

GCSE (9-1)

Examiners' report

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

J625

For first teaching in 2016

J625/05 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction 3

Paper 5 series overview 4

 Question 1 (a) 5

 Question 1 (b) 6

 Question 1 (c) 7

 Question 1 (d) 8

 Question 1 (e) 10

 Question 2 (a) 11

 Question 2 (b) 12

 Question 2 (c) 13

 Question 2 (d) 14

 Question 2 (e)* 15

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 responses is 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.

Would you prefer a Word version?

Did you know that you can save this PDF as a Word file using Acrobat Professional?

Simply click on **File > Export to** and select **Microsoft Word**

(If you have opened this PDF in your browser you will need to save it first. Simply right click anywhere on the page and select **Save as . . .** to save the PDF. Then open the PDF in Acrobat Professional.)

If you do not have access to Acrobat Professional there are a number of **free** applications available that will also convert PDF to Word (search for PDF to Word converter).

Paper 5 series overview

GCSE Religious Studies Paper 5 is the Hinduism: Beliefs, Teachings and Practices paper. It assesses knowledge and understanding of key elements that are part of Hinduism as it is practised in the contemporary world. It also assesses the ability to discuss and evaluate the significance and impact of these on different groups of Hindus.

All questions and sections of questions are compulsory. In this series no questions were routinely left unattempted by candidates.

Candidates who performed well on this paper demonstrated strong examination skills, including effective use of their examination time, careful reading of the questions and the application of their material to the specific question that had been asked. Their responses showed not only knowledge of a range of relevant material but also understanding of the demands of a question; for example, they were aware that more than a personal opinion or descriptive knowledge of the issue would be required to deal adequately with the (e) part questions.

Candidates who did less well often used material from the appropriate topic area without focusing on the specific question. An example is 1 (c) where descriptions of Navaratri customs (and those of other festivals) were given in place of the origin or focus of the festival that was asked for. Less successful responses were also more restricted in their discursive responses to part (e) questions, usually demonstrating relevant knowledge and some ability to organise it into opposing views, but without progressing from there to discussion and/or analysis.

It should be noted that the (e) part questions do not demand opposite views, but rather different ones. The identification of distinct sets of views does not automatically amount to a discursive engagement sufficient for higher level marks. Ways of deploying knowledge that allow for justification, critique, counterargument and/or the relationship of different views to one another 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:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrated a focus on the questions asked with the application of selected knowledge to the specific question showed a clear knowledge and understanding of specialist Hinduism-specific terminology, with some recognition of the complexity of relating Sanskrit terms to English equivalents were able to apply their understanding of diverse Hindu traditions to identify and explore common and divergent perspectives on the questions asked. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> demonstrated an overly simplified understanding of core concepts such the operation of karma and the compound nature of Varnashra-madharm gave descriptive responses where discursive ones were required by the question.

Question 1 (a)

1

(a) Outline what happens during havan.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This kind of points-marked question gives marks for discrete points of correct, relevant knowledge, points of development of that knowledge and/or relevant exemplification. Candidates were able to gain a mark for correctly defining the term and its connection to ritual worship. Descriptions of the steps through which havan progresses, the involvement of fire and of offerings being made to the fire, were all creditable points. Responses linking havan to rites of passage or specifically to Agni and his role as a messenger were also relevant.

A significant number of responses did not gain the full three marks on this question. While most recognised that they had been asked about a ritual form of worship involving fire the specifics of this form, and therefore the ways in which it is distinct from others, were often absent. Many responses gave only general material about Hindu worship overall, which sometimes included relevant points and sometimes didn't; the lack of selection and/or application of which made it challenging to demonstrate a full understanding of the question. Many responses also went beyond the scope of the question, showing lots of knowledge about symbolism or the historical development of different forms of worship that was, unfortunately, not applicable to the question asked.

Question 1 (b)

(b) Describe the role karma plays in rebirth.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This is a points-marked question, giving marks for each discrete point of correct, relevant knowledge, points of development of that knowledge and/or relevant exemplification.

With this question candidates were able to gain marks for demonstrating knowledge of the relationship between individual actions and the production of karma, and for linking positive karma to favourable rebirth and vice versa. Most responses were able to do this, and some gave detailed accounts of the relationship between sanchita (accumulated) and prarabdha (fruit-bearing) karma.

