

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM**9487/02**

Paper 2 Development of Hinduism

May/June 2025**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 May/June 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **24** printed pages.

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 descriptions 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.

Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

| Annotation | Meaning |
|-------------------|--|
| N/A | Highlighting areas of text |
| N/A | Allows comments to be entered in speech bubbles on the candidate response. |
| N/A | Allows comments to be entered at the bottom of the RM marking window and then displayed when the associated question item is navigated to. |
| L1 | Level one |
| L2 | Level two |
| L3 | Level three |
| L4 | Level four |
| L5 | Level five |
| SEEN | Indicates that the point has been noted, but no credit has been given. |
| EVAL | Evaluation |

Generic Levels of response descriptions

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 teachings, beliefs and practices, including relevance for individual Hindus and communities.

AO2: Analysis and evaluation

Analyse, evaluate and discuss evidence, points of view and issues in Hinduism.

Generic marking principles

- (a) Examiners should use the performance summary statements at the top of the descriptors to help to identify a level which matches the candidate's response. However, the final decision on the band and the mark within the band should be made on the basis of **all** the descriptors in the level and not primarily using the performance summary statement.
- (b) Examiners should start at the lowest level, 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 level 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.
- (c) 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.
- (d) 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 | Accurate knowledge with good understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant. | 5 |
| Level 2 | Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Addresses some aspects of the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant. | 3–4 |
| Level 1 | Basic knowledge and basic understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little or no 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 | Accurate knowledge with good understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of detailed, accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a well-developed response. • Fully addresses the question. • Good understanding of the wider context, if relevant. | 9–10 |
| Level 3 | Mostly accurate knowledge with some understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of mostly accurate and relevant knowledge. • Demonstrates understanding through a developed response. • Addresses most aspects of the question. • Some engagement with the wider context, if relevant. | 6–8 |
| Level 2 | Partially accurate knowledge with limited understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses a range of knowledge which may be partially accurate. • Demonstrates limited understanding through a partially developed response. • Addresses some aspects of the question. • Attempts to engage with the wider context, if relevant. | 3–5 |
| Level 1 | Basic knowledge and basic understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies a limited range of knowledge which may not be accurate. • Demonstrates basic understanding through a limited response. • Response is relevant to the topic, but does not directly address the question. • Little or no 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 | Thorough discussion supported with evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyses the importance and/or strength of different arguments/points of view. Uses accurate evidence to support a well-structured discussion. Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view and assesses alternative conclusions. | 13–15 |
| Level 4 | Coherent discussion supported with evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discusses different arguments/points of view in some detail. Uses accurate evidence to support a structured discussion. Coherent conclusion to the question which evaluates knowledge and points of view. | 10–12 |
| Level 3 | Clear discussion with some support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises different arguments/points of view and discusses at least one in some detail. Uses some evidence to support discussion. Clear conclusion to the question which is linked to a range of knowledge and points of view. | 7–9 |
| Level 2 | Attempts a discussion with limited support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlines one or more argument/point of view. Uses supporting evidence for one or more relevant point. The support may not be wholly relevant or accurate. Attempts a conclusion to the question which is linked to knowledge and/or a point of view. | 4–6 |
| Level 1 | Basic response with a point of view <ul style="list-style-type: none"> States a point of view. Little or no supporting evidence. May attempt a basic conclusion, which may not directly address the question. | 1–3 |
| Level 0 | No relevant material to credit. | 0 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---------------|--|-----------|
