

Cambridge International AS & A Level

HINDUISM**9487/03**

Paper 3 Hinduism: Philosophy and Religion

October/November 2024**MARK SCHEME**Maximum Mark: 60

Published

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

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This document consists of **15** 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.

Section A AO1 12 mark questions**Section B Essay Marking grid AO1**

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. 	10–12
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. 	7–9
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. 	4–6
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. 	1–3
Level 0	No relevant material to credit.	0

Section A AO2 18 mark questions**Section B Essay Marking grid AO2**

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. 	16–18
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. 	12–15
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. 	8–11
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. 	4–7
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

Section A

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>Explain the means of achieving kaivalya according to Samkhya philosophy.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Kaivalya means isolation or separateness and it is used in Samkhya philosophy to describe the state of liberation or enlightenment. In this state the purusha realises it is separate from prakriti and is therefore liberated from rebirth. Moksha is seen as a goal that it is natural for every individual soul to pursue but it cannot be attained without effort.</p> <p>The means of achieving moksha is always affected by what is understood to be causing bondage in samsara in the first place. According to Samkhya philosophy, samsara is created, and purusha is trapped within it, through ignorance of the true nature of things. The interactions of purusha and prakriti cause purusha to develop tattvas (constituent aspects of experience) beginning with intellect and ego and progressing to the sensory capacities. Through the experiences, which manifest from the interaction of the tattvas, purusha is deluded into believing that it is both acting and subject to change; it identifies itself with prakriti. It is this confusion that keeps purusha entangled and the means to escape it is therefore to develop appropriate understanding of its separateness.</p> <p>Both prakriti and purusha are eternal and uncreated, and they are also entirely distinct from one another. Prakriti is the matter of the universe, active but not conscious, while purusha is pure consciousness, but static and inactive. When it is bonded with prakriti as a living being (jiva) each individual purusha regards itself as sharing the qualities of prakriti. Samkhya holds the view that liberation cannot be fully achieved while embodied. But, since non-physical things like memories, thoughts and emotions are all prakriti, remaining attached to any part of them will also prevent liberation. To counter purusha's attraction to prakriti it is necessary to practice viveka (discrimination), which is the use of reason to analyse and understand the tattvas and thus distinguish between purusha's apparent and actual state. Samkhya philosophy is not specific regarding the best practices to employ to achieve this end; it explains the reality, which must be realised to achieve kaivalya, but it does not set out a clear path to follow although there are some general guidelines. All margas – jnana, karma and bhakti – have the potential to lead to kaivalya, in the sense that they encourage letting go of ego and so ending rebirth.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
1(a)	<p>There is a strong connection with Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, which is based on Samkhya epistemology and sets out eight limbs dealing with body and mind: Yama (moral discipline), niyama (restraints), asana (physical postures), pranayama (breathing techniques), pratyahara (sense withdrawal), dharana (concentration), dhyana (absorption) and samadhi (enlightenment or bliss). Together these 8 limbs constitute a path of physical and spiritual discipline that enables the kind of discernment necessary to achieve kaivalya. Other systems of meditation, renunciation and study can also lead to viveka and, ultimately, to kaivalya and any spiritual path (marga) might be understood as a process of letting go of ego, or self, and therefore as a means of achieving kaivalya.</p> <p>The question specifies Samkhya philosophy; descriptions of ashtanga yoga will be creditable if clearly linked to that philosophy.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	<p>Assess the claim that Samkhya is not a theistic philosophy.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18 mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Samkhya is an ancient dualistic philosophical tradition, regarding prakriti and purusha as the two eternal and self-existent elements that make up reality. Prakriti is matter, active and changing but unconscious. Prakriti consists of the three gunas: sattva, rajas and tamas. Everything in the material universe is made up from these gunas. The other constituent of the universe is Purusha, unchanging, unmoving and conscious. Purusha is plural, and it is individual purushas that become jivas (living beings) entangled in prakriti. Since it does not support the idea of a single entity responsible for creation Samkhya is often considered non-theistic; common usage of the term equates theism with belief in the concept of God found within the Abrahamic religions, a concept very different to the dual nature of purusha and prakriti.</p> <p>However, strictly speaking, theism only specifies belief in gods, and gods is, itself, a term open to many definitions. Some scholars hold the view that Samkhya rejects the concept of God entirely, while others interpret it as being agnostic rather than atheistic. Commentaries on the earliest Samkhya texts show a rejection of the idea that purusha and prakriti would require another entity to instigate them but also reflections on the possibility of Ishvara. An eternal Ishvara is not in line with Samkhya views about the causes of creation, which associate activity inevitably with desire, and since desire of any kind prevents liberation no being with desire can have the qualities attributed to a creator deity. However, the possibility of an emergent Ishvara, consisting of enlightened purushas, is recognised by some. Other scholars argue the concept of Ishvara is irrelevant to Samkhya since it cannot be either proved or disproved.</p> <p>A more general consideration of the concept of God in relation to Samkhya philosophy might argue that purusha and prakriti together fit such a concept sufficiently to refute the claim that Samkhya is non-theistic. Understandings of God generally include attributes such as being necessary, eternal and omnipresent which both purusha and prakriti are. However, this is complicated by the idea of creation: if purusha and prakriti are eternally existent without needing a creator to be so this could be seen as inimical to theism, which relies on the concept of a creator. On the other hand, purusha and prakriti can be seen as being responsible for creation and, although the sense of a benign entity consciously choosing to craft the world might be considered by many implicit in the idea of a creator, it is arguably not an intrinsic part of the definition. The idea of being self-existent (not reliant on an external creator to exist) is a quality often attributed to the divine and it can also be attributed to purusha and prakriti.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
1(b)	The connection between Samkhya and yoga might also be used to argue that the philosophy is not inherently hostile to theism, even if it doesn't unequivocally take a theistic stance in its original form. However, ashtanga yoga has an ethical dimension that is often central to theistic traditions, and this is arguably absent in Samkhya. Candidates can argue for or against the view as long as their discussion is focused on the question.	

