the general roles of deity within Hinduism while others confused it with virtuous actions or forms of worship. There were also responses which identified avatars by name without making any reference to their role.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Describe the reasons why dana (giving) might be an important practice for Hindus.

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.... **[6]**

Responses to this question were often very generic, outlining why giving is widely considered a virtuous action without relating it clearly to Hindu ideas about virtue. Exemplar 1 is typical of this kind of response. The points being made are not wrong, but they are vague and simplistically expressed. Only the middle point, regarding moksha, uses specifically Hindu ideas but it is given in a way that suggests a limited understanding of the relevant concepts.

Responses which did use specific knowledge of Hinduism generally connected virtuous actions with positive karma, although understanding of the connection between karma and liberation was often over-simplified. Considerations of giving as part of Sanatana Dharma were also common. A small number of responses identified the giving of offerings to deity as relevant, but this was not generally expanded on with any depth.

Exemplar 1

Dana is an important practice for hindus as giving to the homless or less fortunate plays an important role in their beliefs and teachings. As it will help them to achieve moksha and get out of the cycle of Samsara which hindues strive to achieve. Dana is also important to hindus as hinduism involves being kind and supportive to others and "giving".

Assessment for learning

While most candidates have a foundational understanding of the connection between karma and the nature of rebirth there is often confusion or over-simplification around the connection between karma and liberation. To understand the karma marga/karma yoga it is important to understand that the accumulation of good/positive karma does not result directly in liberation. This is because thinking about the results of one's actions creates an attachment which keeps the atman trapped in the cycle of rebirth. To achieve liberation through karma a person must become detached from the results of their actions, which means doing what is right or good or part of the dharma solely for that reason while remaining neutral about the possible rewards.

Question 1 (e)

(e) 'All Hindus should celebrate Raksha Bandhan.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Hinduism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority. **[15]**

✎ Spelling, punctuation and grammar **[3]**

Most responses were based on a recognition of Raksha Bandhan as a festival and included some discussion about whether any festival is of universal significance in Hinduism. However, a noticeable minority did not demonstrate any specific knowledge of the Raksha Bandhan festival, what it celebrates or associated customs. These responses generally began with a declaration that it was not particularly important because other festivals are more popular, followed by a great deal of information about those other festivals. This did create some relevant discussion but was of necessity limited by the lack of focus on the specific festival named in the question.

Responses that did focus on the festival often argued that it could not be universally relevant because not everyone has siblings or because the deities associated with it are not universally worshipped.

Some responses attempted to connect views on the practices associated with festivals with different darshanas, most commonly Advaita, with varying degrees of success. Some of these showed a sophisticated understanding of the relevant philosophy but many struggled to connect that philosophical position with religious practices. Some responses struggled to try and reconcile the idea of Advaita as a foundational Hindu philosophy with the popularity of practices that are rooted in an entirely different epistemology, suggesting perhaps a confusion around the diversity of philosophies within Hinduism.

Question 2 (a)

2 **(a)** Describe the concept of Sanatana Dharma.

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.... **[3]**

This proved to be a challenging question overall with most candidates focussing on the word 'dharma' and ignoring the preceding 'Sanatana', which does change the appropriate translation of the term. Creditable responses needed to indicate awareness of the significance of 'Sanatana' through references to its eternal or universal nature.

Misconception	
?	That 'dharma' always means the same thing, regardless of context or associated terms.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Outline the relationship between dharma and the ashramas.

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.... **[3]**

Most responses showed a correct understanding of dharma in this context, observing that it corresponds with personal duties/responsibilities and that these can vary with other elements of someone's life. This could be expanded into a description of the relationship between concepts, commonly using varnashramadharma to do so.

Most responses also correctly associated ashramas with stages of life although a noticeable minority confused the ashramas with the varnas. Some gave specific examples of the dharma of a particular ashrama as a means of outlining the relationship.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Describe the state of jivan mukti.

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.... **[3]**

This question proved challenging with some candidates not recognising the term jivan mukti and others understanding the term but not responding to the specific question by describing the state. Some responses, as shown in Exemplar 2, recognised one of the component words and were focused on the meaning of that rather than showing understanding of the term as a whole. Exemplar 2 gives a correct and detailed definition of jiva, but without a reference to liberation, moksha or similar this is not a creditable response to the question asked.

Exemplar 2

Jiva is the embodied soul. Unlike the atman it has layers — the changeable body and the atman. The body is seen like a prison for the atman to be trapped in.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Outline the ways astanga or raja yoga is different from the other margas.

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.... **[6]**

While a majority of candidates were familiar with the idea of different margas there were some responses which showed knowledge about the other three but appeared unfamiliar with astanga. Some responses referred to astanga in terms of the purely physical westernised practice of yoga as exercise.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* 'Prakriti is the cause of everything in the material world.'

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Hinduism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority. **[15]**

Most responses demonstrated an understanding of prakriti and the idea of interactions between prakriti and purusha as the source of creation. Some responses also set out other Hindu perspectives on the sources of creation including some which compared Advaita and Dvaita Vedanta.

However, with some responses, setting out the relevant knowledge led the candidate away from a focus on the question. There were also responses which appeared to be trying to reconcile or connect distinct philosophical approaches to the issue into one.

Exemplar 3 illustrates both of these issues. The response contains a range of knowledge, much of which is relevant, including prakriti and purusha, maya and the idea of Brahma as the creator deity of the Trimurti. Although greater depth and detail would be useful with all these concepts, they are not inaccurate. However, the section on Brahman is more muddled and the relevance of the purusharthas and the margas, referenced as part of the account of these concepts, is unclear. There are attempts to make and justify arguments – for example connecting Brahma to the creation of prakriti, but as an argument this is based on the idea that prakriti is a relevant concept for all forms of Hinduism which it is not.

Exemplar 3

(e)* 'Prakriti is the ⌐cause⌐ of everything in the ⌐material world.⌐

Discuss this statement. In your answer, you should:

- Analyse and evaluate the importance of points of view, referring to common and divergent views within Hinduism.
- Refer to sources of wisdom and authority.   **[15]**

⌐PLAN⌐

P1- purusha - cosmic man,
Prakriti   Brahman - '
↳ nature   Brahma   creator
             P2 - Maya = prakriti!   Bhagavan
distinguish
             P3 - All that's real is Brahman

Prakriti is the element of the universe which represents nature and the material world. The other element of the universe is Purusha, cosmic man and consciousness. And, the creator is Brahma but all that's real is Brahman.

All that we can see and observe is due to prakriti, prakriti is female and is linked to Maya - illusion - which challenges Hindus in distinguishing what's real and what's maya. To fulfill Hindus' margas, especially jnana and Bha Bhakti, they must be able to distinguish between illusion and Brahman, in order to gain complete awareness and attain moksha.

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