| EITHER | | |
| 1(a) | <p>Summarise the difference between the concerns of the Samhitas and the concerns of the Aranyakas.</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 Samhitas are the oldest parts of the Vedas. They contain mantras some of which consist of sounds with no linguistic meaning- prayers and hymn for recitation during rituals. The Aranyakas or Forest/Wilderness books are sometimes conflated with the Brahmanas, unlike the Samhitas which are more clearly distinct. The Aranyakas primarily explain ritual practices although they also include philosophical reflections. Some people suggest that the rituals addressed in the Aranyakas are those which needed to be conducted away from the places where people lived, unlike the Samhitas which collect all kinds of mantras together.</p> | 5 |
| 1(b) | <p>Explain how the different Vedic writings are related to one another.</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 is the name given to a collection of texts that are considered shruti (heard) by most Hindus, this means that they are believed to be divinely inspired. There are four Vedas: The Rig Veda (praise knowledge) is the oldest, concerned primarily with hymns of praise. The Sama Veda (song knowledge) contains chants and songs, largely taken from the Rig Veda. The Yajur Veda (worship knowledge) focusses on liturgy and ritual and contains mantras and instructions for the priests performing the required sacrifices (srauta). The Atharva Veda (Artharvans knowledge), which is arguably a much younger text, is concerned with magic and medicine.</p> <p>Vedic writings is not only a collective term for the four Vedas but also reflects the fact that each of the four Vedas actually consists of several different types of text: Samhitas (hymns), the Brahmanas (rituals), the Aranyakas (theologies) and the Upanishads (philosophies).</p> <p>The name Samhitas (collection) can refer to any ordered collection of shorter texts. In the context of Vedic writing it is used to describe the earliest parts of the Vedas which include mantras, prayers and other sacred sounds with no literal, linguistic meaning. These are the heart of the Veda and in some contexts the term Veda might only be intended to refer to these. Mantras are spiritually powerful sounds, and, in the context of Vedic worship, each sound corresponds with a ritual act. These actions are described in the Brahmanas and Aranyakas.</p> | 10 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-------|
| 1(b) | <p>The distinction between Brahmanas and Aranyakas is not always clear. Both provide commentary upon and explanation of ritual practices, important for understanding the purpose of the ritual and the nature of the world they are to be performed in. In broad terms the Aranyakas are more concerned with action (karmakanda) and the practicalities of ritual while the Brahmanas offer explanation and interpretation, including commentary on mantras and hymns.</p> <p>The final section, the Upanishads consists of philosophical writings on the central concepts and ideas of Hinduism – such as Brahman, atman and moksha. They are usually classified as the section of the Vedas most concerned with knowledge (jnankanda), developing metaphysical and philosophical understandings.</p> <p>The different Vedic writings can be understood as layers of explanation; the Samhitas might be the most significant part of the texts, because of the powerful nature of mantras and also because they are the original appearance of the ideas which reach their full development in the Upanishads; but the mantras cannot perform their ritual function without understanding the necessary actions, which requires the Brahmanas and Aranyakas, while the Upanishads offer deeper insight into the nature of the reality that underlies these rituals.</p> <p>Although they develop ideas identified in the Samhitas, the philosophy of the Upanishads is considered by many to be the process through which Hinduism moved away from the Vedic rituals and towards its contemporary forms of practice. The relationship between the different writings could therefore also be described as an historical progression, demonstrating the development of religious ideas over time.</p> | |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1(c) | <p>Assess the claim that Hinduism as it is practiced today is <u>not</u> Vedic 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>Most authorities agree that the Vedas are foundational to Hinduism, establishing a cosmology and identifying important concepts for living well and righteously. Hindu philosophical schools are categorised according to whether they accept (astika) or reject (nastika) the authority of the Vedas; this suggests the texts are significant, but it also demonstrates the existence of forms of Hinduism that are not Vedic. The complex and diverse structure and nature of the texts makes it difficult to justify general claims about what is and is not in the Vedas as a whole. The earliest Vedic texts give instructions for rituals that are no longer performed, require fundamental ingredients which cannot now be identified, and name deities who are no longer widely worshipped. This certainly suggests substantial change since the texts were written. However, the Vedic texts themselves can be said to show the process of this change, with the development of various key Hindu concepts from their first mentions in the Samhitas and Aranyakas to the detailed philosophical ideas in the Upanishads. It is also possible to link rituals such as homa, which are practised today, to the Vedas.