



Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM

9487/02

Paper 2 Written Paper

October/November 2023

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 60

Published

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2023 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptors for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

Generic marking grids

These level descriptors address Assessment Objectives (AOs) 1 and 2, and should be used in conjunction with the indicative content for each question in the mark scheme.

Assessment Objectives

AO1: Knowledge and understanding

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the specified topics and texts

AO2: Analysis and evaluation

Analyse and evaluate the specified topics and texts

Generic marking principles

- 1 Examiners should start at the lowest descriptor, if the answer meets all the criteria they should then move to the next level and so on. The Examiner should repeat this process until there is a match between the overall answer and the descriptor. Examiners should use a best-fit approach when deciding upon the level, it is possible for a different level to be chosen for each AO.
- 2 If the Examiner identifies all aspects of the level descriptor within the answer then the highest mark for the level should be given. Examiners should also make reference to the indicative content when deciding on the mark within a level to ensure that there is sufficient relevant content evident within the answer for the level and mark. Examiners should be prepared to credit material in answers which is not contained in the indicative content.
- 3 The Examiner may need to make a judgement within a level or between two or more level statements. Once a 'best-fit' level statement has been identified, use the following guidance to decide on a specific mark:
 - Where the candidate's work **convincingly** meets the level statement, you should award the highest mark.
 - Where the candidate's work **adequately** meets the level statement, you should award the most appropriate mark in the middle of the range.
 - Where the candidate's work **just** meets the level statement, you should award the lowest mark.

5 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 3	Explains significance of knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge.• Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response.• Addresses the question.• Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	5
Level 2	Range of knowledge partly addressing the question <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses a range of knowledge with some accuracy.• Demonstrates understanding through use of appropriate knowledge, may be less well developed.• Partially addresses the question.• Uneven engagement with the wider context, if relevant.	3–4
Level 1	Limited answer to question with limited knowledge/understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate.• Demonstrates basic understanding.• Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question.• Little reference to the wider context, if relevant.	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

10 mark questions

Level	AO1 Knowledge and understanding	Marks
Level 4	Explorative with detailed significant knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of detailed and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through well-developed connected discussion. • Addresses all aspects of the question. • Good understanding of the wider context if relevant. 	9–10
Level 3	Explains significance of knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through developed discussion. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant. 	6–8
Level 2	Range of knowledge partly addressing the question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of knowledge with some accuracy. • Demonstrates understanding through use of appropriate knowledge, may be less well developed. • Partially addresses the question. • Uneven engagement with the wider context, if relevant. 	3–5
Level 1	Limited answer to question with limited knowledge/understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies a limited range of knowledge some of which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little reference to the wider context, if relevant. 	1–2
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