Question	Answer	Marks
2(a)	<p>Describe Dvaita Vedanta teachings about the dualistic nature of the universe.</p> <p>AO1 – Knowledge and understanding. Responses will be marked according to the 12 mark level descriptors (AO1).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Dvaita Vedanta is a philosophical school established by Madhva as a response to the Advaita philosophy with which he disagreed. Dvaita means 'two' or 'dual' and the distinctive teaching of Dvaita Vedanta is based on the view that Brahman is a totally different substance to the atman. Both are real and they will always be separate and distinct. However, this does not account for how/why the universe might be considered dualistic in nature. That arises from the nature of physical matter which is not regarded as part of Brahman but as a separate and real thing, as the atman is.</p> <p>In sum, the two realities recognised in Dvaita consist of independent (svatantra) reality, which is Brahman only, and dependent (paratantra) reality which is everything else – physical matter and individual souls, all depend upon Brahman. Only Brahman is not dependent upon something else. The material world does therefore have real existence, it is not the effect of maya on the atman but the deliberate creation of Brahman. This is a dualistic understanding of reality, in contrast to the Advaita position that only Brahman is real.</p> <p>The world and the individual souls are not only eternally distinct from Brahman but are also distinct from one another. In fact, there are five fundamental differences which emphasise the absolute reality and separateness of these three things – differences between atman and ishvara, between matter and ishvara, between individual atman, between atman and matter and between different types of matter. The theory can still be accurately described as a dualist one however, because matter and the atman share one kind of reality while Brahman has another – the duality which gives the philosophy its name is in the nature of reality rather than the substances that share it.</p> <p>The universe itself might also be considered as dualist in nature because it is made up of individual atman and matter, which are also fundamentally distinct. Souls are entangled in matter by their karma, but this does not alter their essential nature.</p>	12

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>'The concept of Brahman is the same in Vishistadvaita Vedanta as it is in Dvaita Vedanta.' Discuss.</p> <p>AO2 – Analysis and evaluation. Responses will be marked according to the 18-mark level descriptors (AO2).</p> <p>Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Brahman is frequently translated as 'God'; this translation is often problematic because it implies a personal creator deity, and the concept of Brahman is broader than that. However, one similarity between Vishistadvaita and Dvaita is that both conceive of Brahman in these terms, often using the term Ishvara and focussing on bhakti as the means of liberation.</p> <p>Different understandings of Brahman can be broadly split into concepts of nirguna Brahman, that is Brahman without qualities or attributes, and saguna Brahman, endowed with attributes or characteristics, including form. Saguna Brahman is often understood to be the reality behind individual gods and goddesses and might be equated with Vishnu or Shiva with whom devotees seek to develop a close personal connection. For some Hindus the true nature of Brahman is saguna, a being possessing infinite attributes beyond the scope of human understanding, while for others this is a way in which the ultimately nirguna Brahman appears to human beings, creating the possibility for them to engage with it.</p> <p>Since nirguna Brahman is without qualities it is generally viewed as impossible to engage with on a personal level. This also means that it isn't able to grant boons, answer prayers, incarnate as avatars or any of the other things associated with a more personal form of deity. Therefore, philosophies that regard Brahman this way do not generally regard bhakti as the best path to liberation. Both Vishistadvaita and Dvaita Vedanta do, however, which implies that they share an understanding of Brahman as primarily saguna. However, this does not necessarily equate to an identical understanding of the nature of Brahman.</p> <p>In Vishistadvaita Brahman is the name given to the completeness of Ishvara together with the universe and all sentient beings (jivas); the universe and the jivas are made by Ishvara, from itself. When jivas are born in human form they are able to gain true knowledge of Ishvara through bhakti and so can become liberated. Once moksha is attained the jiva knows its own nature is that of Brahman, but it remains a distinct being, enjoying the bliss of being with Brahman.</p> <p>In Dvaita Vedanta too, Brahman is certainly saguna although the philosophy is clear that the precise nature of the attributes of Brahman defies human comprehension. Madhva believed Brahman can only refer to Vishnu, meaning Vishnu is the Supreme God. Vishnu has independent existence and both the world and the individual jivas have dependent or contingent existence. They are created by Vishnu and are eternally and ontologically distinct and separate, standing in the relationship of creature to creator. This is a different position to that of Vishistadvaita, which presents them as made of the substance of Brahman in much the same way as a spider creates a web out of its body; the web is real, not illusory and clearly distinct from the spider but sharing a substance with it.</p>	18