</p> <p>The Upanishads were written over a long period of time and therefore the nature and approach of the individual Upanishads are not uniform and do not set out a single philosophical system. This is in keeping with the great diversity of Hinduism today, a diversity that many Hindus value greatly. Different traditions have been able to use different Upanishads to develop their practices and explain their beliefs, while still being able to link these back to the Vedas if that is felt to be important. It is therefore possible to justify a claim of being essentially Vedic in nature while, at the same time, engaging in practices that are not explicitly described in the earlier Vedas.</p> <p>The Upanishads consist of philosophical reflections on concepts mentioned in the earliest Vedic texts concepts such as Brahman, atman and moksha and these concepts are central to contemporary Hinduism. The later Upanishads take a broadly negative view of external ritual, focussing instead on internal reflection on the relation of the atman to Brahman or the nature of the self. This is the philosophical perspective that gives a foundation to the different schools of Vedanta, and these are arguably the most influential Hindu darshanas today. Other influential texts are also often related to the Vedas as a means of arguing for their primacy or importance. For example, the Mahabharata describes itself as the fifth Veda, suggesting any practice or concept it contains is Vedic in nature. The Bhagavad Gita is sometimes described as a synthesis or summary for the Vedas as well as being categorised as shruti in its own right; it endorses the idea of multiple possible paths to liberation, in particular bhakti, which is commonly connected to murti puja and other, arguably non-Vedic, practices.</p> | 15 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-------|
| 1(c) | <p>It is difficult to justify broad claims in a situation where categories do not admit of unambiguous definition. The nature of the Vedas themselves poses a challenge to clear identification of what is and is not Vedic; much of the earliest Vedic writings are indirect or unclear and therefore subject to interpretation. There are undoubtedly elements of contemporary Hindu practice which do not directly or unambiguously appear in the corpus of Vedic writings, although this is often a question of interpretation; there have been Hindu social reformers with the view that a return to the Vedas would remove social problems such as caste discrimination.</p> <p>To claim that contemporary Hinduism no longer has strong connections with the Vedas would probably be controversial, even for Hindus who have never read any part of the Vedas themselves. Further, the diversity of Hinduism is such that while it might sometimes be possible to identify a particular tradition or practice as having no link to the Vedas at all this claim could not really be extended beyond that tradition.</p> | |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|-----------|---|----------|
| OR | | |
| 2(a) | <p>‘The ancient Sanskrit epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are part of a canon of Hindu scripture known as itihasa, which means this is how it was. These are accounts of events which some consider mythological but which are nevertheless considered important in the development of Hinduism, usually as narrated by someone who was present during those events. The authors of both the Mahabharata (the sage Vyasa) and the Ramayana (the sage Valmiki) appear as characters in the stories attributed to them. The texts are also known as Mahakavya (Great Compositions) because of their poetic form and narrative structure.’</p> <p>Summarise what the above passage says about the nature and significance of the epics.</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 epics are part of a broader category of Hindu literature relating to important events, which might be historical or mythological in nature, but which are part of the development of the religion of Hinduism. The accounts are presented by someone who was an eye-witness to the events, Valmiki for the Ramayana and Vyasa for the Mahabharata, which contributes to the idea that they are historical events.</p> <p>The stories are written as epic poems and so are also known as Great Compositions, suggesting a literary as well as a spiritual importance.</p> | 5 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 2(b) | <p>Explain how the Bhagavad Gita might be used by Hindus in their daily lives.</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 Bhagavad Gita is probably the best-known Hindu scripture and it is widely read by Hindus following many different paths and traditions. In its 700 verses it explores the nature of the divine, the self and reality, as well as karma, dharma and the different ways in which moksha might be achieved. The Gita is sometimes described as offering a synthesis of the great diversity that Hinduism encompasses, emphasising that there is not one correct way to live.