

GCE

Religious Studies

H173/07: Developments in Hindu thought

AS Level

Mark Scheme for June 2025

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of candidates of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support, which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and students, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the report on the examination.

© OCR 2025

Indicative content – Responses might include:	Guidance
1. ‘Vaishnavism is completely different to other Hindu theistic traditions.’ Discuss. AO1 Candidates may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following ideas: • Vaishnavism is a theistic Hindu bhakti (devotion) tradition which is centred upon Vishnu as the Supreme Godhead • Vishnu is generally understood as a single omnipotent and omniscient deity, responsible for both the creation and maintenance of the universe and able to be approached as a personal deity by devotees • there are different forms of Vaishnavism, which might take different philosophical positions on the precise nature of God. Vishnu (or one of his avatars) is always central; the existence of other deities might be accepted, but only worship of Vishnu is believed to entail the possibility of liberation • Liberation is usually understood to mean eternal bliss in the heavenly realm of Vishnu • Vishnu is commonly considered both immanent and active in the world; he manifests as avatars to support and maintain dharma • Vaishnavism is a bhakti (devotion) tradition and includes practices such as puja, communal chanting or singing in praise of Vishnu; common offerings include tulsi/basil leaves, marigolds and other yellow flowers, sandalwood paste, spices such as saffron or turmeric • Vaishnava traditions are more strongly associated with the practices of varnashramadharma. Study with a guru and eventual initiation into a specific tradition of practice are highly valued.	Reference to at least one other theistic tradition is required for the response to directly address the question asked.
AO2 Candidates may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through the use of some of the following ideas: • Vaishnavism is not a single tradition, but an umbrella for different groups who share some things but not others; this could be considered as a microcosm of Hinduism as a whole • concepts such as karma, dharma and liberation are found across all traditions of Hinduism, including Vaishnavism; specific understandings of what they mean and how they relate to human life vary, suggesting the traditions are different but perhaps not entirely so • the centrality of Vishnu can be considered unusual in comparison to traditions that engage in the worship of multiple deities, such as Smartism • the existence of other theistic traditions implies at least some distinctions between the beliefs and practices of their followers who choose to identify with one group rather than another • Shaivism and Shaktism both focus on devotion to a single deity; this deity might take different forms to represent different aspects of their nature. As Vishnu also does this, the concept of divinity across the theistic traditions could be considered comparable • some Vaishnava traditions teach that liberation is only possible through bhakti (devotion) and the grace of Vishnu, while other traditions embrace a broader variety of paths to liberation.	

Indicative content – Responses might include:	Guidance
2. Evaluate the claim that self-restraint is the most important virtue for all the ashramas. AO1 Candidates may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following ideas: • self-restraint can be understood as a single virtue encompassing all forms of self-discipline and control and it can also be understood as an umbrella encompassing a range of specific forms of self-control such as celibacy and temperance • both self-restraint as a general concept, and the specific virtues which contribute to elements of it, are commonly included in lists of important Hindu virtues and emphasised in sacred texts • the four ashramas are the stages of an ideal Hindu life; each has its own dharma • restraint in relation to sexual activity, consumption of food and drink and accumulating material possessions is a significant element of the student (brahmacarya) ashrama because the individual is wholly focused on learning • while the householder (grihastha) ashrama is allowed to enjoy sensual pleasures and to pursue wealth this must be done within the bounds of dharma, in order to properly fulfil the duties of this ashrama rather than for its own sake • the forest-dweller (vanaprastha) ashrama is a transition stage between the householder who lives in the world and is an active part of society and the renunciate who leaves it entirely behind; self-restraint in regard to worldly things is developed during this stage • in the renunciate (sannyasi) ashrama the individual is meant to rid themselves of all worldly attachments, which requires self-restraint in all areas.	Answering the question requires understanding of three elements: self-restraint, virtue and the ashramas. Virtue is connected with concepts such as karma and dharma; these are not virtues in themselves. The connection between such concepts and virtue must be explicitly developed to constitute a good demonstration of knowledge and understanding.
AO2 Candidates may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through the use of some of the following ideas: • self-restraint is a broad concept rather than a single virtue, so it is likely to be important to some degree to any person striving to live a good life • detachment means the atman is able to separate itself from the material world, which enables liberation. Being restrained about material pleasures could make it easier to achieve that detachment • the ideal of a full Hindu life is one that passes through all the ashramas, fulfilling all the associated duties of each; this includes things that self-restraint could be said to encourage the avoidance of, such as sex • because self-restraint is not a single thing that must be avoided but rather an attitude towards a range of behaviours, it can be seen as relevant and important to all Hindus even though the specific forms it takes are different for different individuals • being an important virtue does not necessarily render it the single most important virtue; it might be considered impossible to separate any single virtue out in this way	