15 mark questions

Level	AO2 Analysis and evaluation	Marks
Level 5	Assesses alternative conclusions with analysis of points view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyses the importance and/or strength of different points of view. Uses accurate evidence to support a coherent and well-structured discussion. Addresses all aspects of the question. Coherent conclusion which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions. 	13–15
Level 4	Coherent conclusion supported by evidenced points of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discusses different points of view in some detail. Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. Addresses most aspects of the question. Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view. 	10–12
Level 3	Clear conclusion with different points of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises different points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. Uses accurate evidence to support discussion. Partially addresses the question. Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view. 	7–9
Level 2	Attempts conclusion with a supported point of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discusses one point of view Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. Partially addresses the question in a limited way. Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view. 	4–6
Level 1	Basic conclusion with a point of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States a point of view. Little or no supporting evidence. Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. Attempts a basic conclusion. 	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>‘The primary source of Hindu literature is the four Veda Samhitas – the Rigveda Samhita, the Yajurveda Samhita, the Samaveda Samhita and the Atharvaveda Samhita. Hindus identify the Samhitas as shruti and believe that the knowledge contained in them was directly revealed to ancient seers (rishis) who then began the earthly transmission of this knowledge. This was probably an oral tradition before the revealed knowledge was recorded in written form. Three other bodies of literature can also be regarded as shruti: the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas, and the Upanishads. These collections are what is often referred to as Vedic literature.’</p> <p>Outline what the above passage says about Vedic writings.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: The passage identifies the Vedas, and more specifically the Samhitas, as the foundation of Hindu literature. These texts are described as being shruti and the term is explained as meaning they were revealed to sages. The sages shared their new knowledge orally for some time before it was captured into the texts now known as the Vedas. Other texts are also identified as being both shruti and part of the overall category of Vedic literature. They are ‘collections’ rather than single, unified texts.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Explain why smriti texts like the epics are important to contemporary Hinduism.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: Smriti is the classification for Hindu religious texts considered to be 'remembered' rather than 'heard' (shruti). The latter are directly revealed and are considered to be apauruṣeya (beyond human ability to conceive) while smriti texts can often be attributed to a human author, albeit a divinely inspired one. Traditionally the Mahabharata is attributed to Vyasa and the Ramayana to Valmiki. Both sages appear in the texts they are said to have written which could be used to emphasise their role as historical texts (itihasa) as well as religious stories.</p> <p>While smriti texts might be considered of a lower status due to their human origins they remain authoritative in that they are based on shruti texts. They expand or clarify the teachings and exploring concepts in greater depth. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata both use story-telling to demonstrate religious concepts like the operation of karma and dharma and to establish ideals for different social and personal roles. Stories are generally more accessible than philosophy and, perhaps for this reason, the epics have been more widely translated than many Vedic texts making them more influential simply because they are easier to get hold of and understand. The religious ideas within them originate in other texts but the epics illustrate how they might work in practice in human lives. The stories are also told via different mediums and so Hindus with no access to the original shruti texts, or to any textual sources at all, are still able to learn about and apply them.</p> <p>The Epics are self-contained and limited in number. Although the texts themselves are vast, their narrative form makes them easy to navigate to specific sections if desired. This same form allows them to be used to entertain as well as to educate; a useful combination for engaging people in considering material that might seem dry or irrelevant in the abstract.</p> <p>Although shruti texts, notably the Vedas, are widely considered the foundation of Hinduism much contemporary practice originates from other sources. Both murti puja and the pantheon of gods recognised by modern Hindus are more closely connected with the Puranas (the compilation of which is traditionally credited to Vyasa) than they are with the Vedas, meaning smriti texts have had a significant visible impact on the practices of contemporary Hindus. Similarly, the concepts involved in varnashramadharma, which form the backbone of most academic understandings of Hinduism outside India, were largely developed through smriti texts such as the Manusmriti.