</p> <p>The story of the Bhagavad Gita takes place on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where two sides of a family, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, are preparing for battle. The text itself is positioned around a conversation between two characters: Krishna and Arjuna. While their conversation centres around Arjuna's reluctance to fight, the text is beloved of Hindus from all walks of life. The battlefield context is understood by many to be metaphorical, a way to symbolise how the human mind can be when people face challenges, encounter self-doubt or question how to live a life of truth and purpose. Regular reading of the Gita might therefore be a form of meditation for individual Hindus wishing to reflect on such questions. MK Gandhi used it in this way, considering it a guide in dark times. He said that it contained the quintessence of all the shastras and the Upanishads which implies that it should be of practical use in answering any questions a Hindu might have about living a dharmic life. It might also be noted that as the 'Song of the Lord' the verses can be sung or chanted as an act of devotion to Krishna.</p> <p>In more general terms the Bhagavad Gita, like many other religious texts, might be read as a means of feeling closer to the deity at its centre. For many Hindus the text is shruti, the words of Krishna, and so reading it would be engaging directly with a divinely revealed message. Its accessibility, short length, many available translations, and status as a summary of the Vedas means that Hindus might also use it to teach others, including non-Hindus, about key elements of their religion. Swami Prabhupadha's translation of the Gita is sometimes given away by members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness for the purposes of proselytising their form of Hinduism. The short length of the text means that it also exists in 'pocket-sized' forms, meaning a Hindu can always have it with them as a source of comfort or guidance; reading the words of Krishna might create a sense of personal connection to him.</p> | 10 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-------|
| 2(c) | <p>‘The Ramayana is the only guide to dharma that a Hindu needs.’ 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>The Ramayana is the story of Rama, initially a prince and later the king of Ayodhya. He is exiled to the forest by his father as a result of his stepmother plotting against him and his wife, Sita and brother, Laskshmana, go with him. The main story centres around the abduction of Sita by the demon Ravana and her eventual rescue by Rama and his companions, who include Hanuman and an army of monkeys. Sita is required to prove her chastity after her rescue, which she does by walking unharmed through fire. All of the events could be seen to contain messages about individual dharma in specific situations but, the polysemic nature of the term ‘dharma’ could be used to argue that more than specific, human-centred examples are needed to truly grasp the concept.</p> <p>Since they are commonly read for entertainment and, in the contemporary world, remade in different media for the same purpose, stories are a useful way to communicate. They have the advantage that they can teach, or preach, without explicitly doing any such thing, using the examples set by the characters to communicate lessons, values and principles in an almost surreptitious way. The hero of the Ramayana, Rama, is understood by most Hindus to be the embodiment of dharma; he is the ideal son, brother, husband and king and as such is considered a perfect example. Sita is similarly considered exemplary, displaying all the traditional virtues of a good Hindu wife. Since the examples are contained in an enjoyable and entertaining narrative they are perhaps easier to engage with than other sources and they communicate widely agreed upon understandings of important principles. Whether there is a need to engage more deeply with the philosophy that underlies those principles or informs the example of the characters is likely to vary with the individual reading the text; some people are inspired or encouraged to explore things from different perspectives by such reading while others do not feel such a need.</p> <p>The Ramayana is not a story about ordinary people, but one about avatars and people with important responsibilities and roles in society. It is also set in a world and social structure that is very different to most in the contemporary world. These things might be used to argue against the Ramayana being a sufficient source of information about how to live a good Hindu life. Most Hindus are unlikely to find themselves in comparable situations, and some of the events such as the questioning of Sita’s purity are potentially problematic for people in the 21st century to accept as exemplary.</p> <p>However, the story is also one of family relationships, between spouses, siblings and parents. Through the things faced by these characters relevant moral values can be demonstrated and might well be engaged with more fully than learning about such principles in a more abstract context that doesn’t relate to real experience.</p> | 15 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-------|