Indicative content – Responses might include:	Guidance
self-restraint can be related to so many other important virtues and the ways they are put into practice that it could be considered to encompass them all within it.	

Indicative content – Responses might include:	Guidance
3. Evaluate the claim that thinking about karma will prevent a person achieving liberation from samsara. AO1 Candidates may demonstrate knowledge and understanding through the use of some of the following ideas: - being born into samsara, in a particular human life, is the result of fruit-bearing karma built up in previous births - karma will be made throughout the current birth as well, and will need to be played out in future ones - many Hindus believe liberation can only be achieved from a human birth; one reason for this that only human beings create karma through their actions - liberation is achieved when the atman is free from karma and the different paths recognised by Hinduism are different ways to achieve this - the karma marga means the individual strives to detach themselves from the consequences of their actions; this is <i>nikam karma</i> <i>sakam karma</i> is remaining attached to the fruits of actions; it might consist of performing good actions in the hope of good rebirths.	
AO2 Candidates may demonstrate evaluation and analysis through the use of some of the following ideas: - thinking about possible consequences will ensure actions are moral or positive in nature. Although all karma binds the atman into rebirth, positive or good karma could help it be born into a life where freedom from karma is a possibility - deciding to practise <i>nikam karma</i> entails thinking about karma, at least to begin with; it has to be understood before the self can be detached from it <i>nikam karma</i> is characterised by acting <i>dharmically</i> for the sole reason that the action is <i>dharmic</i>; if this is managed then there is no need to consider consequences - surrender to a deity can lead to liberation through their divine grace; a true devotee might not think about karma at all as their focus will be on serving their deity - if devotion is the chosen path then even if the consequences of actions are considered this need not necessarily prevent liberation; even if it does create karma the deity could still liberate the atman - thinking about karma does not mean that those thoughts lead one to specific actions which will create it.	If the 'thinking about' part of the question is ignored then the statement becomes a truism, which limits the scope for relevant evaluative discussion.

Level (Mark)	<u>Levels of Response for AS Level Religious Studies: Assessment Objective 1 (AO1)</u> <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> • <i>Religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> • <i>Approaches to the study of religion and belief</i>	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)	A very good demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question : • 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)	A good demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question: • 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)	A satisfactory demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question: • 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. • 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	

Level (Mark)	<u>Levels of Response for AS Level Religious Studies: Assessment Objective 1 (AO1)</u> <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> • <i>Religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> • <i>Approaches to the study of religion and belief</i>	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.
2 (4–6)	A basic demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question: • 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)	A weak demonstration of knowledge and understanding in response to the question: • 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: • 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: <i>There is a well-developed and sustained line of reasoning which is coherent, relevant and logically structured.</i>	
4 (10–12)	A good demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: • 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: <i>There is a well-developed line of reasoning which is clear, relevant and logically structured</i>	
3 (7–9)	A satisfactory demonstration of analysis and/evaluation in response to the question: • 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: <i>There is a line of reasoning presented which is mostly relevant and which has some structure.</i>	
2 (4–6)	A basic demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: • some argument attempted, not always successful • little successful analysis and evaluation • views asserted but with little justification	