</p> <p>Traditions of oral transmission of religious insights or truths remain relevant in contemporary Hinduism. Contemporary movements within the broader Hindu tradition, such as ISKCON and the Swami Narayan movement, are founded on material which comes from texts such as the Mahabharata and the Puranas rather than directly from the Vedas.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>Assess the claim that to be Hindu means accepting the authority of the Vedas.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: As a dharmic tradition, Hinduism can be described as concerned with action and practice rather than belief or doctrine. From this perspective scriptural authority is not really a useful concept as authority is more likely to be seen in the rishis or gurus who can communicate the truths contained in the Vedas in ways that are relevant for people living within the world.</p> <p>The Vedas might well be accepted as the oldest texts within the Hindu religion, and as containing important spiritual truths, without being accepted as authoritative in the sense that one must do or think as they proscribe. Some Vedic practices remain relatively common, such as homa, and some sections of Vedic text are well known and widely used, such as the Gayatri Mantra. However, these things do not necessitate a wholesale acceptance of the whole canon of literature as having personal authority over how an individual chooses to live.</p> <p>The view that there is a single doctrinal core to Hinduism within the Vedas and that only a person who accepts them as authoritative can be considered a 'true' Hindu has its roots in Brahminical Hinduism – the same tradition that promotes varnashramadharma. As this is the form of Hinduism most commonly taught, it seems likely many people would accept the claim at face value. However, even from this perspective, much of the minutiae of rules surrounding varnashramadharma comes from texts like the Manusmriti and other dharma shastras which explain and interpret the Vedas, rather than being directly from the Vedas themselves.</p> <p>The existence of the concepts of both astika (orthodox) and nastika (heterodox) Hinduism could be said to entail a rejection of the claim as, by definition, nastika schools reject the authority of the Vedas but are still considered within the broader classifications of Hinduism. Jainism and Buddhism are both often included in lists of nastika schools of Hinduism, which raises the question of whether nastika is more accurately described as the creation of new religions than an expansion of Hindu thinking. While these Shramana (seeker or renouncer) traditions are often assumed to be non-Vedic, but the use of practices of renunciation and austerity as a path of spiritual seeking can be seen in both Vedic and non-Vedic traditions.</p> <p>More modern movements like the Brahmo and Arya Samaj can be similarly divided in their approach to the Vedas, with the Arya Samaj being founded on the principle of 'back to the Vedas' while the Brahmo Samaj built its philosophy on a range of different sources. Both certainly began as Hindu focused reform movements, but Brahmoism is now legally recognised as a religion in its own right in India.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>Other contemporary movements within the broader Hindu tradition, such as ISKCON and the Swami Narayan movement, are founded on material which comes from texts such as the Mahabharata and the Puranas rather than directly from the Vedas. However, these movements describe themselves and their teachings as Vedic, suggesting that this status remains valuable.</p> <p>Many people regard Hinduism as inherently pluralistic, with many different traditions and branches encompassing all possible beliefs about the nature of the divine and human relationships with it. However, it is equally possible to argue that the diversity is such that there is, in reality, no single religion of Hinduism at all. Neither view would really be able to support the claim that Hindu identity rests in the Vedas, although the latter view would allow for Vedic religion to be included as one of the disparate religions that can be separated out from what is commonly called Hinduism.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Summarise the main areas of concern of the Manusmriti.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The Manusmriti is primarily a book of laws and rules, setting out dharma as it applies to the four varnas and the four ashramas. The majority of the text focuses on the rules for, and virtues expected of brahmins and kshatriyas. The other varnas are mentioned more briefly. Sthri dharma (women's dharma) is also included as a separate area of concern.</p> <p>There is also material on the concept of dharma, on karma yoga and on the soul.</p> <p>The text also establishes that the source of its authority is in the Vedas and in the traditional practices of those people who have studied and know the Vedas.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>Explain why the Vedas might not be relevant to the religious practices of contemporary Hindus.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The Vedas are ancient texts, with the earliest parts of them dating from between 1700 and 1000 BCE. The forms of worship they describe and the deities to whom these are dedicated are still present in contemporary Hinduism: for example, the Gayatri Mantra is recited by many Hindus daily. However, the more recent Puranas are more clearly related to both the deities commonly worshipped today and the forms such worship takes. Bhakti as it is understood today does not really appear in the Vedas, and neither do the deities to whom such worship is offered.