Question	Answer	Marks
2(b)	<p>While saguna Brahman is emphasised, Vishistadvaita does not ignore the concept of nirguna Brahman. Instead, it interprets Upanishadic references to nirguna Brahman as meaning that Brahman can have no negative or impure attributes or qualities. Since Brahman is chit (possessing consciousness) it must know of its own existence and such knowledge cannot be entirely devoid of any content – even trying to discuss it in terms of its qualitylessness ascribes qualities to it. In this philosophy ‘neti neti’ is taken to mean ‘not <i>just</i> this’ rather than an absolute ‘not this’; Brahman cannot be restricted to any specific description but has infinite qualities, each of which is infinite in extent.</p> <p>Dvaita Vedanta philosophy is likely to be considered as agreeing that God’s qualities are infinite and ineffable to human beings, and maybe even includes such apparently paradoxical aspects as both having form and being formless. However, because the system was presented by Madhva as tattavada, or based on a realist viewpoint, it might be considered less concerned with semantics such as the application of the term nirguna. Madhva argued that ordinary perception tells human beings that they are different from both one another and from God and that this a reliable understanding.</p> <p>Both Dvaita and Vishistadvaita emphasise bhakti as the path to liberation and both have their roots in Vaishnava traditions. The practices inspired/informed by the philosophy are likely to look very similar and both traditions conceive of moksha as a state in the presence of Brahman rather than becoming one with it. It is clear that there are similarities in the ways Brahman is understood but there are also clear differences in the underlying philosophies. Since the same term is used, and the understanding of it is based on the same source – the Upanishads – it could certainly be argued that the concept and the reality it describes are the same, with any apparent differences arising from the fundamental inability of limited human minds to properly grasp this reality. Alternatively, it could be argued that one position is stronger than the other in terms of the construction of the argument or its congruence with personal belief. It would however be hard to argue that either is unequivocally wrong. Candidates can argue for or against the view as long as their discussion is focused on the question.</p>	

Section B

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>Evaluate the claim that M K Gandhi's ethics were not based on Hindu teachings.</p> <p>AO1 - Knowledge and understanding AO2 - Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors. Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Ethics are strongly associated with the concept of religion and religions often include sets of moral principles intended to guide the actions and choices of practitioners in a righteous or virtuous direction. Hinduism certainly recognises both virtues and vices and various lists of these principles might well be used by individual Hindus. While there is no universally agreed upon list of central virtues some, such as ahimsa (harmlessness), satya (truth) and sewa (service) are included in most of them. In general Hindu ethics are relative and concerned with fulfilling duty through action. This perspective can be said to permeate Gandhi's teachings – the concern is less with ethical principles than with acting ethically. It might also be noted that much of Gandhi's ethical teaching was developed in response to specific political and social contexts and that this background could have been influential.</p> <p>Gandhi certainly described himself as a Hindu and considered the Bhagavad Gita, a Hindu scripture, as being of central importance to his understanding of Hinduism. He described this text as more than just one scripture among many, and it had a personal significance for him that went beyond a view of it as the most significant Hindu scripture: he described it as his eternal mother, which certainly implies it has a foundational place not only in his thought but in his character as well. Gandhi's ethics, certainly in relation to society, were largely based on the concept of the Rama Raj, which has its foundations in the Ramayana, a key Hindu text.</p> <p>Gandhi valued the Gita for its devotional focus, its accessibility to an ordinary reader, its freedom from dogma, its recognition of multiple paths and its practical ethics. He first read the Gita as an adult, later saying he was ashamed not to have known about it before. After that first reading, he became interested in religious thought more generally and expanded his reading beyond Hindu texts. He was particularly impressed with the Sermon on the Mount, in the Christian New Testament, and considered it to be of equal spiritual value and authority to the Bhagavad Gita. This history emphasises Gandhi's Hindu origins and it was certainly a Hindu text that sparked his philosophical and ethical thinking. However, it could also be used to argue that he was influenced by ideas from other religions from the outset of his personal exploration of religion, ethics and philosophy.</p> <p>Gandhi believed in the oneness of God, but he did not think this meant that there should or could be only one correct or appropriate form of religious practice. He considered that religion and morality are, effectively, the same thing and that the world's religions generally agree on what the central moral principles of human behaviour should be. The differences in practice and belief, provided they do not contradict these principles, are therefore irrelevant.</p>	30

