

Markscheme

May 2026

World religions

Standard level

Paper 2

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Paper 2 markbands

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–3	The response demonstrates minimal knowledge and understanding in relation to the demands of the question. There is little use of relevant terminology. The response is descriptive in nature. Any conclusions presented are superficial, anecdotal or common-sense.
4–6	The response demonstrates some relevant knowledge and understanding of the beliefs/ concepts/ practices/teachings of the specified religion in relation to the demands of the question. There is some use of relevant terminology. The argument is limited and the analysis is only partially consistent with the knowledge and understanding demonstrated. There is some use of examples, but these are generally vague and do not support the argument. There is a limited conclusion(s), but this is not supported by the evidence presented or examples.
7–9	The response demonstrates mostly relevant and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings of the specified religion in relation to the demands of the question. There is use of relevant terminology, but this is not always consistent. There is an argument, which is generally supported by the analysis; connections between beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings are identified but not developed. The argument at times lacks clarity and coherence but this does not hinder understanding. There is a conclusion(s) but this is only partially supported by the evidence presented and the examples used.
10–12	The response demonstrates relevant and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings of the specified religion, and this is demonstrated throughout the essay. There is consistent use of relevant terminology. The argument is structured and coherent and supported by the analysis; connections between beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings are identified and developed. There is a conclusion(s) supported by the evidence presented, with relevant examples. There is a partially developed evaluation.
13–15	The response demonstrates detailed, relevant and appropriate knowledge and understanding of the beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings of the specified religion, and this is demonstrated throughout the essay. There is consistent use of relevant terminology. A reasoned argument(s) is well-structured and coherent and supported by the analysis with connections between beliefs/concepts/practices/teachings clearly identified and effectively developed. There is a conclusion(s) supported by the evidence presented, and effective use of examples. There is a developed evaluation; any minor inconsistencies do not detract from the strength of the overall argument.

Section A

Hinduism

1. Discuss the importance of diet, fasting and vegetarianism to Hindus.

- Traditionally, diet varied by caste and social class, and those of the higher castes did not touch food prepared, or water taken, by lower caste or untouchable Hindus. However, traditions always varied and are more fluid today
- Food is important in ritual. The sweet food prashad may be offered to gods during a Puja ceremony. Halwa and Kheer, two deserts, are shared at the festival of Divali. These are means for devotees to offer praises to the gods
- Many Hindus are vegetarian; most recommend lacto-fermented dairy, though many prohibit eggs
- Some eat a small amount of meat though not meat from cows, due to the sacred nature of the cow attributed by Hindus
- Vegetarianism is seen as the ideal, because it is in keeping with the principle of ahimsa (non-violence). The killing of animals for meat is considered violent and ritual sacrifice forbidden by some
- According to samsara, the cycle of reincarnation and rebirth, people may return in a new body of animal form, so they treat animals with respect as fellow creatures
- Texts such as the Mahabharata highlights non-violence towards animals and condemns slaughter
- Fasting is part of worship for many Hindus. They may fast for a god, or at the time of a festival, or at times considered important for their particular sect or following
- Fasting is a way to gain discipline of the body over physical wants, such as food, so that spiritual matters can be focused upon
- Fasting for these reasons helps a Hindu gain good Karma as it was seen as an act of selfless devotion to a god and the faith
- Students of the Vedas practiced fasting as part of their discipline, and there are many holy people, hermits, gurus and spiritual guides who practice fasting to control their desires
- Self-purification of greed, gluttony and to perform expiation for sins are further aspects of the practice. Awareness of others in need may also be increased
- There are different kinds of fasts, such as one meal a day or a fruit only fast, but the intention is not to cause harm to the body
- From the point of view of Indian natural medicine, Ayurvedic practitioners teach that it cleanses the body of toxins as well as cleanses the mind
- Mahatma Gandhi used to fast as a form of non-violent protest, which was a powerful expression of his case.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

2. “Samsara is the most important doctrine in the lives of Hindus.” Discuss.

Note: candidates might discuss a range of Hindu doctrines but with a focus on the importance of samsara.