</p> <p>Most the ritual practice described in the Vedas is intended for priests to perform on behalf of other Hindus. The expansion of Hinduism beyond its country of origin means many Hindus live in largely non-Hindu communities and may not have access to a Vedic priest. It also means that large-scale or more elaborate rituals are more likely to be communal events. This is not the focus of the Vedas and is therefore likely to be influenced by other sources.</p> <p>While gurus, priests and scholars may be concerned with the relationship between religious texts and religious practices many practicing Hindus will be less so. The Vedas are not the most accessible of texts regardless of language and many Vedic texts still only exist in Sanskrit. Additionally, the materials necessary for Vedic ritual worship may be impossible to obtain. Hindus who are unable to read them are unlikely to worry about how relevant their contents are to day-to-day religious practice. There is a connection between religious practices set out in the Vedas and the traditional structures of the extended family, as these structures change in the contemporary world Vedic practice may seem less relevant.</p> <p>As a dharmic tradition Hinduism can be described as concerned with action and practice rather than belief or doctrine. The karma marga (path of action) and the bhakti marga (path of devotion) in particular might well be considered more to do with what an individual does in their day-to-day life than with their academic knowledge of what is written in scripture. It is also possible to regard the Vedas as and valuable without detailed knowledge of what is in them, making their relevance symbolic rather than practical.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>Assess the claim that sacred texts are important in Hinduism.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Hinduism is unusual in the range and diversity of texts that are recognised as religious in nature. These scriptures have their origins in a history of oral transmission of wisdom that remains alive today.</p> <p>The Vedas are considered foundational. They are the oldest Hindu texts and are agreed to be shruti (revealed) texts and, as such their status is high. They explain the structure and form of rituals and the roles and responsibilities of the priests who carry them out. However, the requirement for priests is to know their role and any ritual words which must be said; this is not the same as engagement with the written text. Some Vedic rituals are still commonly practiced in the contemporary world, and the sacred fire required for Vedic sacrifice is present at Hindu weddings.</p> <p>Belief in the authority of the Vedas has been suggested as a means of identifying who is ‘really’ a Hindu and who is not. Agreement with this need not entail reading the Vedas themselves, but the claim still speaks to the importance of texts. This is a contentious claim due to the existence of nastika (heterodox) schools within Hinduism, but it could be argued that, in challenging the authority of the Vedas, there is an implicit acknowledgement that they have at least historical importance in the context of Hinduism.</p> <p>In Western (post-Enlightenment) thinking philosophy, epistemology and metaphysics are generally separated out from religion and theology and regarded as separate concerns. But Hindu sages made no such distinctions and consequently, Hindu texts are far broader in scope than the rules, laws, history, and mythology which many modern people might expect them to include. This might impact on their perceived relevance for contemporary Hindus, either because they remain valuable sources for the study of medicine, astronomy, mathematics etc. or because the practical advice they offer has been superseded by modern discoveries. Different darshanas (philosophical schools) draw on different, although often overlapping, collections of texts as the basis for their philosophies and text is thus clearly woven into Hindu philosophy. How far these philosophical darshanas relate to the religious practices and beliefs of the majority of the world’s Hindus remains debatable.</p> <p>There are collections of texts given primary importance by the theistic traditions in the sense that some texts are more focused on their supreme deity than others. Within bhakti traditions, studying these texts may well be seen as of limited importance but the provision of religious texts in vernacular language has been seen as an important part of the work of sages like Tulsidas and Surdas, implying at least some significance in access to the written word.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>Given the traditional system of varna and ashrama this concern with accessibility might be as much to do with issues of equality and discrimination as it is with any spiritual significance to the texts themselves. The ashrama system emphasises, at least for brahmins and kshatriyas, study with a guru who is regarded as the expert and transmitter of the essential sacred knowledge of the texts. Learning from them includes insights from the gurus own spiritual experiences but it also involves the direct study and interpretation of texts, in particular the Vedas.</p> <p>However, religion can also be engaged with less cerebrally and an individual religious practice need not rely on or originate in texts, even if textual support for it exists.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	<p>‘In Vedantic philosophy the entire material world is considered an illusion; true reality is “not this, not this” – we are not our roles in society or family, our jobs, our accomplishments, our bodies, our egos, our minds. We are our essential highest selves, that which defies definition, that which exists beyond material, individual reality.’</p> <p>Summarise what the above passage says about the concept of neti-neti.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>‘Neti-Neti’ literally means ‘not this, not this’ and it is a means of understanding how maya deludes us about the true nature of reality.