Question	Answer	Marks
3	<p>This is arguably less a matter of being influenced by any religion, including Hinduism, and more one of reaching a conclusion through consideration and interpretation of the available evidence. Gandhi undoubtedly respected different religious traditions and saw figures within them as teachers with important messages for everyone.</p> <p>But it is also true that Hinduism includes the idea of universal religion among its many philosophies; the idea of truth being one but called by different names is found in the Rig Veda, which is the oldest Hindu text.</p> <p>The emphasis Gandhi placed on ahimsa is often associated with Jainism. He regarded ahimsa as meaning far more than simply not engaging in violence, understanding it as an active form of showing love and the highest moral principle human beings have. This is in accordance with the Jain perspective of ahimsa as the cornerstone of ethical action and violations of that as damaging to the self and its potential to achieve liberation. Buddhism also advocates ahimsa, making the avoidance of killing one of the Five Moral Precepts but Gandhi extended the concept far beyond physical violence to include even violent or uncharitable thoughts and the rejection of the whole concept of enmity. It also included standing firm in the face of violence, even at the cost of one's own life, and this can be seen in Jain texts in relation to the behaviour expected of sadhus and sadhvis, who have taken the great vows. They are enjoined to willingly sacrifice their own lives to an attacker rather than break their vow of ahimsa. It is less clear whether ordinary people are similarly forbidden to defend themselves, and there is ambiguity in later Jain texts even in regard to monks in situations where a greater evil might be prevented by forceful action. Gandhi cited Jainism as the deepest expression of ahimsa and the support for direct but non-violent actions endorsed by his Satyagraha could be derived from the same idea of a responsibility to prevent greater evil.</p> <p>It might also be argued that the idea of ahimsa as a virtue is found throughout Hindu traditions, and that both Jainism and Buddhism are considered by some to be nastika Hindu Darshanas rather than distinct religions. The prominence of ahimsa in Gandhi's thought does not therefore establish a non-Hindu basis for his ideas. Gandhi saw this same principle in the Christian idea of agape love, and it could be argued that his understanding of the concept originates in a Hindu perspective which then enabled him to identify it within other traditions.</p> <p>It might also be noted that Gandhi's family were Vaishnava, and his mother belonged to a specific Vaishnava sect, the Pranami sampradaya, which espoused many of the ethical principles Gandhi considered important. Pranami temples welcome worshippers from all castes and classes and its founder Prannath encouraged them to eat together as well as to worship. His collected teachings are believed by his followers to be the essence of all the world's major religious texts, including the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gita, the Bible and the Qur'an. How far this background influenced Gandhi's later life is unclear, but it seems unlikely to have had no impact whatsoever. Whether or not this it is considered as the influence of non-Hindu religions is likely to come down to how one understands the concept of religion overall and syncretic forms of it in particular.</p> <p>Candidates should provide a justified discussion, which addresses the claim and comes to a conclusion.</p>	