- Accounts might define doctrine in Hinduism. As there is no single, central authority, beliefs grew up organically over a long period of time. A diversity of sources is available to discover beliefs and doctrine, and these are seen as different ways of defining the same truth. They are not the same as a revelation of doctrinal beliefs as found in some western religions
- Samsara means the cycle of life, death and reincarnation. This is an endless cycle in which the atman (soul) moves on to another body after death. A favourable rebirth might take place in a being which has a relatively painless existence, whereas an unfavourable rebirth may transfer the atman to a life which experiences less favourable conditions
- Therefore, it could be argued that samsara is more important than anything else because it determines a Hindu's future. However, there are many other aspects of this doctrine and links to other beliefs, which might be seen as dependent on each other
- Moksha (liberation from the cycle of samsara) might be seen as the end goal, as it is a form of freedom. This could be a more important focus to keep in mind rather than the process of cycles itself
- Dharma (religious or moral duty) brings doctrine to the area of action in everyday life and ethical issues encountered in undertaking action. It could be said that in terms of daily experience, dharma is more important for the lives of Hindus and this will affect the state of rebirth, and so is critical to samsara
- Underlying the importance of dharma, is Karma (action used to refer to the law of cause and effect). It is the karma that is built up through dharma which actually determines a Hindu's rebirth
- Brahman is the ultimate reality, the overarching deity, and the soul which individual souls aim to unite with to escape the endless cycle of rebirths
- Hindus experience Brahman in different ways and Hindu worship may include various deities which are, to many, special representations linked to this one, ultimate reality
- Therefore, it might be argued that the most important doctrine for Hindus is that of Brahman as absolute
- Another view is that as all these doctrines are interlinked, no one can be said to be more important than any other.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Buddhism

3. To what extent is *karuna* (compassion for all) Buddhism's most important teaching about ethics and moral conduct?

Points for:

- *Karuna* means compassion for all. This means compassion towards others and towards oneself. Feeling compassion towards others can be said to be an important moral standpoint
- Buddhism teaches that *kamma/karma* is volitional action of mind, body or speech. Therefore to have compassionate thoughts towards others counts as ethical and moral conduct; as does compassionate speech and action towards others. This demonstrates that in Buddhism compassion is important in internal and external actions
- *Karuna* (compassion) is one of Buddhism's three virtues that counteract the *Three Poisons*: compassion (opposite to aversion, hatred); wisdom (opposite to ignorance), generosity (opposite to desire). Understanding and negating the *Three Poisons* is a fundamental Buddhist teaching, which makes *karuna* (compassion) an important teaching
- Metta-bhavana is a meditation (*bhavana*) that intends to cultivate loving-kindness (compassion) towards self and others, that was taught by the Buddha and is practiced by many Buddhists. Incorporating *karuna* (compassion) into routine meditation practices demonstrates its importance as a Buddhist teaching
- The Buddha is the first of the *Three Jewels* of Buddhism. For many Buddhists the Buddha is compassion personified and they aim to emulate this quality in their own lives. The Buddha's example of compassion makes *karuna* (compassion) a central Buddhist teaching
- In Tibetan Buddhism the *Dalai Lama* is regarded as a *bodhisattva* of compassion known as *Avalokiteshvara*. This signals the importance of *karuna* (compassion) in Buddhist teachings because it exemplifies *karuna* (compassion) as an important quality in Buddhist religious leaders
- In Mahayana Buddhist traditions *bodhisattvas* embody compassion by attaining *nibbana/nirvana* not for themselves but for the sake of others. This signals the importance of *karuna* (compassion) in Buddhist teachings by symbolising the value of sacrificing one's own benefits for the sake of others
- *Karuna* (compassion) is the second of the four *Brahmaviharas* (Brahma Viharas). Buddhism teaches the *Brahmaviharas* are mental states and dispositions to strive for, and which are cultivated through meditation practice.

Points against:

- An attitude of compassion towards others is an insufficient expression of ethics and moral conduct because conduct must be expressed through actions and not attitudes
- Compassion for all is too idealistic to be a realistic expression of ethics and moral conduct. Arguably it is not feasible to feel compassion towards everyone; towards people unknown to us; or towards others who are hostile towards us
- Other Buddhist teachings may lay claim to be as important to ethics and moral conduct as *karuna* (compassion). For example, *ahimsa* (non-violence) or *panna/prajna* (wisdom)
- It might be argued that *ahimsa* (non-violence) is a more important Buddhist teaching than *karuna* (compassion) for ethics and moral conduct. *Ahimsa* is the first of the five precepts and encompasses all the precepts: i) *ahimsa* (non-violence), ii) take only what is given, iii), correct use of senses, iv) honesty, v) avoid intoxicants. This means that *ahimsa* provides explicit directions about ethics and moral conduct of mind, body and speech, making *ahimsa* a more important teaching than *karuna* (compassion), which is more generalised
- It might be argued that *ahimsa* is the most important Buddhist teaching about ethics and moral conduct because it forms Right Action in the Noble Eight Fold Path. Right Action, Right Speech and Right Livelihood constitute *sila* (ethical conduct) in the Noble Eight Fold Path. This demonstrates that *ahimsa* is central and most important to Buddhist teachings about ethics and moral conduct