The question specifies the role of karma in rebirth and so material about moksha and ending the cycle of rebirth was not relevant. It is worth noting that many responses which took this route mistakenly stated that good karma leads directly to moksha (liberation). While it was not relevant to this question the error does suggest a limited understanding of the concepts of karma and liberation. Similarly, some responses conflated nishkam (selfless) karma with good or positive karma.

Misconception



Many responses mistakenly stated that good karma leads directly to moksha (liberation).

The accumulation of karma, whether positive or negative is what drives the cycle of samsara (rebirth). Good karma can lead to rebirth in a heavenly realm, but this is still rebirth within samsara.

Nishkam (selfless) karma is a term given to the path for removing karma altogether; no karma of any kind results from actions performed without an attachment to the results of them and it is this removal of karma that results in liberation.

Question 1 (c)

(c) Outline what is being celebrated during Navaratri.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

As with 1 (a) and (b) this is a points-marked question, giving marks for knowledge, development of knowledge and exemplification.

While most candidates correctly recognised that they had been asked about a festival there were many responses showing confusion about which festival it was, a noticeable number of responses focused on Raksha Bandhan and gave responses that would have done well on the 2023 paper question 2 (b). Holi and Maha Shivaratri also appeared in multiple responses.

The most common relevant response was to identify the festival with Durga and to her defeat of Mahishasura. Some told the story in greater detail and so gained the third mark. Other relevant material included the links between the festival and other named goddesses: Shakti, the harvest season, Rama's battle with Ravana. Conceptual ideas such as the triumph of good over evil or light over darkness was also given marks.

Descriptions of activities and customs that take place during the festival were common, but not relevant to the question of what is being celebrated. This question was left unanswered more often than other three mark questions.

Question 1 (d)

(d) Outline why Varnashra-madharma might be important for individual Hindus.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

This question is marked according to the levels of response given in the mark scheme, considering the responses as a whole.

Most candidates demonstrated some familiarity with the term Varnashra-madharma, although recognition that each element of the three elements which make up the concept contribute to its overall purpose and significance was less common.

The highest level responses effectively explored the interconnectedness of varna, ashrama, and dharma, demonstrating how these concepts overlap and influence an individual's life. Some focused on the individual in the sense of how svadharma is constructed through varna and ashrama while others began with the individual within society, considering the ideals of varna and how it then informs dharma and ashrama. Both approaches were able to produce nuanced, high level responses. Some responses went into corruptions and distortions of the varna system and its relationship to the practice of caste in contemporary India; while this is an understandable interest and concern, most responses did not manage to make this a clear contribution to answering the question.

Less successful responses tended to consider only one of the three elements of the concept. This was usually dharma, presented as simply meaning duty without reference to how these duties are identified or how they might change; the specific duties of the varnas and/or the ashramas were less likely to be mentioned in these responses. Others described varna or ashrama, sometimes in some depth but without reference to the other parts of the Varnashra-madharma which limited the available marks.

There was also a common misconception relating varna to family roles, such as being a parent, sibling or child.

Exemplar 1

Varnashramadharma is a Hindu's role in society and essentially their duty. Hindus are split depending on their social importance. ~~they are split into servants, masters~~ Depending on their social importance their duty in society ~~may~~ ^{is} be different.

~~It is~~ Hindus aim to do their duty and play their role in society to fulfill their purpose on earth.

Exemplar 1 shows a typical response to this question; the term is clearly recognised and understood in a very broad way. It connects the overall concept with both duty and place in society and connects both of those things with having a purpose in life. The description is vague and general, and there is not even an implied reference to ashrama. There is also only an implied reference to the importance of the concept, which is left undeveloped. The response as a whole meets the requirements of Level 1, giving a generalised response without detail. But, because it does contain some evidence of understanding for two of the three concepts that make up Varnashramadharma and because there is the beginning of a consideration of importance in the reference to purpose, it was put at the top of the level, gaining two marks.


Question 1 (e)

(e) 'Atman is **not** the same as Brahman.'

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]

The (e) part questions are marked using two sets of levels; one addresses the three marks available for AO1 (Knowledge and Understanding) and the other the twelve marks available for AO2 (Evaluation). Addressing these questions requires a discussion of the issue given in the stimulus and the higher levels require that a judgement be made on that issue.