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.
	- 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: <i>There is a line of reasoning which has some relevance and which is presented with limited structure.</i>	
1 (1–3)	A weak demonstration of analysis and evaluation in response to the question: - 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: <i>The information is communicated in a basic/unstructured way.</i>	
0 (0)	No creditworthy response	

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS – FOR MARKING ON-SCREEN

June 2025

H173, H573 AS and A Level Religious Studies

PREPARATION FOR MARKING RM ASSESSOR

1. Make sure that you have accessed and completed the relevant training packages for on-screen marking: *RM Assessor Online Training: OCR Essential Guide to Marking*.
2. Make sure that you have read and understood the mark scheme and the question paper for this unit. These are available in RM Assessor
3. Log-in to RM Assessor and mark the **required number** of practice responses (“scripts”) and the **required number** of standardisation responses.

MARKING

1. Mark strictly to the mark scheme.
2. Marks awarded must relate directly to the marking criteria.
3. The schedule of dates is very important. It is essential that you meet the RM Assessor 50% and 100% (traditional 40% Batch 1 and 100% Batch 2) deadlines. If you experience problems, you must contact your Team Leader (Supervisor) without delay.
4. If you are in any doubt about applying the mark scheme, consult your Team Leader by telephone or the RM Assessor messaging system, or by email.
5. **Crossed Out Responses**
Where a candidate has crossed out a response and provided a clear alternative then the crossed out response is not marked. Where no alternative response has been provided, examiners may give candidates the benefit of the doubt and mark the crossed out response where legible.

Rubric Error Responses – Optional Questions

Where candidates have a choice of question across a whole paper or a whole section and have provided more answers than required, then all responses are marked and the highest mark allowable within the rubric is given. Enter a mark for each question answered into RM assessor, which will select the highest mark from those awarded. *(The underlying assumption is that the candidate has penalised themselves by attempting more questions than necessary in the time allowed.)*

Multiple Choice Question Responses

When a multiple choice question has only a single, correct response and a candidate provides two responses (even if one of these responses is correct), then no mark should be awarded (as it is not possible to determine which was the first response selected by the candidate).

When a question requires candidates to select more than one option/multiple options, then local marking arrangements need to ensure consistency of approach.

Contradictory Responses

When a candidate provides contradictory responses, then no mark should be awarded, even if one of the answers is correct.

Short Answer Questions (requiring only a list by way of a response, usually worth only **one mark per response**)

Where candidates are required to provide a set number of short answer responses then only the set number of responses should be marked. The response space should be marked from left to right on each line and then line by line until the required number of responses have been considered. The remaining responses should not then be marked. Examiners will have to apply judgement as to whether a 'second response' on a line is a development of the 'first response', rather than a separate, discrete response. *(The underlying assumption is that the candidate is attempting to hedge their bets and therefore getting undue benefit rather than engaging with the question and giving the most relevant/correct responses.)*

Short Answer Questions (requiring a more developed response, worth **two or more marks**)

If the candidates are required to provide a description of, say, three items or factors and four items or factors are provided, then mark on a similar basis – that is downwards (as it is unlikely in this situation that a candidate will provide more than one response in each section of the response space.)

Longer Answer Questions (requiring a developed response)

Where candidates have provided two (or more) responses to a medium or high tariff question which only required a single (developed) response and not crossed out the first response, then only the first response should be marked. Examiners will need to apply professional judgement as to whether the second (or a subsequent) response is a 'new start' or simply a poorly expressed continuation of the first response.

6. Always check the pages (and additional objects if present) at the end of the response in case any answers have been continued there. If the candidate has continued an answer there, then add the annotation 'SEEN' to confirm that the work has been seen and mark any responses using the annotations in section 11.

7. There is a NR (**No Response**) option. Award NR (No Response):
- if there is nothing written at all in the answer space
 - OR if there is a comment which does not in any way relate to the question (e.g., 'can't do', 'don't know')
 - OR if there is a mark (e.g., a dash, a question mark) which is not an attempt at the question.

Note: Award 0 marks – for an attempt that earns no credit (including copying out the question).

