



GCE A LEVEL MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2024

**A LEVEL
RELIGIOUS STUDIES - COMPONENT 1
OPTION E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM**

A120UE0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme.

Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for Marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content. Examiners should not seek to mark candidates down as a result of small omissions in minor areas of an answer.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner.

When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

A Level Generic Band Descriptors

Band	<p style="text-align: center;">Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [20 marks]</p> <p><i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> – <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> – <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> – <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	<p style="text-align: center;">17-20 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Insightful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • An extensive range of views of scholars/schools of thought used accurately and effectively. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	<p style="text-align: center;">13-16 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Purposeful connections are made between the various approaches studied. • A range of scholarly views/schools of thought used largely accurately and effectively. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	<p style="text-align: center;">9-12 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Sensible connections made between the various approaches studied. • A basic range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	<p style="text-align: center;">5-8 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Makes some basic connections between the various approaches studied. • A limited range of scholarly views/schools of thought used. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	<p style="text-align: center;">1-4 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Little or no use of scholarly views/schools of thought. • Very few or no connections made between the various approaches studied. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. <p>N.B. A maximum of 2 marks should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'</p>
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions [30 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	<p style="text-align: center;">25-30 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • The views of scholars/schools of thought are used extensively, appropriately and in context. • Confident and perceptive analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
4	<p style="text-align: center;">19-24 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are used appropriately and in context. • Purposeful analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
3	<p style="text-align: center;">13-18 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Views of scholars/schools of thought are generally used appropriately and in context. • Sensible analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
2	<p style="text-align: center;">7-12 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Basic use of the views of scholars/schools of thought appropriately and in context. • Makes some analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context.
1	<p style="text-align: center;">1-6 marks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Little or no use of the views of scholars/schools of thought. • Limited analysis of the nature of connections between the various elements of the approaches studied. • Some use of basic specialist language and vocabulary.
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No relevant analysis or evaluation.

EDUQAS GCE A LEVEL – COMPONENT 1

OPTION E: A STUDY OF HINDUISM

SUMMER 2024 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) Examine the Hindu concept of ashrama.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The ashramas are the four main stages or periods of life – the student stage; the householder stage; the retired person stage and the ascetic stage.
- The ultimate purpose of observing the four ashramas is to help a person achieve moksha, liberation from reincarnation. There are specific duties associated with each ashrama.
- Those who are in the brahmacharya – the student stage – will have specific duties. Traditionally boys were expected to live away from home during this stage and study with a guru for several years to foster spiritual values. However, today only a few Brahmin families follow this tradition to the full extent. This stage begins for members of the three upper varnas after the ritual of the sacred thread when they are reborn. The duties at this stage include – studying the Vedas and other texts; living a celibate and simple life; serving the guru and collecting alms for him; learning how to set up and maintain household worship; developing appropriate qualities such as humility; understanding and performing various rituals.
- Those in the grihastha – the householder stage – will have different responsibilities and duties. This is the stage when a Hindu decides to marry and accept family responsibilities which include having children, forming a family, following a career and becoming an active member of the community. The duties at this stage include – making money / enjoying pleasure in an ethical manner; performing sacrifice / observing religious rituals; protecting and nourishing family members; teaching spiritual values; giving to charity.
- For those in the vanaprastha ashrama– the retired person stage – the duties are again seen to be different. This stage begins when a man reaches old age. When his son has a family and is ready to take over the leadership of the household, he and his wife will retire. Some choose to withdraw into a secluded area, or they may involve themselves more with bhakti of a god or goddess. Others go on pilgrimage when they may be accompanied by their wife but all sexual relations are forbidden. The duties at this stage include – devoting more time to spiritual matters; going on pilgrimage.
- The sannyasin – the ascetic stage – has its own specific duties. Traditionally it is only available to men who exhibit the qualities of a Brahmin. The sannyasin become wandering hermits, leaving their family and living a life dependant on God alone. They seek spiritual enlightenment and power. The duties at this stage include – controlling the mind and senses, fixing the mind on the Supreme; becoming detached and fearless, fully dependant on God as protector; becoming aware of the self and of God.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