| 2(c) | There are many texts other than the Ramayana, although many of them address the same issues and support the same values. But Hindus might also prefer to learn about dharma from a human source, such as a guru than from textual study. It might be argued that being in the Kali Yuga makes it necessary to use different guides; the Upanishads give a more philosophical or metaphysical exploration of what dharma is while the epics could be seen as more personal. | |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---------------|--|----------|
| EITHER | | |
| 3(a) | <p>‘Among Smartas there is the concept of ista-devata, that is of the particular form of God which one chooses as the focus of their worship and meditation. To reach the One Supreme each person must choose some manifestations, which is their ista-devata; but someone else may choose another manifestation and a different form of worship. As each progresses in their devotion and concentration they are led on to the One where the differences disappear. Thus, a true Shiva-bhakta has no quarrel with a true Vishnu-bhakta. They know that all ways to the One are equally valid and true.’</p> <p>Summarise what the above passage says about Smarta views on the diversity of Hindu traditions.</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>For Smartas ista-devata describes a person’s individual choice as to the form of the divine they wish to worship. Both the form of the deity and the practices used to worship will be different for everyone but their devotion will result in them reaching the same ultimate goal, where the apparent differences disappear. This means that a true devotee of any particular deity, knowing all paths to this end are equally valid, should be easily able to accept that other people are devoted to a different deity.</p> | 5 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 3(b) | <p>Explain why a Hindu might choose to practise Shaktism.</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>Shaktism 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. It is also distinct from approaches that consider gender to be irrelevant as Brahman is nirguna (without attributes). For some Hindus approaching the divine as feminine is a powerful concept; Ramakrishna worshipped God as the Mother, associating this concept with both ferocity and nurture. For Hindus who see the world as the creation or manifestation of the divine Shaktism and worship of Devi might feel like the most appropriate way to approach divinity.</p> <p>Devi is dynamic and active, and manifests in the material world; 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. However, the role of consort can be seen as lesser or subservient, perhaps especially to modern eyes, leading to a desire to worship these deities in their own right.</p> <p>When shakti is understood as the power of a masculine deity it is unconscious or unaware but the Goddess in Shaktism is both active and conscious.</p> <p>Shaktism rejects the dualism of a masculine-feminine or transcendent-immanent division in favour of a holistic view of the cosmos itself as a divine, unified whole, encompassed by Devi. Shaktism might therefore appeal to Hindus who wish to reject dualist ideas about ultimate reality.</p> <p>Shaktism is often strongly associated with tantra, a system of non-Vedic rituals, practices and philosophies. Tantra, in all its forms, is concerned with energy and its manipulation; since it is shakti which shapes everything that exists, most tantric practices involve worshipping the Goddess in some form. While shaktas engage in many religious practices common to other theistic traditions there is also a tradition of blood sacrifices in Goddess worship while other traditions are more likely to regard blood as a polluting substance. Shaktism could be said to combine both orthodox and heterodox aspects of Hinduism within one tradition, and this might contribute to its appeal for some Hindus.</p> | 10 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 3(b) | Of course which religious group a person associates themselves with is not always a matter of considered choice; family tradition, local context, including proximity to sacred sites or Shakti Temples and personal experiences can all lead a person to a particular form of religious practice. Women in the contemporary world might feel drawn to feminine understandings of the divine as a response to patriarchal social values and some people simply feel a strong emotional connection or draw to a particular form of deity, for example Ramakrishna's devotion to Kali. | 10 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 3(c) | <p>Evaluate the claim that differences between theistic traditions are <u>not</u> important in contemporary 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>The idea of a religion is often presented as a unified set of beliefs and practices, which everyone who associates themselves with that religion accepts, but the reality is rarely so simple. Even religions that teach that there is only a single correct path to salvation encompass different branches with different views on what that path is and how to follow it.</p> <p>Most forms of Hinduism do not make such absolute claims to truth but instead they tend to embrace ideas of different paths having equal validity or all leading to the same ultimate truth. This would argue against the idea that the differences between traditions matter on the largest possible scale: they won't result in some people achieving liberation while others do not. They may matter a great deal on a more personal scale however, with people being deeply devoted to their deity or their form of practice.