</p> <p>The true nature of a person is not found in social or family roles, accomplishments, our physical bodies or even our mental activities but outside of the material world altogether. It is not individual, and it cannot be defined in ways other than by saying what it is not.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	<p>Explain the differences between the concepts of saguna and nirguna Brahman.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: Saguna Brahman is Brahman with qualities or attributes. It generally refers to personal forms of deity, immanent within the universe and possessing attributes such as omniscience. Bhakti worship is focused on saguna forms of Brahman, manifest within the world. The different theistic traditions each regard a different named deity as the supreme godhead, but all these deities can be understood as manifestations of saguna Brahman. The iconography of different murtis represents the attributes which saguna Brahman has in that particular manifestation.</p> <p>Nirguna Brahman is Brahman without qualities or attributes, an impersonal and transcendent absolute, beyond time and space. Realisation of nirguna Brahman is the aim of the jnana marga. Advaita teaches that atman and Brahman are not different, and it is failure to realise this which traps the atman within samsara.</p> <p>Another view is that Brahman is present within all living things; whether the atman and Brahman both being seen as having ultimate reality constitutes a rejection of nirguna Brahman is debatable. Both concepts of Brahman agree that Brahman is the source of all things and, albeit in different ways, the means of liberation. It is also true that the concepts are not wholly distinct, in that accepting one means a total rejection of the other – for many Hindus the two concepts work together to describe the Absolute. Saguna Brahman may be viewed as a more accessible way for the limited human brain to approach the absolute. It is possible for a devotee to have a personal relationship with a deity that has qualities whereas this kind of relationship would not be possible with nirguna Brahman.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	<p>‘It is not possible to worship nirguna Brahman.’ Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Worship refers to religious practises intended to show reverence or adoration to a deity. By implication that would be a personal form of deity, enabling a two-way relationship between the devotee and the object of their devotion. The most common form of worship in contemporary Hinduism is murti puja, where the deity is physically present in the form of a murti and darshan can be exchanged between human and god.</p> <p>However, other forms of worship such as homa (offering ghee to sacred fire) or yajna (sacrifice) also presume a deity capable of recognising and receiving such offerings. Nirguna Brahman, impersonal and transcendent, seems unlikely to recognise such practises or the individual people carrying them out.</p> <p>It could be argued then that the bhakti marga is based on a concept of saguna Brahman, but this might be complicated by the idea of devotion to saguna Brahman, and the resulting relationship, as being a first step towards the deeper understanding of nirguna Brahman. If nirguna and saguna Brahman are different conceptual approaches to the same overarching reality then any engagement with one concept entails, on some level, the other.</p> <p>The jnana marga is a path usually focused on nirguna Brahman, although this focus would not generally be described as devotional. The aim of jnana is to realise the true nature of reality and thereby achieve liberation. The nature of the relationship between atman and Brahman is crucial to this, and also contributes to the question of worship. If the realisation is that atman is not different from Brahman, worship becomes a meaningless concept as there is no ‘I’ to offer anything to Brahman.</p> <p>However, if atman has an ultimate reality dependent upon Brahman, then understanding this might lead to a greater need to worship; as Ramanuja argues, understanding the nature of Brahman is a requirement for effective devotion rather than the other way around.</p> <p>It is also possible to argue that worship does not necessarily entail a reciprocal or relational aspect. Offerings could be made to nirguna Brahman for the benefit that brings to the devotee – comfort, engagement in community, paying a debt (rina) – rather than in the expectation of it being specifically noticed and accepted by the Absolute. In addition, a focus on and commitment to living a dharmic life might be seen as being, in essence, and act of worship as the individual strives to realise the Divine.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	<p>Outline what is meant by ‘theistic traditions’ in Hinduism.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>The theistic traditions are the devotional (bhakti) branches or schools of Hinduism rather than the philosophical darshanas. The main traditions are Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism.</p> <p>Theistic traditions have a central deity (or group of deities in Smartism) who is considered the Supreme, although the nature of this Supreme deity – whether they are immanent, transcendent or both for example – may vary. This deity is commonly known as Ishvara or Bhagavan and personal devotion to a named deity is a central aspect of these traditions.</p> <p>Theistic traditions are broad groups, no more universal or monolithic than Hinduism as a whole. The categorisation is likely to be of more interest to scholars than to most Hindus.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	<p>Contrast the main practices of Vaishnavism and Shaivism.