1. (b) 'Hinduism is nothing more than a religion of duty.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many Hindus themselves refer to their religion not as Hinduism, but as 'sanatana dharma', 'eternal religion', and varnashramadharma, a word emphasizing the fulfilment of duties (dharma) appropriate to one's class (varna) and stage of life (ashrama). This in itself shows the importance of the concept of dharma within the religion.
- Dharma is seen in Hindu philosophy as representing order with laws to govern creation. Dharma with its religious and moral laws binds Hindus in harmony with that order. This is a very important principle in Hinduism and as such duty can be argued to be the most important part of Hinduism.
- Hindus see life as a duty and opportunity to fulfil the aim of creation and be part of God's eternal dharma.
- They believe that religious duty is the primary aim of human life and the way that a Hindu can fulfil the four aims of life – karma, artha, dharma and moksha.
- According to some Hindu sources there are four types of dharma – cosmic, social, human and self. Cosmic dharma reflects the Hindu belief that they are part of nature and try to bring themselves into harmony with the universe. Social dharma refers to duties within a family or community. Human dharma is ashrama dharma and personal dharma (svadharma) is duties within the path a person chooses through life in terms of tendencies, personality, desires and experience. This makes Hinduism very much a religion of duty overall.
- The Vedas and the Dharmashastras refer to the ten most important duties in Hinduism. These duties cover every aspect of Hindu life.
- However, although it seems that duty is the overriding factor in Hinduism and in a Hindu's life many believe that there is free will and choice within the religion.
- Whilst there is no doubt that duty is a very important concept in Hinduism, not all Hindus would agree that it is the most important concept or that it is fair to say that duty is the main characteristic of the religion. Devotion, meditation and morality, whilst encompassed within duties are in fact very important elements in themselves.
- Hindus can choose a deity as their personal or family deity and followers of bhakti would argue that it is based on loving devotion which is not a duty.
- They would also point out that the essence of bhakti where caste differences are not emphasised proves that Hindus are not bound by duty.
- Others would argue that taken as a whole Hinduism is a religion of beliefs and it is those beliefs not duty which are the basis of all Hindu actions, rituals and festivals.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2. (a) Examine Hindu beliefs about the Trimurti.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many Hindus understand the concept of Saguna Brahman through the Trimurti.
- The three gods of the Trimurti are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and are regarded as different aspects of God – Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. This can be seen in representations of the Trimurti as one God with three heads.
- They also represent earth, water and fire.
- Hindus see time as being cyclic and the Trimurti expresses this understanding.
- They also represent the three gunas, the three strands of life – Vishnu the sattva guna, Shiva the tamas guna and Brahma the rajas guna.
- Many believe they also represent various stages in a person's life. Brahma represents the student ashrama, Vishnu the householder ashrama and Shiva the retirement stage of life.
- Although they are male in nature, they are associated with shakti (female energy) since each one has a female consort.
- Brahma is the creator of the universe and is usually depicted as a man with four heads, four faces and four arms.
- Hindus believe that Brahma after the end of each universe meditates before creating the next and that the symbols he holds represent this belief.
- Vishnu is known as the preserver both in the cosmic sense of preserving the universe as it should be and in a personal sense in the preservation of dharma.
- For the followers of Vaishnavism he is the Supreme God and not just one aspect of him.
- Vishnu is frequently presented in blue to represent his all-pervading nature.
- Vishnu is worshipped in many forms including the tulsi or basil plant which many of his followers grow and use as murtis. However, he is mainly associated with his avatars.
- The third member of the Trimurti is Shiva who is the god of destruction. This must be understood in the context of Hinduism's cyclic understanding of life – in order to move through successive rebirths the atman must die and death is as important in the cycle of life as birth.
- He is the god of reproduction and is worshipped in the form of the linga, the male sexual organ.
- Shiva is the god of opposites – creator and destroyer, old and young, fierce and gentle and as Ardhanarishwara both man and woman.
- His trident represents the three aspects of the Trimurti.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