Most candidates dealt very well with this question, demonstrating understanding of the different philosophical beliefs surrounding the nature of the relationship between the Atman and Brahman and often linking these perspectives to different yogic paths and other forms of religious practice. A range of scriptural quotations and reference to the different Vedantic philosophers were well used to support the perspectives being set out.

It is important to note that, while a discussion begins with identifying and justifying differing views on an issue, the level descriptors against which these responses are marked require more than this for the higher levels. Responses often needed to expand their detailed explanation of how a position on the issue might be justified into a more critical analytic or evaluative reflection on that position and the different positions on the issue were presented descriptively rather than as ideas in dialogue with one another. Some responses were structured around a clear framework of making a point, giving some support or justification for it, and then concluding the paragraph with a statement beginning 'this is a strong/weak argument because...' This makes the response more than pure description, but the reasons were often underdeveloped or consisted of repetition of the justification previously offered. Higher level evaluative responses compared different views, identified how one view emerges from gaps or weaknesses in another, or gave a reflective conclusion considering the different ways one view might be chosen as preferable to another.

Question 2 (a)

2

(a) Describe the concept of Loka.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This was a very well answered question with many candidates going into far greater depth and/or detail than necessary for the three marks. As with 1 (a-c), responses to this question were given marks for discrete points of correct knowledge, development of that knowledge and/or relevant exemplification.

Correct definitions of loka were creditable and most responses began with this. No specific way of understanding how Hindu cosmology divides reality into realms was required and the full range of possibilities was represented, with some focusing on the idea of realms belonging to specific deities, others describing the idea of fourteen lokas with seven higher and seven lower realms, and still others addressing the idea of the tri-loka division into heaven, earth and atmosphere. All these approaches were creditable and examples of each gained all the available marks.

Question 2 (b)

(b) Name the **three** goddesses of the Tridevi.

- 1
-
- 2
-
- 3
-

[3]

While this is also a points-marked question it differs from the others on this paper in that marks can only be given for individual points of knowledge. There are no marks for development or description as the question specifies three names are required to fully answer it.

The vast majority of candidates were able to correctly identify the three goddesses who are most often collectively referred to as the Tridevi: Sarasvati, Lakshmi, and Parvati. Some responses gave Kali or Durga instead of Parvati and that was also a creditable response as these goddesses are widely considered forms of the same deity; therefore, giving two or more of those names (Kali, Durga, Parvati) could not gain more than a single mark. While alternative incarnations of the other two goddesses would have been given marks according to the same principle, no such examples were offered.

The most common errors answering this question were to mistake the Trimurti for the Tridevi, naming Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. Some responses also simply named any three deities.

Question 2 (c)

(c) Outline **one** Hindu teaching about the treatment of animals.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [3]

This was another very well answered question, eliciting a diverse range of creditable approaches. One of the most common began by defining ahimsa (harmlessness) and linking this to the idea that harming animals would be a breach of this ethical principle. This was often linked to karma and rebirth or exemplified with the idea that it leads to vegetarianism. The belief that animals possess atman and that this is the same as human atman, similarly, caught in the cycle of samsara, was another effective approach. The status of the cow as sacred because of its contribution to human well-being was another common response.

The need to read the precise question carefully is demonstrated by those responses that did not gain full marks. Where the question specified 'one teaching/attitude/belief' examiners are only able to credit the first one identified with any development or exemplification relating to that. Responses that gave multiple ideas do not answer the question and most did not include enough development of their first point to gain all the available marks.

Exemplar 2

Ahimsa (non-violence) should be a prevailing attitude when approaching other lives. Additionally, animals are often the vehicles of deities e.g. Shiva rides a bull. Animals are also often depicted in stories with deities e.g. tortoises and peacocks. As a result, peacocks are protected in India and Nepal. [3]

Exemplar 2 opens with an identification of ahimsa as a principle which should inform the treatment of animals. Since this is correct it can gain a mark. However, the following sentence does not develop the idea of ahimsa in any way nor does it offer a relevant example. Instead, it gives another principle which might affect Hindu attitudes to the treatment of animals and, so, no further marks can be given. The second point is the better developed of the two but the marking principle, which is given on page three of the mark scheme (short answer questions requiring a more developed response) specifies that creditable material begins with the first response made and stops when the development of that response ends.