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>Evaluate the significance of Shankara's philosophy for contemporary Hinduism.</p> <p>AO1 - Knowledge and understanding AO2 - Analysis and evaluation Responses will be marked according to the level descriptors. Candidates might refer to some of the following:</p> <p>Candidates must address the significance of Advaita in contemporary Hinduism, either inside or outside India. The question does not ask them to describe Advaita Vedanta in detail.</p> <p>Shankara was the founder of the Advaita Vedanta darshana. His work, like the other Vedanta schools, was based on interpretation of the Upanishads. He understood their central theme to be that the individual atman is identical to Brahman, apparent multiplicity and diversity is the product of maya (delusion) and liberation is achieved through the realisation of this truth. He argued that, when properly understood and interpreted, all scripture contains this message. He is said to have written a great many philosophical and theological works, although not everything traditionally attributed to him is universally accepted as his work by scholars. He certainly wrote commentaries on the principal Upanishads and these, in particular on the Brahma Sutra, are the foundational texts of contemporary Advaita. He is also said to have founded four monasteries, one for each of the cardinal points, and this may have contributed to his enduring legacy. The heads of these institutions carry the title 'Shankaracharya'; this means Shankara Teacher or Instructor and it emphasises his ongoing significance to contemporary practitioners within the tradition he founded.</p> <p>Shankara's time, the 8th century CE, was a period of unrest and upheaval in the area now called India, during which various regional religious traditions were emerging, nastika traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism were strong and influential, and Islam was also gaining more followers. Since Shankara's work rested on the Vedas he has been viewed by some as a champion of the original or most authentic form of Hinduism, working to restore it and reduce the influence of other sources. The Smarta tradition in particular considers him responsible for bringing together the disparate sects of Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism into one, introducing the Panchayatana puja – the simultaneous worship of five deities with the aim of understanding that they are in fact all one Brahman. As the founder of a significant tradition in contemporary Hinduism he is clearly significant, however the fact that the other traditions persist alongside Smarta suggests that this significance is not universally accepted. Hinduism historically has evolved and changed through the work and insights of enlightened individuals, and Shankara is one example of many such. He is perhaps unusual in the breadth of his travels, across the entirety of India, meaning his influence was potentially more widespread during his lifetime and the geographically disparate institutions he founded remain at the heart of a living tradition.</p> <p>While he is well known to contemporary scholars of Hinduism some scholars suggest this fame did not occur until some considerable time after his death. Other scholars wrote about aspects of advaita (non-dualism) at the same time as Shankara and were arguably better known to their contemporaries.</p>	30

Question	Answer	Marks
4	<p>However, the later Vedanta schools, Ramanuja's 11th century CE Vishistadvaita and Madhva's 13th century Dvaita, are both arguably responses to Shankara's Advaita philosophy which had by then become well established. This argues for Shankara's overall significance in that his work had become influential and widespread enough to deserve serious philosophical consideration and critique.</p> <p>Beginning in the 19th century Western scholars became more interested in Hinduism. The academic study of religion (as distinct from theology) arguably has its roots in this same period. This work led to what is sometimes called neo-Hinduism or Hindu universalism, meaning an understanding of Hindu dharma as based on universal ethical principles. Later 'neo-Vedanta' was coined as a means of explicitly distinguishing this view of Hinduism from what the scholar to whom the term is attributed (Paul Hacker) considered the real or traditional Vedanta – by which he meant Shankara's Advaita. This could be used to argue for the significance of Shankara's work for Western scholars as well as within Hinduism itself, with the originally pejorative sense inherent in the distinction demonstrating Shankara's status for some as a person who revealed ultimate truths, rather than as a proponent of one philosophical theory.</p> <p>However, the teachings of Neo-Vedanta, a term now primarily associated with Swami Vivekananda and the Ramakrishna mission, were undoubtedly influenced by Shankara's Advaita Vedanta. Vivekananda considered this the best expression of the essence of Hinduism, although his own teachings present the divine as being both immanent and transcendent and nirguna and saguna, in direct disagreement with the Advaita position. As the first person to present Hinduism to a non-Hindu audience as a 'world religion' Vivekananda is certainly an extremely influential person in many contemporary understandings of the religion. He himself considered Advaita to be the basis of his philosophy and, if this is accepted, then it supports a view of Shankara as one of the strongest influences on contemporary understandings of Hinduism. However, some scholars argue that Vivekananda's position is actually closer to a Vishistadvaita position, which would make Ramanuja the more influential.</p> <p>It would be difficult to argue that Shankara has no significance at all for scholarly understandings of Hinduism, although the degree of that significance is debatable. It might however be noted that practitioners have their own understanding of their religion, and the ubiquity of bhakti practices could certainly suggest that the practical impact of Shankara's work on Hindu practice has been less than his impact on abstract discussions about the religion. Advaita Vedanta has also had an impact on movements such as the Arya Samaj, and through this on understandings of Hinduism outside India. Hinduism encompasses many different margas and traditions and is able to do so without contradiction; Advaita and traditions built upon it are neither more nor less significant than any of these – no single path is viewed as universally correct.</p> <p>Candidates should provide a justified discussion with addresses the claim and comes to a conclusion.</p>	