</p> <p>The theistic traditions within Hinduism all share the idea of a personal form of deity as the supreme godhead. It can be argued that they personify Brahman in this form, regardless of whether the named deity is Shiva, Vishnu, Shakti/Devi or any other. By doing so they arguably make the inconceivable nature of the Ultimate accessible to ordinary people through a personal relationship with their ishvara. The nature of such a relationship, individual by definition, might lead to the differences being given greater significance by a devotee than by a scholar or someone practising another form of Hinduism. A person might feel a far stronger connection to the divine presented one way than another, and since their liberation depends on their receiving that deity's grace (anugraha) through their total devotion, that felt connection is likely to seem more significant than abstract arguments about what the divine is really like.</p> <p>However distinct the different schools of Hinduism may appear to be they do share at least some characteristics. Concepts such as karma and dharma are shared across both astika and nastika schools of Hinduism, although the precise philosophy built around them may vary. With regard to the theistic traditions the similarities are often clearer than the differences. Although they are broadly divided by which deity is considered to be the supreme many devotional practices are similar, and many Hindus recognise and worship more than one deity.</p> | 15 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-------|
| 3(c) | <p>For most Hindus adherence to one tradition does not amount to an outright rejection of the validity of others, nor is the reality of deities other than the central one generally a matter of dispute. Many Hindus might appear to an outsider to follow more than one tradition, worshipping both Shiva and Vishnu for example, while self-identifying as Shaivite. Shakti, in the sense of the Divine Feminine, is also an aspect of all traditions in some measure since each male deity has a female consort. It could therefore be argued that the traditions differ only in the broadest terms, or in the idealised description of them, while the reality blurs the boundaries between them. It is also important to note that many Hindus practise their religion without connecting themselves explicitly to any named tradition, supporting the view that the differences are not particularly important and might even be considered an attempt to impose a framework which is fundamentally inappropriate.</p> | |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|-----------|---|----------|
| OR | | |
| 4(a) | <p>Outline what the concept of ishvara tells Hindus about the nature of Brahman.</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 word ishvara has various translations, depending on the context it is used it, but it is commonly translated as Lord and used to denote the concept of a personal deity. This is related to the concept of saguna Brahman, that is Brahman with attributes or qualities. These might include physical form and/or immanence in the material world and these are the aspects represented in a murti, which provide a visual resource for learning about divine attributes.</p> <p>Murti puja is often an act of devotion to a personal ishvara, and this enables human beings to relate to the divine in ways that would not otherwise be possible. Ishvara might also be used within some Hindu traditions, such as Brahmoism, to identify Brahman as God in the monotheistic sense.</p> | 5 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 4(b) | <p>Explain why it might be important for Hindus to understand the relationship between Brahman and the atman.</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>Atman, or the self, is generally understood as the essential or real element of a person. It is real in the ultimate sense, unchanging and eternal and so distinct from the impermanent and mutable material world. It is what is reborn into samsara, entangled with maya, and it is what will be freed from that cycle if moksha is attained. Around this general understanding are different ways of explaining how this eternal, unchanging entity is related to the eternal, unchanging Brahman. Different understandings of this relationship are found in different schools of thought and these schools might endorse different paths to liberation.</p> <p>For example, one school of thought holds the view that atman and Brahman are identical. Believing them to be distinct is a result of the atman's confusion and entanglement with maya, which leads to the identification of the self with what is unreal rather than what is real. Liberation therefore consists of realising that error.</p> <p>By contrast dualist philosophies argue that Brahman and atman are wholly distinct, with atman being created by Brahman to be real but also to be eternally separate from Brahman. Based on this view liberation is dependent on God's grace and should therefore be sought via the bhakti marga rather than the jnana marga which is required by a monist understanding of the relationship.