Question 2 (d)

(d) Describe how the concept of sewa (service) might influence Hindu responses to social issues.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

..... [6]

This question asks for links to be identified between the concept of sewa (service) and problems or concerns within society. This proved a challenging question for many, with sewa seeming an unfamiliar concept. Many responses focused on concepts such as karma, dharma or moksha, which are contributors to ethical thinking overall, but which prevented a focus on the specific question.

The link between action and social issues was also rarely addressed. Few responses identified any examples of social concerns and even those responses which did correctly identify sewa as selfless service to others did not clearly link that to acting within the world. Some responses wrote generally about charity work.

Question 2 (e)*

(e)* 'Karma is the best guide to living a good life.'

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 candidates demonstrated good knowledge of karma, its various types and how they influence an individual's journey towards rebirth. The mistaken assumption that accumulating good karma leads directly to liberation mentioned in 1 (b) was also in evidence in these responses but there were also examples of more nuanced understanding. Many responses interpreted 'a good life' as being a reference to one of pleasure or enjoyment rather than goodness in an ethical sense, and this was a creditable interpretation.

Responses to this question were noticeably longer than those to 1 (e). In most cases, this was because of more descriptive material being included rather than because of an increase in discussion. As with 1 (e) the focus on description rather than analysis and evaluation limited higher level marks.

Exemplar 3

Karma is the ~~natura~~ cosmic law that refers to the link of action and consequence. ~~there are 4 paths to reach Moksha~~ there are 4 ways to ~~get to~~ reach Moksha (the main goal for a Hindu), so Hindus would argue that Karma isn't the best guide to living a good life.

Some Hindus believe that serving ^{God with devotion and adoration} ~~oneself and society~~ is the best way to ~~live~~ live a good life - This is known as Bhakti Yoga. 'If one offers me a leaf, fruit, flower or water with devotion I will accept it.' Lord Krishna ~~says~~ said this quote in regard to a devotee's devotion. This shows Hindus that if they want to live their best life, ^{it} ~~they~~ must be devotional and God centered. Vaishnavas and other Hindus that believe in Saguna Brahman believe this. They could chant God's name on a 'mala' (rosary bead) or sing bhajans and ~~kirtans~~ Kirtans to appease the lord. Therefore, some Hindus think that Bhakti Yoga is the best guide to living a good life and achieving Moksha.

Other Hindus believe that ~~karma~~ serving society and those around you is the best way to live. ~~that~~ This is known as Karma Yoga. 'perform your prescribed duties' is what Hinduism advocates. This is important as it teaches Hindus to do their duties of serving others well and ~~that~~ one will be rewarded. Hindus ~~that~~ believe that by serving society they accumulate Nishkam Karma (selfless karma) and would be able to achieve moksha. Nirguna Brahman believers follow this teaching and would therefore take care of others and volunteer for those in need. Therefore, some Hindus could argue that Karma Yoga is the best way to live one's life.

However, other Hindus may believe that ~~it is not~~ a simple life is a good life. They would believe in Raja Yoga. 'Stop the modification of the mind state' shows Hindus that God will ~~be~~ be happy with you if you ~~the~~ live a simple life and don't overcomplicate things. Hindus that believe this will spend a lot of time meditating and focusing on just God. Therefore, for some Hindus, Raja Yoga is the best guide.

To conclude, ~~it is not~~ one guide for living one's best life is ~~different~~ different for each Hindu so shouldn't just be 'Karma' Yoga but all of them in balance. It is about ~~whatever~~ whatever works best for each individual.

Exemplar 3 is a response which demonstrates a good level of knowledge that has been organised into two separate positions, but which does not then go on to develop a discussion. It opens with a correct definition of karma as cosmic law and states that most Hindus would agree it is a guide to a good life. This statement is made as if it results from the preceding observation about different paths to moksha; how it would do so is not made clear at this point, although taking the response as a whole gives us the implied argument that if moksha is the ultimate aim and one of the paths to moksha uses the concept of karma then following that path must equate to living a good life. There is a paragraph describing what a good life would be according to the bhakti marga, another describing the karma marga and a third more briefly describing Raja yoga. For each of these the description of what it involves is followed with the statement that some Hindus would consider this is the best way to live; the existence of the path does justify that statement (it would not exist if there were not people choosing to follow it) but it does not amount to the 'reasoned argument' required by the descriptors for Level 3 and above. The conclusion simply says that because there are many paths there can't be one best one, which is a repetition of the introduction and doesn't add any analysis, critique or evaluation. The response gained all the available marks for AO1 while for AO2 it was placed in Level 2. It meets all the requirements of that level, stating different views with limited development, analysis and/or evaluation, so it gains six marks, but it cannot move above Level 2 because there is no clear discussion of the issue.