8. The RM Assessor **comments box** is used by your team leader to explain the marking of the practice responses. Please refer to these comments when checking your practice responses. **Do not use the comments box for any other reason.**

If you have any questions or comments for your team leader, use the phone, the RM Assessor messaging system, or e-mail.

9. *Assistant Examiners will send a brief report on the performance of candidates to their Team Leader (Supervisor) via email by the end of the marking period. The report should contain notes on particular strengths displayed as well as common errors or weaknesses. Constructive criticism of the question paper/mark scheme is also appreciated.*

10. For answers marked by levels of response:
- a. **To determine the level** – start at the highest level and work down until you reach the level that matches the answer
 - b. **To 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

11. Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Level one – to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	Level two – to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	Level three – to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	Level four – to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	Level five – to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	(H573 only) Level six - to be used at the end of each part of the response in the margin.
	Highlighting a section of the response that is irrelevant to the awarding of the mark.
	Point has been seen and noted, e.g. where part of an answer is at the end of the script.

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

H173, H573 AS and A Level Religious Studies

Introduction

Your first task as an Examiner is to become thoroughly familiar with the material on which the examination depends. You should ensure that you have copies of these materials:

- the specification, especially the assessment objectives
- the question paper and its rubrics
- the mark scheme.

Please ask for help or guidance whenever you need it. Your first point of contact is your Team Leader.

Information and instructions for examiners

The practice scripts provide you with *examples* of the standard of each band. The marks awarded for these scripts will have been agreed by the Lead Marker and Team Leaders.

The specific task-related indicative content for each question will help you to understand how the band descriptors may be applied. However, this indicative content **does not** constitute the mark scheme: it is material that candidates **might** use, grouped according to each assessment objective tested by the question. It is hoped that candidates will respond to questions in a variety of ways. Rigid demands for 'what must be a good answer' would lead to a distorted assessment. Candidates' answers must be relevant to the question. Beware of prepared answers that do not show the candidate's thought and which have not been adapted to the thrust of the question. Beware also of answers where candidates attempt to reproduce interpretations and concepts that they have been taught but have only partially understood.

Using the Mark Scheme

Please study the Mark Scheme carefully. The Mark Scheme is an integral part of the process that begins with the setting of the question paper and ends with the awarding of grades. Question papers and Mark Schemes are developed in association with each other so that issues of differentiation and positive achievement can be addressed from the very start.

This Mark Scheme is a working document; it is not exhaustive; it does not provide 'correct' answers. The Mark Scheme can only provide 'best guesses' about how the question will work out, and it is subject to revision after we have looked at a wide range of scripts.

Please read carefully all the scripts in your allocation and make every effort to look positively for achievement throughout the ability range. Always be prepared to use the full range of marks.

The Mark Scheme contains 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.

The Levels of Response must be used in conjunction with the outlined indicative content.

Assessment Objectives

Two Assessment Objectives are being assessed in all questions:

AO1 (Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief) and

AO2 (Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study).

Responses are credited for **AO1** for selection, detail and accuracy of the knowledge and understanding of religion and belief deployed.

Responses are credited for **AO2** for how well the response addresses the question, for candidates using their knowledge and understanding to draw, express and support conclusions in relation to the question posed. Candidates will be assessed on the quality of the conclusions and points they argue and the clarity and success of their argument.

Levels of Response

Questions in this paper 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 or 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.

Please note that the Assessment Objectives being assessed are listed at the top of the mark scheme. Where a candidate does not address all of the Assessment Objective strands listed, the candidate cannot achieve the top level of response.

Assessment of Extended Response

The GCE General Conditions of Recognition state that:

GCE 5.1 In designing and setting the assessments for a GCE qualification which it makes available, or proposes to make available, and awarding organization must ensure that, taken together, those assessments include questions or tasks which allow Learners to -

- a) provide extended responses

As such, the quality of extended responses are assessed in all questions. While marks are not specifically given for this, descriptors for extended responses can be found in the AO2 Levels of Response *in italics*.

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



Twitter/ocrextams



/ocrextams



/company/ocr



/ocrextams



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS & ASSESSMENT

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 2025 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](#).

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.