</p> <p>In between monism and dualism is another view, which sees atman and Brahman as made of the same substance but remaining distinct, even after liberation. In this view atman are modes of Brahman's existence, dependent upon Brahman but separate from the mode which is the Paramatman (Supreme Soul). Bhakti is considered the path to liberation by this philosophical perspective too.</p> <p>In sum what is believed to be the best path to liberation may depend on the understanding an individual has of the relationship between the atman and Brahman. Since liberation is the ultimate goal understanding how it is best achieved might be considered of great importance by many Hindus.</p> | 10 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 4(c) | <p>'Human beings can never really know 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>The complexity of the concept of Brahman and the relationship of atman-Brahman is the basis of much Hindu philosophy and some schools of philosophy present understanding that as the basis of liberation. Others however do not. It could also be argued that knowing the divine means something more, or wholly other, than an academic of abstract understanding or the nature of it. The degree to which it is believed Brahman can be known, and the importance attached to doing so, is therefore likely to vary greatly between different individuals.</p> <p>While the term Brahman is found within most schools of Hindu philosophy it does not have a single, uncontested English language equivalent and the etymology of the word itself is unclear. The term is present in the Vedas, which are certainly the foundation of astika schools of Hinduism and, in the sense that something must be known in order to be rejected, of foundational significance to nastika schools. As such it could be said that the idea there is something known as Brahman is a universal one and understanding on this basic level could therefore be of universal importance.</p> <p>However, the specific ways in which the term is understood are not universally shared. Some scholars argue that its use in even the single text of the Rig Veda is open to a variety of possible interpretations and understanding, including use as a chanted mantra through which priests made manifest the sacred power on which Vedic rituals were focussed. Such usage could be argued not to require knowledge of any kind, or it could be argued that manifesting such power and experience through ritual is a deeper kind of knowledge than any cognitive process can reach.</p> <p>Brahman is often conceptualised as nirguna and saguna, perhaps as a way of trying to know Brahman. Nirguna Brahman (without qualities) and saguna Brahman (with qualities) seem very different concepts and the idea that both might apply to the same entity is contradictory and therefore arguably an obstacle to knowing in a rational sense. Reflection on such things might be seen as a route to mystical knowledge however. For non-dualists saguna</p> | 15 |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 4(c) | <p>Brahman is likely to be considered an illusion obscuring the ultimate truth and therefore setting it aside might lead one to true knowledge of the reality. However, there are Hindus who accept both these ways of understanding Brahman, with saguna Brahman offering a more accessible path towards nirguna Brahman. It might also be pointed out that the idea of the true nature of divinity as being fundamentally beyond human understanding is a common one, supporting ideas relating to faith in and devotion to the divine as the best means to liberation. From a philosophical perspective it can certainly be argued that it is impossible to know Brahman because it is unlimited while human brains, demonstrably, are not. Ideas such as neti, neti and sat, chit, ananda are used to create a partial understanding of the divine as fundamentally different to everything else but whether this can, or is meant to, create a complete picture of what the divine is like is debatable. It could also be argued that Brahman can be known intuitively or experientially but that this knowledge is beyond capture by human language.</p> <p>From a practical perspective acts of worship might be understood as involving or enabling knowledge of Brahman. Practices intended to show reverence or adoration to a deity could be said to imply a personal form of deity, with the devotee experiencing a two-way relationship with the object of their devotion: darshan, inherent in murti puja, involves a mutual seeing in more than a simple, physical sense and this exchange supports the idea that a devotee can know their ishvara, perhaps achieving knowledge of Brahman through that relationship. Other forms of worship such as homa (offerings made to a sacred fire) or yajna (sacrifice) might be said to presume a deity capable of recognising and receiving such offerings but they do not require the worshipper to know more of the deity than that these offerings are welcome. However, it is also possible to argue that worship does not necessarily involve a reciprocal or relational element, since offerings might be made for the benefit that brings to the devotee – comfort, engagement in community, paying a debt (rina); therefore, no knowledge of Brahman is inherent in or even required by the act of engaging in religious worship.</p> | 15 |