2. (b) 'The Trimurti is the most important concept in Hinduism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- It is difficult to evaluate in the context of a religion which concepts, if any, are more important than others.
- The concept of the Trimurti is a very important concept within Hinduism and is the basis for understanding many of the other concepts within the religion.
- The Trimurti expresses the concept of God in Hinduism.
- They are three different manifestations of the ultimate supreme reality of Brahman, the impersonal absolute. Many would argue that it is very difficult to form a relationship or worship an impersonal god and that the concept of the Trimurti helps to overcome these problems.
- The concept also represents the energies of creation, maintenance of harmony and order, destruction and recreation of every aspect of the material universe.
- The concept of the Trimurti also helps Hindus to understand the cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
- The specific features of each of the deities within the Trimurti also express the concept of God. This helps Hindus to understand the concept of Saguna Brahman – Brahman with qualities or attributes.
- Many also believe that the Trimurti also represent various stages in an individual's life and therefore helps to explain the ashramas.
- Many would argue that there are other concepts within Hinduism which are as if not more important. For example, some would refer to the concept of atman and the importance of its relationship with Brahman.
- Others would suggest the concepts of karma and reincarnation because of their influence on the behaviour of Hindus in the present life.
- A concept that many would consider fundamentally important in Hinduism is varnashramadharma because of its influence on all aspects of a Hindu's life.
- It is very difficult to divide a religion into neat little boxes as all concepts relate in some way to each other and therefore it is a difficult, if not impossible, task to decide if those concepts are more or less important than each other.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3. (a) Explain the importance of A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada for the development and growth of ISKCON.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many would state that without Prabhupada's influence ISKCON would not have grown or developed. He had a true desire of spreading Krishna to all over the world.
- Srila Prabhupada set out to America in 1965 and established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness at the age of sixty-nine. He travelled around the world fourteen times, established more than 100 temples of Krishna and initiated more than 10000 disciples into Krishna consciousness.
- Srila Prabhupada arrived in the US during the decade of discontent; there was widespread dissatisfaction with America's war with Vietnam. The American youth created their counter culture popularly known as hippie culture. They were trying to break away from the status quo, searching for an alternative. Srila Prabhupada presented this alternative. Srila Prabhupada brought the Hare Krishna Movement to the public eye by:
 - chanting in the parks, distributing the Back to Godhead Magazine, conducting love feasts, delivering lectures from the Bhagavad-gita and Srimad Bhagavatam in a rented store-front. Thus, he attracted many youngsters, who gradually became his disciples.
- In order to revive the Krishna conscious tradition, he envisioned God-centered self-sufficient farm communities based on the principles of 'Simple Living, High Thinking'. In 1972, he started a gurukul in Dallas, Texas – an educational institution set up in accordance with the Vedic model. He established more than 108 temples and he also instructed his disciples that no one should go hungry within a 10-mile radius of an ISKCON temple.
- Of all his contributions, many consider his books to be of utmost importance. These books present the wisdom of Vedic scriptures in English with startling simplicity and clarity that proves the relevance of the science of self-realization to the modern world. These books it is argued have changed millions of lives.
- Another important aspect of his influence was his uncompromising preaching of Vedic tradition to the entire community irrespective of caste.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