- Buddhist teachings are integrated and should be understood holistically. To claim that one teaching is more important than another is a misunderstanding of Buddhist teachings. For example, *panna/prajna* (wisdom), *bhavana* (meditation) and *sila* (ethical conduct) are emphasised equally in the Noble Eight Fold Path.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

4. Examine the contributions of the monastic sanghas (monastic communities) to the development and composition of the Pali Canon (first written Buddhist scripture).

Question includes 'composition' so that candidates can be credited for writing about sutta, Vinaya and Abhidhamma.

- The Buddha's teachings (*dhamma/dharma*) were not collated or written down during his lifetime
- After the Buddha's death (*parinibbana/parinirvana*) the monastic sanghas took responsibility to preserve and disseminate his teachings through oral recitation from memory and communal chanting. This is an early contribution to the preservation of the Buddha's teachings that would ultimately become the Pali Canon. Similar contributions made by nuns is largely absent from the historical record
- Senior monks convened a series of councils between approx. 450 and 250 BCE. At these councils the communities of monks agreed (usually by majority not consensus) the accuracy of their recollections of the Buddha's teachings (*sutta*), the codes of conduct (*vinaya*), and the systematisation and exposition of the Buddha's teachings (*abhidhamma*). These councils contribute to the development and composition of the Pali Canon by refining its content and structure
- These councils were often convened to address perceived contraventions to the teachings (*sutta*) or codes of conduct (*vinaya*) by monastic groups. Therefore, the autonomous structure of the monastic sangha contributed to the development and collation of the Pali Canon
- First century BCE a council was convened at Sri Lanka by Theravadan Buddhist monks. At this council the Buddha's teachings (*sutta*), monastic codes of conduct (*vinaya*), and expositions of Buddha's teachings (*abhidhamma*) were affirmed by senior monks and written on palm leaves (35-32 BCE approx.). This was the first written version of the Pali Canon, so called because Pali was the language used. Committing the *sutta*, *vinaya*, and *abhidhamma* to writing is a significant because it preserved the Buddha's teachings outside of the oral tradition
- The authority of the Pali Canon is accepted by many Buddhist traditions. Many monastic sanghas contributed to its early development through their community preservation of the Buddha's teachings. The Theravada tradition committed these to writing and so may claim to the formalisation of the Pali Canon as it is known to Buddhism today.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Sikhism

5. Examine ways in which Sikh religious experiences reflect the belief in gender equality.

- Equality is important in Sikhism. Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak spoke strongly in favour of equality for women and supported women having all the same rights as men
- Sikhs go to the Gurdwara for main religious services which include reading the holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. This is read by a granthi. Sikhs make no distinction and both women and men perform this important role
- This includes reading in the Akhand Path (continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib), and amrit vela / parkash (installing and closing the Guru Granth Sahib)
- Women and men can take part in all acts of worship and lead worship. They both lead prayers and kirtan (meditative singing of God's Word)
- When people go to the gurdwara, it is common to see men sitting on one side and women on the other. This is due to cultural reasons, not religious teachings. Nevertheless, both are equally near the holy book and neither sits behind the other, showing their status is equal
- Within the Sangat (the Sikh community at a local gurdwara), all are equal. When someone wants to be initiated into the community as a committed Sikh, they take part in the Amrit Sanskar ceremony. This is open to men and women
- Katha (talks) may take place in the Gurdwara, and women may also lead and refer to the teachings of the gurus from the past. They made no distinction in matters of initiation
- Karah parshad (literally, food given through God's grace) is shared by men and women at the end of services before leaving the Gurdwara
- Sikh religious practices are also reflected in the home where the majority of prayers are said throughout the week. Women and men have roles to support each other in the household. Men and women are encouraged to support each other and to get married
- When Sikhism began, these practices were significantly different from the expected social practices of the time. Sikh experiences would have felt radically new and empowering for women
- Today, Sikhs experience equality from a young age when boys and girls attend the Gurdwara together for classes to learn about Sikhism and the Panjabi language.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

6. Explain the importance of the Vaisakhi and Gurpurb festivals for Sikhs.

- Vaisakhi and Gurpurb festivals serve as a reminder to Sikhs of their sacred history
- These festivals provide opportunities to bring Sikhs together and affirm their communal identity