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: Both are bhakti traditions, but this can take many forms from public service dedicated to the deity, to total renunciation of the material world in order to be closer to them. Different forms of bhakti are more strongly associated with specific theistic traditions: an ascetic, monastic or renunciate life is regarded as the best form of life in Shaivite teachings. For example, Aghori sadhus, who live on cremation grounds, cover their bodies in ash and engage in a range of ascetic practices are Shaivites. By contrast Vaishnavas consider that lifestyle to be only one among many which are meritorious.</p> <p>Bhakti is most commonly associated with murti puja and both Vaishnavas and Shaivites might engage in this practice, with different offerings being considered most appropriate for each deity, such as marigolds for Vishnu and lotus flowers for Shiva. The tilak (or pundra) mark drawn on the worshipper's forehead differs for each tradition, with Vaishnavas having a U or V shaped mark and Shaivites three distinct lines.</p> <p>Vishnu might be worshipped in the person of one of his avatars or as Vishnu himself. Shiva might be represented as Nataraja (Lord of the Dance) or as the Ardhanari (half Shiva, half Parvati) which illustrates some of the ambiguities of Shiva's nature. The Shiva Linga is also a common focus of worship for Shaivites, rather than an anthropomorphic image. The Shaligram (an ammonite fossil) is used in a similar way by some Vaishnavas.</p> <p>Natural objects might be used as offerings in both traditions, but different objects are associated with different deities. Leaves of the bael tree are commonly offered to Shiva, and Rudraksha beads (made from dried seeds) are worn to invoke his protection. The tulsi plant is associated with Vishnu and caring for one is believed to confer merit on the devotee, even if no worship is intended.</p> <p>Shaivism is strongly associated with physical yoga practices and hatha yoga, which can result in jivan mukti (liberation while alive) while other theistic traditions like Vaishnavism are more focused on videha mukti (liberation after death). Meditation is a practice Shiva himself is said to engage in and so it is important to his devotees. The practices associated with varnashramadharma have a stronger traditional connection to Vaishnavism than to Shaivism.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>‘Shakti is a part of all Hindu theistic traditions.’ Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation.</p> <p>Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following: Shaktism is a theistic tradition in itself; it is the branch of Hinduism that worships Devi (the Goddess) as the supreme creative power. This is a feminine concept of the Absolute, unlike other theistic traditions, which have a masculine deity or deities as their focus and also distinct from approaches that consider gender to be irrelevant as Brahman is nirguna (without attributes). However, the concept of shakti extends beyond this discrete tradition.</p> <p>Devi is dynamic and active, and manifests in the material world. Shakti Pitha are shrines or temples within the Shakti tradition, many of which are associated with the presence of Devi's body (or parts of it) in that place. They are also sites of pilgrimage for many Hindus, whether Shaktas or not. The story of Shiva's grief for Sati is widely associated with the sites of the Shakti Pitha, making them important sites for Shaivites as well.</p> <p>The name Shakti means energy or power, and this can be understood as manifest in any female form of deity making a clear potential connection with other theistic traditions. In many forms of Hinduism goddesses are the consorts of masculine deities and may be understood as the representation of their immanent power. The masculine is understood to be conscious but passive, with the active feminine being unconscious.</p> <p>However, a distinction can be drawn between recognising feminine aspects of divinity and worshipping a personified form of Shakti as a Goddess. It could therefore be argued that Hinduism broadly recognises shakti as a concept, but Shakti is a less universal presence. Even where goddesses form part of worship within a tradition the association with power is not universal. Some forms of Vaishnavism explicitly reject the idea that Vishnu's consort Lakshmi has any power other than to mediate between the devotee and Vishnu.</p> <p>Shaktism differs from other theistic traditions in the view that the passive, conscious masculine principle is encompassed by Devi, it rejects the dualism of masculine-feminine or transcendent-immanent in favour of a holistic view of the cosmos itself as a divine, unified whole. However, the existence of ardhnanari (half female) murti of Shiva and, less commonly, of Vishnu suggests that this view can also be found within other theistic traditions. These images display an inextricable union of shiva and shakti – meaning intertwined masculine and feminine energies rather than personifications of divinity. This could be understood as the belief that, at the level of ultimate reality, Shiva is Shakti regardless of the anthropomorphic form ascribed to them. This would be so regardless of which named deity is worshipped as Supreme.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	Shaktism is often strongly associated with tantra, a system of non-Vedic rituals, practices, and philosophies. Tantric texts are found within all theistic traditions and the term can cover a wide range of practices and beliefs. It does not therefore have to include Shakti. However, it is generally concerned with energy and its manipulation; and since it is shakti which shapes everything that exists, most tantric practices involve worshipping the Goddess in some form.	