3. (b) 'ISKCON is a traditional form of Hinduism.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Candidates might begin by showing awareness of the shared roots of the two religions, looking at the origins and development of the Indus Valley civilisation. They might also choose to explore in some depth the importance and influence of the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita, for Hindus of all schools before going on to consider how and why Swami Prabhupada established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).
- The focus on bhakti yoga and the proselytising element of ISKCON might also be identified. The Vaishnavite philosophies of Chaitanya, whose focus on a pure love of Krishna as the ultimate goal lies at the heart of ISKCON, might also be brought in.
- Some candidates might take the approach of identifying core elements of the two religions – such as the beliefs held about God, scripture, karma, dharma, liberation, death and rebirth – and the ways in which they are distinct in interpretation and practice.
- The role of Krishna is also important - Hinduism on the whole, regards him as the eighth avatar of Vishnu but candidates might identify the ways in which he is more than this to followers of ISKCON, who regard him as the 'supreme personality of Godhead'.
- The views of Swami Prabhupada on the distinctions between Krishna Consciousness and Hinduism. He sometimes denied that there was such a religion as Hinduism at all, at other times he described it as a degraded form of Sanatana Dharma. However, he always distinguished it from his own movement, which he regarded as the true Sanatana Dharma.
- The shared elements which illustrate their relationship, while also being aware of differences in approach. One area of interest might be varnashramadharma and its application through the caste system in India – followers of ISKCON regard the caste system as evidence of corruption of the ideals of varnashramadharma, but of course there are Hindus who would also agree with this. They might consider examples of Hindus such as Gandhi, who rejected the caste system as a secular imposition on their religion.
- Other areas to explore might include the nature of deity, reality and the rules according to which an individual human being should live. Different emphases on liberation from rebirth might also be considered here.
- Since Hinduism incorporates many different views and schools of thought on all of these areas, they might argue that Hindus could accept ISKCON as an aspect of their own religion. By contrast ISKCON recognises only bhakti yoga
- Their critique of modern society links them to other movements within Hinduism.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. (a) Examine the origin and background of the Upanishads.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- There are two types of Hindu texts – shruti and smriti. Shruti texts are generally regarded as being the oldest and most sacred. They were handed down orally before being written and is one of the main reasons why the spoken word has always been important in Hindu practice.
- Shruti means ‘that which is heard’ referring to their status of not being human words, but the words of the gods as heard by the rishis who had direct contact with them. Therefore, Shruti literature is regarded as containing universal laws which are unchangeable and eternal. The two main parts of Shruti literature are the Vedas and Upanishads.
- The Upanishads originated during the eight to fifth centuries BCE and are seen as both a commentary upon and development of the Vedas. Their specific origin and dating are considered unknown by some schools of thought but, generally, their composition is dated to between c. 800 - c. 500 BCE for the first six (Brhadaranyaka to Kena) with later dates for the last seven (Katha to Mandukya).
- The background to the Upanishads is simply their context of asceticism. Some are attributed to a given sage while others are anonymous. As such, the Upanishads have a very special status because they explain the Vedas and in so doing reveal sacred truths in philosophical formulas. As shruti, they are not products of human intelligence, but the whisperings of God to man received by ascetics. They often went to live alone in the forests where they could develop in holiness so that they could hear the truths of the universe.
- The word Upanishad is derived from the Sanskrit ‘shad’ – ‘to sit’ and ‘upa’ – ‘near’ and refers to a student who is seeking knowledge and enlightenment sitting down with a teacher to listen to his spiritual instructions. These teachings are not accessible to all and need to be explained by gurus, sannyasins and swamis. They are regarded as being as relevant and inspiring today as they were when they were first written.
- The Upanishads. comprise the final Vedas and concern the soul (atman) and its pursuit of ultimate reality (Brahman). The teachings of the scriptures are both religion and philosophy, and constitute the underlying principles for eastern mystic religions, most notably Hinduism and Buddhism.
- The Upanishads are mystical texts describing the nature of infinite ultimate divine reality (Brahman) and its relationship to the inner self, or soul (Atman). The fundamental claim of the Upanishads is that Atman is Brahman, or in other words, that the soul is part of, or equivalent with, ultimate reality. Thus, the human soul is, at its essence, divine.
- The Upanishads also teach about the achievement of jnana. Jnana has many meanings, such as: knowledge, learning, consciousness, awareness, sacred knowledge derived from the Vedas or self-knowledge, intelligence or wisdom.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

4. (b) 'The Upanishads are still important for Hindus today.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Upanishads are the teachings of gurus and therefore give Hindus guidance about beliefs and instruction which gives them importance in any age. However, others would argue that they are not simply books of instruction, but esoteric texts and their true meaning is deliberately obscured using language that makes no sense to the casual reader. Therefore, their importance to the ordinary Hindu can be questioned.
- They are important because they teach jnana which is regarded as the highest path to liberation. However, this knowledge is experiential and is designed to be accompanied by explicit instruction from someone who already has jnana. This kind of instruction can be difficult to find and follow especially in a non-Hindu environment. Many Hindus therefore look for guidance from other sources.
- The Upanishads were written in an ascetic context which for many today is an alien way of life. This can diminish their importance to Hindus living their religion in the 21st century.
- The Upanishads can be argued deal with the most important beliefs in Hinduism and understanding these beliefs are fundamental to every Hindu. Therefore, the importance of the Upanishads cannot be questioned. The main concern of the Upanishads is the nature of Brahman and atman. They contain many wonderful images for the nature of Brahman which helps Hindus in their understanding.
- The Upanishads also explain the relationship between Brahman and atman which is important to Hindus because of its relationship to the concept of reincarnation. The Katha Upanishad explains that the achievements of this and other lives affect the destination of the atman. The Chandogya Upanishad includes the famous dialogue between the guru Uddalaka and his son Svetaketu.
- The Upanishads also contain detailed information on the kinds of practices necessary to follow and achieve the jnana path. The Upanishads also give advice and instruction on meditation.
- The Upanishads are particularly important for Hindus who follow Vedanta philosophy. It also follows that they are not as important for Hindus who follow other philosophical schools of thought.
- Other Hindus could argue that in the 21st century other texts offer more practical and relevant guidance than the Upanishads such as the epics – the Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. (a) Examine Shankara's understanding of Advaita.