Vaisakhi

- Vaisakhi is important as a festival of commitment for Sikhs. It was through this ceremony that Sikhs became members of the Khalsa, the community of committed Sikhs
- At Vaisakhi, the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, called five of his followers to obey him regardless of doubt. He called them into a tent where it looked like they would be killed
- However, they were not killed. Instead, they had passed the test of ultimate commitment. The five were known as the Panj Piare (beloved ones)
- As symbols of commitment, they were given the five Ks to wear. These are still today identity symbols which encourage Sikhs to become committed to their faith
- Sikhs wishing to become initiated into the committed community, go through a special ceremony, called the Amrit sanskar (initiation into the Khalsa), based closely on the events of Vaisakhi
- Ensuring people become committed to Sikhism helps to continue the faith and encourages members to carry out acts of commitment, such as charitable events
- The festival was also important as a harvest festival in the Panjab, so draws together communities.

Gurpurb festivals

- There are many Gurpurb festivals during the year, each celebrating the life of a guru, an important spiritual teacher in Sikhism in the past
- Some celebrate birthdays, such as the birthday of founder Guru Nanak and birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, who founded the Khalsa, the community of committed Sikhs
- Others celebrate days when Sikhs were martyred, such as Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. These show Sikhs how committed their gurus were that they dedicated their lives to their faith
- Many events may take place including talks which help inform Sikhs about their faith
- The holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, is read from beginning to end. This is known as the akhand path and is read by a team of readers
- It helps remind Sikhs of the importance of their texts and verses within it which are used as songs of praise
- They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs, helping them become focused on life around their faith throughout the year.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Open-ended question

7. With reference to **one** religion—Hinduism **or** Buddhism **or** Sikhism—explain how different types of religious authority are sometimes constant and sometimes change over time.

Buddhism

- The religious authority of the Three Jewels - Buddha, dhamma/dharma and sangha – is consistently important in Buddhism
- Having achieved pari-nirvana the religious authority of the Buddha's (enlightened or awakened one) dhamma/dharma (teachings) is constant
- Monks (bhikkhus) and nuns (bhikkhunis) have religious authority because they exemplify and transmit the Buddha's dhamma/dharma. However, different interpretations of the Buddha's dhamma/dharma have developed over time through the geographical spread of Buddhism and emergence of different Buddhist traditions; for example Theravada and Mahayana traditions
- Attitudes towards nuns have changed over time and between different Buddhist traditions. In Theravada traditions nuns are subordinate to monks. In some Mahayana traditions (eg New Kadampa) the religious authority of monks and nuns is more equal
- Religious leaders hold religious authority. Types of religious leaders have changed overtime as Buddhism developed different traditions. For example, Vajrayana Buddhism has a system of lamas
- Scripture as a form of religious authority has developed and changed overtime in response to the ways in which Buddhism has developed and changed. An early Buddhist scripture is the Pali Canon, also called Tipitaka/Tripitaka. Later scriptures include the Diamond Sutra, the Heart Sutra and the Lotus Sutra, that were developed in Mahayana traditions.

Hinduism

- The *Vedas* are a category of Hindu scripture defined as *shruti* (heard/divinely revealed). As divine revelations the religious authority of the *Vedas* is unchanging. Included in the *Vedas* are the *Upanishads*
- The Hindu epics the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* are defined as *smriti* (remembered). The Hindu epics have religious authority because they deal with Hinduism's unchanging teachings, the *sanatana dharma*. There are different versions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* because they were compiled over long periods of time
- Hinduism has different schools of philosophical thought that have emerged over time. Each interprets the *shruti* and *smriti* literature differently
- The *Bhagavad Gita* sits within the *Mahabharata*. The *Bhagavad Gita* explains different paths to enlightenment; *bhakti yoga* (path of devotion), *jnana yoga* (path of knowledge), *karma yoga* (path of ethical actions). The central teaching of enlightenment is consistent, however teachings about how to achieve this have changed over time in response to changing dynamics in Hindu communities
- Brahmins (the first of the four varnas; priestly caste) have religious authority because traditionally only they can read and recite the *Vedas*. The caste system and the Brahmins' authority has been challenged both within Hindu society and externally. Attitudes towards the Brahmins' religious authority have changed over time
- Many Hindus regard gurus (enlightened spiritual teachers) as having religious authority. For their devotees, a guru's teachings are divinely inspired and unchanging. Others consider some gurus to be disingenuous. Hindus' individual attitudes towards the religious authority of gurus is subjective.