Supporting you

Teach Cambridge

Make sure you visit our secure website [Teach Cambridge](#) to find the full range of resources and support for the subjects you teach. This includes secure materials such as set assignments and exemplars, online and on-demand training.

Don't have access? If your school or college teaches any OCR qualifications, please contact your exams officer. You can [forward them this link](#) to help get you started.

Reviews of marking

If any of your students' results are not as expected, you may wish to consider one of our post-results services. For full information about the options available visit the [OCR website](#).

Access to Scripts

We've made it easier for Exams Officers to download copies of your candidates' completed papers or 'scripts'. Your centre can use these scripts to decide whether to request a review of marking and to support teaching and learning.

Our free, on-demand service, Access to Scripts is available via our single sign-on service, My Cambridge. Step-by-step instructions are on our [website](#).

Keep up-to-date

We send a monthly bulletin to tell you about important updates. You can also sign up for your subject specific updates. If you haven't already, [sign up here](#).

OCR Professional Development

Attend one of our popular professional development courses to hear directly from a senior assessor or drop in to a Q&A session. Most of our courses are delivered live via an online platform, so you can attend from any location.

Please find details for all our courses for your subject on **Teach Cambridge**. You'll also find links to our online courses on NEA marking and support.

Signed up for ExamBuilder?

[ExamBuilder](#) is a free test-building platform, providing unlimited users exclusively for staff at OCR centres with an [Interchange](#) account.

Choose from a large bank of questions to build personalised tests and custom mark schemes, with the option to add custom cover pages to simulate real examinations. You can also edit and download complete past papers.

[Find out more](#).

Active Results

Review students' exam performance with our free online results analysis tool. It is available for all GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Cambridge Nationals (examined units only).

[Find out more](#).

You will need an Interchange account to access our digital products. If you do not have an Interchange account please contact your centre administrator (usually the Exams Officer) to request a username, or nominate an existing Interchange user in your department.

Need to get in touch?

If you ever have any questions about OCR qualifications or services (including administration, logistics and teaching) please feel free to get in touch with our customer support centre.

Call us on
01223 553998

Alternatively, you can email us on
support@ocr.org.uk

For more information visit

 **ocr.org.uk/qualifications/resource-finder**

 **ocr.org.uk**

 **facebook.com/ocrexams**

 **twitter.com/ocrexams**

 **instagram.com/ocrexaminations**

 **linkedin.com/company/ocr**

 **youtube.com/ocrexams**

We really value your feedback

Click to send us an autogenerated email about this resource. Add comments if you want to. Let us know how we can improve this resource or what else you need. Your email address will not be used or shared for any marketing purposes.



I like this



I dislike this

Please note – web links are correct at date of publication but other websites may change over time. If you have any problems with a link you may want to navigate to that organisation's website for a direct search.



OCR is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored. © OCR 2024 Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England. Registered office The Triangle Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge, CB2 8EA. Registered company number 3484466. OCR is an exempt charity.

OCR operates academic and vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual, Qualifications Wales and CCEA as listed in their qualifications registers including A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Technicals and Cambridge Nationals.

OCR provides resources to help you deliver our qualifications. These resources do not represent any particular teaching method we expect you to use. We update our resources regularly and aim to make sure content is accurate but please check the OCR website so that you have the most up to date version. OCR cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions in these resources.

Though we make every effort to check our resources, there may be contradictions between published support and the specification, so it is important that you always use information in the latest specification. We indicate any specification changes within the document itself, change the version number and provide a summary of the changes. If you do notice a discrepancy between the specification and a resource, please [contact us](#).

You can copy and distribute this resource in your centre, in line with any specific restrictions detailed in the resource. Resources intended for teacher use should not be shared with students. Resources should not be published on social media platforms or other websites.

OCR acknowledges the use of the following content: N/A

Whether you already offer OCR qualifications, are new to OCR or are thinking about switching, you can request more information using our [Expression of Interest form](#).

Please [get in touch](#) if you want to discuss the accessibility of resources we offer to support you in delivering our qualifications.