[AO1 20]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Vedanta is another branch of the Darshana (Hindu schools of thought). Advaita means 'not two' – and Vedanta, 'knowledge'. Vedanta is jnana marga or jnana yoga, the pathway of knowledge. This is the oldest Darshana (Hindu school of thought). This tradition's main scholar was Adi Shankara in the 8th century. Advaita Vedanta believes that the atman and Brahman are one and the same, making it a non-dualist philosophy.
- Everything in the world is an expression of God, every living thing has Brahman residing inside them. Brahman is impersonal as you are not trying to have a relationship or connection with God like Bhakti yoga; with Advaita Vedanta, you just need to realise you are Brahman. The key argument is that Brahman is noncorporeal, having no attributes (Nirguna Brahman) and he is beyond our understanding. For an Advaita, God is present but you cannot see him.
- Shankara also known as Shankaracharya is the most renowned scholar of the Advaita Vedanta Darshana.
- According to the Advaita Vedanta Darshana, Brahman is real and anything other than Brahman is falsehood or Maya (illusion). Therefore, Shankara developed the 3 stages of reality.
- The Illusory level of Reality. This is the subjective reality, where we may dream at night or even daydream. Most people would recognise that this is not a true reality and false.
- The mundane level of reality. This reality is the more familiar reality because it is the world that we know, through empirical sense. Taste, touch, smell is not the true reality of God. God's essence is not seen but known through jnana yoga (the path of knowledge). In this reality we superimpose our beliefs of reality and God in this world. We therefore have an illusionary understanding of God, and we are ignorant (avidya) to the knowledge of God. This is where Advaita Vedanta would reject the Samkhyan Philosophy of prakriti and the 3 gunas.
- Many people refer to Brahman as this 'Ultimate Reality'. This is where we realise that Brahman is within, we are part of Brahman and the mundane reality distracts or confuses us from this. This was one of the reasons that Shankara believed that worshipping God as Saguna (physical attributes) was a lower level of understanding, because it stops you realising that Brahman is within, as you are worshipping outwardly instead of understanding the Ultimate Reality inwardly. This could be the level that was referred to in the Vedas as the 'world of the gods'. The awareness of us being part of Brahman leads us out of Samsara and to be released to moksha.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

5. (b) 'Brahman can only be fully understood as nirguna.'

Evaluate this view.

[AO2 30]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Brahman can be understood as both personal (saguna) and impersonal (nirguna) within Hinduism. There are different emphases about these two forms of Brahman. The earlier Upanishads and some schools of Philosophy emphasise the personal forms while later schools of thought emphasise the impersonal form.
- Saguna Brahman is the Brahman that can be characterised. It is manifested in the Trimurti which show the three divine energies – creative (Brahma), preserver (Vishnu) and destroyer and recreator (Shiva). They all have their origin in Brahman and Brahman as their essence.
- Brahman nirguna is Brahman beyond all attributes – invisible, ungraspable, eternal and without qualities. It is unconditioned and without origin or end. Brahman is also transcendent and beyond the created universe. It is an all pervading self-existent power.
- Many Hindus would argue that it is not possible to worship an impersonal God. This is why personal deities are much more in evidence in the popular culture of India and feature in every aspect of life in homes, offices and in street shrines and temples.
- The two major traditions of Hinduism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism are based on devotion to personal manifestations of Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva. Many people support the view that humankind needs a tangible, manifest and anthropomorphic conception of God to worship. They would argue that it is difficult, if not impossible, to worship a formless 'It' which is why manifested aspects of Brahman are so important within Hinduism.
- All meaningful human relationships are based on the personal and as such knowing God through personal deities is more possible and meaningful to many Hindus. Many popular forms of worship such as bhakti and daily puja are based on this personal relationship with specific deities.
- Many Hindus would argue that it is a common misconception that the Hindu concept of God is ultimately impersonal and that any personhood is anthropomorphic. Another misconception is that the various gods and goddesses and the stories about them are merely ways by which Hindus relate to an Impersonal Supreme. They would argue that there are many schools within Hinduism, mainly Vaishnavas but also within Shaivism and Shaktism who believe that God possesses personality.
- However, other schools of philosophy within Hinduism such as Vedanta maintain that knowing God in personal forms is a lower level of truth than knowing God in its impersonal form. This is reflected in the belief that jnana yoga is the highest form of yoga since it enables Hindus to know God in the impersonal forms. This is the ultimate goal for Hindus, self-realisation or realisation that the innermost being atman is one with Brahman. Most Hindus believe in the impersonal abstract force of Brahman symbolised by the symbol OM which is just as much in evidence as personal deities.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised