

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM**9487/02**

Paper 2 Development of Hinduism

October/November 2024**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 2024 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **18** 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.

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
1(a)	<p>Summarise the main themes of the Brahmanas.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Brahmana can be a general term for any explanation or commentary about the Vedas, they are shruti texts. The question is concerned with their contents/areas of concern.</p> <p>The term is widely used to name part of the Vedic writings; in this context too it refers to commentary upon rituals, in this case the rituals and sacrifices set out in the Samhita texts. These are performed by priests and therefore the texts are aimed at/of most interest to priests. However, many of the rituals are performed on behalf of grihasthas, such as the five Great Sacrifices (panch mahayajna), which pay the Great Debts (rina).</p> <p>Details given in the Brahmanas includes explanation of and instructions about the different rituals and their significance, how to use the Vedic hymns, interpretations of mantras and advice on practical matters such as the proper construction of altars for specific rituals.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Explain why some contemporary Hindus might believe the Upanishads are of greater importance than other Vedic writings.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. 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 Upanishads are the fourth 'layer' of Vedic writings, consisting of philosophical reflections on concepts identified in the earlier texts. They are also sometimes referred to as the Vedanta, which means 'end of the Vedas', and could be said to imply that these texts are some kind of culmination or conclusion to the Vedas. The major Upanishads are also probably among the more widely read sacred texts of Hinduism. This is partly because of the influence of the Vedanta philosophies on academic understandings of the religion and perspectives of it outside its place of origin.</p> <p>While the ritual practices set out in the Vedas are regarded as the foundation of Hinduism the religion in its contemporary forms looks very different to that described in the earlier parts of the Vedas. The metaphysical focus of the Upanishads, with their focus on the nature of atman and Brahman, the nature of reality and the relationship between these things, could be seen as the foundation of current forms of astika Hinduism. The Upanishads can also be seen as providing a link between the Vedas and various smriti writings. 'Upanishads' is sometimes interpreted as meaning 'sitting down beside', as a pupil would sit next to their guru in order to learn from them. This indicates that the texts are intended to teach in a way that allows an individual to engage personally with the spiritual principles. The Upanishads offer a means through which Hindus can reflect upon liberation, considering both why it is desirable and how it might be achieved. The term 'upanishad' can also simply mean 'knowledge', referring to knowledge of a particular kind that will destroy the ignorance which keeps atman in samsara. Either understanding suggests the potential importance of the Upanishads for Hindus seeking to attain moksha.</p> <p>The Upanishads offer ideas for the individual to reflect upon, but they do not, for the most part, specify particular forms of religious practice and different margas might therefore find them of differing importance. They do offer clear advice/guidance on paths to achieving moksha and therefore might be considered more important than texts which do not have this focus.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
1(c)	<p>'The Atharva Veda is less important for Hindus than the other three Vedas.' Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. 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 most ancient sources refer to the Triple Veda or to the threefold knowledge of the Vedas. This became fourfold later – how much later is uncertain - with the inclusion of the Atharva Veda. The title Veda suggests that all four texts which carry it should have the same importance. The Vedic texts are also all shruti, which gives them all the status of revealed knowledge. It could be argued that it is not possible or not necessary to try to rank the Vedas in any way. Each has its own particular focus and concern, and all remain present in the world for Hindus to consult. It could also be argued that human perspectives of importance are irrelevant to sacred objects and texts; all are equally sacred.</p> <p>The fact that it was classified as a Veda later than the other three texts does not necessarily mean that the Atharva Veda was written or compiled later – some linguistic study suggests it is younger than the Rig Veda but probably contemporaneous with the Sama and Yajur Vedas. If this view is accepted it might be used to argue that its contents were considered less important at the time they were written, but whether this equates to a limitation of their importance now is more debatable. However, it is also possible that the Atharva Veda is drawn from religious traditions indigenous to the land which later became India and, as such, it may pre-date the religion described in the Rig Veda.</p> <p>However, the differences between the Atharva Veda and the other three texts have led to debate. It has been suggested that historically priests practising according to the Atharva Veda had a lower status than others and some sources suggest there remains a degree of stigma associated with the text today, perhaps because of the inclusion of spells. The contents are certainly different to the other Vedas, as the Atharva Veda does not focus on the performance of sacrifice or formal ritual but more on everyday life and concerns. It does include spells and charms to help with things such as recovery from illness or success in an endeavour, but it is inaccurate to describe it as simply a book of spells or magic. It also includes mantras, hymns and prayers without a magical element to them and, as with the other Vedas it addresses metaphysical concerns such as the nature of good and evil, the source of cosmic order and why things happen as they do.</p> <p>Whether the more domestic concerns of the Atharva Veda render it less important than the other Vedas probably depends on the personal concerns of the reader; for a householder it may well be more important to know how to avoid fever or to seek peace among the family than it would be to know the priestly requirements of specific sacrifices. On the other hand, if the sacrifices have ultimate or cosmic significance they could be considered the more important concern for everyone.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Outline how the Bhagavad Gita is different from the rest of the Mahabharata.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. 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 Bhagavad Gita is a section of the Mahabharata, which is an epic story surrounding the Kurukshetra War. While the Mahabharata is narrative in form and spans many years and events the Bhagavad Gita is an account of a single conversation between Arjuna and Krishna on the eve of a decisive battle. The Bhagavad Gita can be read as a stand-alone or discrete text, without any knowledge of the events in the Mahabharata, however the reverse is not so clearly the case.</p> <p>The Bhagavad Gita uses the context of the battle to open an exploration of ideas of dharma, the paths to moksha and how to live a good life. It does not tell a story itself and knowledge of the overall story of the Mahabharata is probably not necessary to understand the contents of the Bhagavad Gita. While the epics are generally considered smriti texts many Hindus regard the Bhagavad Gita as shruti, because it is the words of Krishna.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>Explain why some Hindus might describe the Bhagavad Gita as a summary of the Vedas.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. 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. 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. In its 700 verses it covers the nature of God, the self and reality, karma, dharma and moksha. It addresses the diversity of ways in which liberation might be achieved, recognising different margas and the different obligations and priorities of individual lives. This includes varnas and the importance of following varna dharma, and the varnas are originally mentioned in the Rig Veda. This embrace of diverse paths as all being equally Hindu means that the Gita can include apparently contrasting ideas from the Vedas as part of this complex whole.</p> <p>The concepts identified and explained in the Gita, such as karma and dharma, are first mentioned in the Vedas. This makes the text a summary of the Vedas in the very literal sense of having collected and explained the central philosophical ideas of those texts. It is also one of the foundational texts used in the development of the Vedanta philosophies. Its contents must therefore be Vedic in nature and the summative nature of the Gita is also evident in its short length relative to each of the Vedas.</p> <p>M K Gandhi explicitly taught that the Bhagavad Gita was a summary of the Vedas and also wrote extensively about its importance in his life and practice.</p> <p>One concern of the Vedas is the maintenance of rita (cosmic order) which is connected with dharma; in its focus on how to live dharmically the Gita is therefore directly concerned with how Hindus can fulfil the aims of the Vedas.</p> <p>Unlike the Mahabharata of which it is a part the Gita does not tell a story. Neither does it give explicit instructions on how to carry out any particular practice. It is more concerned with the underlying principles and structures of the religion and in this it is similar to the Upanishads, being a set of philosophical reflections rather than practical instructions. It might therefore be more accurate to describe it as a summary of the Upanishads, but since these are Vedic texts, the description given in the question remains justifiable.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
2(c)	<p>Assess the claim that the Bhagavad Gita is the only sacred text a Hindu needs to read.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. 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 Bhagavad Gita has been influential on many contemporary forms of Hinduism and the thinking of many well-known Hindus: MK Gandhi described it as “the quintessence of all the shastras and the Upanishads” and also referred to it as his eternal mother; Swami Prabhupada considered it the “essence of Vedic knowledge” which could serve as “one common scripture for the whole world”; Sri Aurobindo considered it a “living creation” which contained a new message for every age of the world. Such views certainly seem to support the idea that the Gita encapsulates the entirety of Hindu philosophy and Gandhi in particular also considered it of practical use, reading it in order to find light in dark times; the text is widely used as a source of inspiration and encouragement by many Hindus today.</p> <p>Being widely considered to be a summary of the Vedas it is certainly possible to justify choosing to read the Gita rather than the Vedas themselves. Since much of the Vedas is concerned with the performance of ritual they might be considered of greater relevance to priests while other Hindus have no need to know their contents in greater detail. The Bhagavad Gita is also widely considered shruti, giving it the same status as the Vedas. This, combined with its greater accessibility could be used to justify the view that it is the only text a Hindu needs to read.</p> <p>It might also be noted that the Bhagavad Gita is not necessarily, or perhaps even ordinarily, engaged with through the written word. The name itself means ‘Song of the Lord’ and it is commonly sung.</p> <p>The diversity of paths supported by the Bhagavad Gita could be used to argue that there is no single essential element of Hinduism at all, and this could be extended to include the Gita itself. That being said it could also be argued that one would need to know the teachings of the Gita to recognise the diversity of possible paths to liberation and so perhaps that the Gita itself is the only essential element for a Hindu to be aware of. It can be argued that the Bhagavad Gita is of greater importance in Vaishnava traditions, since Krishna is an avatar of Vishnu and Ishvara (Lord), and that therefore Hindus worshipping other deities would be less likely to find it of central concern.</p> <p>It might also be argued that it is entirely possible to follow a religious path without concerning oneself with the philosophical, theological or metaphysical underpinnings of that path and therefore there is no need to read any text at all, even one which supports your chosen path. Many Hindus would take the view that a guru is essential as a guide on any path and therefore reading or not reading the Gita is irrelevant without the input of a guru.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
3(a)	<p>Summarise the difference between monism and monotheism.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Both terms begin with 'mono' which means 'one', but they differ with regard to what it is they consider to be one thing. Monotheism refers to the belief that only one God exists. This God is usually the creator of everything and so the world is dependent upon God in some way. This is comparable to ideas of saguna Brahman (Brahman with qualities).</p> <p>Monism holds the view that only one reality exists and that even though things might appear to be distinct and separate from one another they are actually all part of the single ultimate reality. Monists might sometimes use the term 'God' to describe this ultimate reality, but it is distinct from monotheist understandings of the term, in that it has no personal attributes or qualities (nirguna Brahman).</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
3(b)	<p>Explain how Brahman relates to the concept of ishvara.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Brahman is a term that is used to refer to ultimate reality or a supreme being. It is often translated as meaning 'God', but such a translation still requires additional qualification as the nature God is understood to have varied across different philosophical traditions.</p> <p>The broader concept of Brahman is often divided into nirguna Brahman (without qualities or attributes), and saguna Brahman (with qualities or attributes). Nirguna Brahman is generally considered transcendent, that is somehow outside or beyond time, space and matter. In Advaita philosophy all things within those categories are ultimately non-distinct from Brahman and so even ascribing transcendence to Brahman could be seen as assigning qualities to that which has none. By contrast saguna Brahman has qualities and can be understood as a personal form of divinity, immanent in the material world.</p> <p>Ishvara (Lord) is most clearly linked to the concept of saguna Brahman. It is a title given to a named deity who is worshipped as the supreme or primary form of God in bhakti yoga and all such deities can be seen as specific examples of saguna Brahman. The term originates in relation to Shiva but is applied more widely in contemporary usage. For many these named deities are not distinct beings but particular manifestations of saguna Brahman, emphasising the qualities needed by that particular devotee. Ishvara can therefore be understood as a means by which an individual can achieve a partial understanding of and a personal relationship with the ultimate.</p> <p>Nirguna and saguna Brahman are not mutually exclusive ideas, although different schools of thought might consider one or the other as the better description of Brahman's nature. Ishvara is sometimes used to signify an idea of Brahman as God in a monotheistic sense, both personal and impersonal, immanent and transcendent.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
3(c)	<p>Assess the claim that liberation is achieved by realising that the atman is entirely separate from Brahman.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Atman, or self, is commonly used to describe the idea of an eternal and unchanging essence that is somehow connected with or contained within a material body and world. It is the atman that is trapped in samsara and subject to a constant cycle of rebirth and therefore it is the freedom of the atman from this cycle that is meant when liberation is referred to. While liberation is the aim in all Hindu practice and philosophy the form/nature of that liberation is understood differently by different schools of thought and the differences depend largely on what is believed to be the relationship between atman and Brahman.</p> <p>It is therefore possible to argue that how liberation is achieved will be different for different people and different philosophical perspectives on the relationship of atman with Brahman might be considered in support of this view. The atman can be understood as identical with Brahman, in which case liberation is achieved by realising that and takes the form of a loss of any idea of an individual self at all (Advaita view). Or atman can be understood as made of the same essence as Brahman and dependent upon Brahman but each has its own consciousness and, upon liberation, the atman is with Brahman but its distinct consciousness is retained (Vishistadvaita view). It is also possible to understand the atman as wholly different from Brahman, a separate creation, in which case liberation is a state of bliss in a realm created by Brahman (Dvaita view).</p> <p>For Hindus who believe that liberation is achieved by overcoming ignorance and understanding the true nature of reality it is essential to understand that any view other than that of atman as not being different to Brahman is deluded. This supports the opposing view to that given in the question, that liberation would be prevented by believing atman and Brahman are distinct as such separateness is a delusion created by maya and this must be overcome for liberation to be achieved. However, it might also be argued that Hinduism encompasses many different paths to liberation and achieving this kind of knowledge is not required by all of them. Whether or not a devotee has given any thought to metaphysics could be considered irrelevant to bhakti marga for example.</p> <p>Dvaita philosophy does view atman and Brahman as entirely separate, but this does not necessarily equate to a need to understand that relationship as a path to liberation. Divine grace (prasada) is needed for liberation in this philosophy and ignoring or rejecting the fundamental differences between atman and Brahman is believed to undermine the supremacy of God. This might be used to suggest that bhakti (devotion) is a surer path to liberation, although whether a bhakta attains liberation is not ultimately in the hands of the individual but their ishvara.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(a)	<p>Summarise what Vaishnavas believe about God.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 5 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Vaishnavism is focused on the worship of Vishnu as the Supreme form of God or the manifestation of ultimate reality. Vishnu is one of the Tri Murti and his responsibility is usually said to be maintaining the universe, he protects dharma and maintains cosmic order. For some Vaishnavas Vishnu contains all three aspects of the Tri Murti within himself, making him the creator, preserver and destroyer. In some Vaishnava traditions it is Krishna who is seen as the Supreme Godhead.</p> <p>There are many different forms of Vaishnavism, taking different philosophical positions on the precise nature of God but the traditions are all broadly monotheist, with Vishnu as a single omnipotent and omniscient deity, able to be approached as a personal deity (ishvara or bhagavan) by devotees. He is able to give boons and protects his devotees from evil.</p> <p>The belief that Vishnu incarnates within the material world in order to protect dharma is another common belief, supporting the view of Vaishnavism as monotheist and Vishnu as immanent and active in the world. He might also be described as all-pervading.</p>	5

Question	Answer	Marks
4(b)	<p>Explain how Smartism is different from other theistic traditions in Hinduism.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and Understanding. Response will be marked according to the 10 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Smartism is based around five deities – Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesh, Surya and Shakti – who are all considered equal and worshipped together through panchayatana puja. Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti are each considered the sole supreme form of the divine within the tradition that bears their name and this might be considered a fundamental difference between Smartism and other traditions. However, while murtis of all five deities are present during this puja they can be arranged differently, placing a specific deity at the centre as the primary deity for this particular act of worship and thus perhaps minimising this distinction. However, there is no belief in any named deity as supreme or superior to any other, and the ultimate aim is to move beyond these forms to an understanding of nirguna Brahman.</p> <p>Smartism is often considered to have links with Advaita philosophy and so these five deities might not be regarded as distinct entities but rather as aspects of Brahman, not different to one another at all on the level of ultimate reality. This is based in Shankara's philosophy and it is an explicit aim of Smartism. However, there are Hindus who hold this same view in relation to the central deities of other theistic traditions, considering devotion to a named saguna deity as the first step on a journey towards realising ultimate truth. Many individual Hindus might not identify with a specific theistic tradition at all, worshipping a range of deities depending on their circumstances, location, family custom etc. Three of the five deities central to Smartism make up the Trimurti, who are central in some Hindu mythology and given prominence in academic study of the religion. Similarly, Ganesh is widely worshipped by Hindus all over the world and a request for his blessing is part of the opening of acts of worship to other deities. All of this suggests that the distinctions between Smartism and other forms of Hinduism may not be as absolute as external divisions between traditions might make it seem. However, Smartism intentionally avoids prioritising any one deity over all the others, seeking to synthesise difference into a broader understanding of the divine (nirguna Brahman), while other Hindu traditions might emphasise difference or the distinctions between one form of deity in comparison to others.</p>	10

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	<p>'Any Hindu is allowed to worship Shiva.' Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and Evaluation. Response will be marked according to the 15 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>It could be argued that only Hindus within the Shaivite tradition can truly worship Shiva as only they would know the specific forms of bhakti most pleasing to him. Shaivism is often associated with asceticism and austerity, sometimes in forms which might be considered extreme such as vowing not to sit or lie down, or to hold an arm above the head for a year or longer. Not everyone is capable of sustaining such practices, nor would they necessarily wish too. Hindus within ashramas other than the sannyasa ashrama have duties of other kinds which should be their focus so Shaivism in this form does not necessarily combine well with the idea that an ideal life should progress through different ashramas. However, this is not the only form Shaivism can take and devotional practices such as meditation or reciting mantras could certainly be considered more accessible.</p> <p>Shaivism is also associated with breaking conventions and social norms, which is why some Shaivite sadhus live on cremation grounds and cover themselves in ashes. Practices such as this are associated with Tantra, which covers a broad range of non-Vedic religious ideas. The rejection of convention means that this is not a practice everyone is likely to want to engage. However, the idea of non-conformity could be said to make Shiva one of the more approachable deities as he can be approached regardless of social status, physical appearance, disability, past actions or other such considerations.</p> <p>The division of Hinduism into named theistic traditions might lead some to conclude that an individual has to choose between worshipping Vishnu and worshipping Shiva, with devotion to the other deity being precluded once the choice has been made. There are Hindu texts which refer to a degree of active competition between Shiva and other deities, for example Vishnu, which might support this view. However, Hindu traditions are not generally exclusivist and there is much overlap of practice and belief. While there is no universal form of conversion ritual initiation is an important element of tantric paths; it is also usually connected with learning from a guru and this might complicate switching between some traditions of Hinduism. However it might also be argued that a dwija (twice-born) person who has received the sacred thread is an initiate into Hinduism overall and could reasonably be accepted by a variety of gurus during their search for wisdom.</p> <p>In some contexts the choice of ishvara could be considered as possible both to make and to undo with relative ease but, as bhakti traditions the primary intention is to offer devotion to the divine and it could be argued that moving back and forth between different forms of divinity shows less devotion than a consistent practice relating to one single Ishvara.</p>	15

Question	Answer	Marks
4(c)	For many Hindus which deity is the focus of their devotion is more a matter of the deity's choice than it is of the worshippers. Shiva is a Mahadeva (great God) and therefore a person chosen by Shiva to worship him does not really have a choice in the matter.	