Sikhism

- God is the ultimate religious authority. God is eternal and constant, so does not change overtime. God's constancy is indicated by the term *Nirguna* (God as one and formless) and is symbolised by the *Ik Onkar* symbol (that represents God one)
- Guru Nanak's teachings are constant because they are the divinely revealed word of God.

- The ten human gurus hold collective and individual religious authority. Their collective teachings are constant, divinely revealed words of God (*Gurbani*). The metaphor of a flame being passed from one candle to the next is often used to describe this idea
- The religious authority of the ten human Gurus also changed over time because each Guru's actions shaped expectations about religious authority among Sikh communities. For example, Guru Hargobind instigated martial fraternities; Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa and initiated the Guru Granth Sahib as the final Guru
- The authority of the Guru Granth Sahib is constant because it contains the word of God (*Gurubani*) uttered by the Sikh Gurus and other enlightened teachers. Physical copies of the Guru Granth Sahib are identical because they are published to a consistent specification. This consistency symbolises the unified word of God
- Guru Gobind Singh's instigation of the Guru Granth Sahib as the final Guru in 1604 positions it as a new source of religious authority, demonstrating sources of authority change in response to the needs of Sikh communities
- The instigation of the *Khalsa Panth* in 1699 also demonstrates how types of authority change over time. *Khalsa Panth* (those who have taken amrit) is an important religious authority for many Sikhs, for whom the status of the Khalsa Panth is constant
- The *Rahit Maryada* (codes of conduct) published in 1936 is authoritative for Khalsa Sikhs and many other Sikhs. It demonstrates that types of authority develop to reflect the changing needs of Sikh communities
- The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee based in Amritsar is considered by some Sikhs as a religious authority and by others as an authority of governance. This demonstrates that the concept of religious authority may change depending on the outlook of individual Sikhs.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Section B

Judaism

8. “Olam Ha-Ba (the world to come) is the most important belief in Judaism.” Discuss.

It is expected that references will be made to other beliefs in Judaism. The authentic justifications for such beliefs (including Olam Ha-Ba) should be the focus for credit.

Candidates should be aware that Olam Ha-Ba refers to a fundamentally new age, coming after the Messianic Age, of peace and justice for humankind.

Credit should be given for recognising there are different interpretations of Olam Ha-Ba.

Arguments for

- References to Olam Ha-Ba are often found in Talmudic and Midrashic literature
- For many Jews there is a connection between Olam Ha-Ba and the Messianic era
- For many Jews there is a belief that their reward for following the Torah will be in Olam Ha-Ba when the dead will be resurrected and judged. The righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished
- Maimonides made reference to Olam Ha-Ba
- The belief in Olam Ha-Ba has given many Jews hope in times of adversity
- Some people interpret passages in the Tanakh to illustrate the importance of Olam Ha-Ba.

Arguments against

- No belief can be identified as most important as it depends upon personal beliefs and tradition
- Judaism emphasises the teachings of the Torah but there are very few references that relate to Olam Ha-Ba in the Torah
- Judaism is a diverse religion, but a fundamental belief is in monotheism. The belief in the one God is expressed throughout the Torah and is also in the Shema
- Some Jews would consider that the nature of God is the most important belief. This would include God as creator, God as judge and God as law-giver
- Some Jews would claim that the covenant relationship between God and His people is the most important belief. This relationship includes God choosing the children of Israel and the importance of keeping the Torah obligations/mitzvoth.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

9. Discuss attitudes to conversion in Judaism.

- In ancient times conversion was practiced for those who wanted to accept monotheism, or to assimilate people e.g. the story of Ruth in the Tenakh
- Contemporary Judaism is not a missionary religion and it is not a mitzvah to convert others to become Jews
- Conversion is accepted although not promoted. The Talmud lays down a complicated procedure for conversion including observing the Law; being immersed in a pool (mikvah) and men being circumcised. The conversion process is lengthy and requires constant learning and reflection
- Orthodox Jews believe even if a Jew converts to another religious tradition they still remain a Jew as part of their identity. According to halakhah (Jewish law)
- For many Jews identity is based on maternal descent. Therefore, an individual is considered as Jewish irrespective of practice. Some Jewish traditions are now accepting male descendancy e.g. Reform Movement
- Prospective converts must undergo a lengthy training and study programme to show they have full knowledge of the religion and its practices
- Reform Judaism does not require circumcision of males or immersion in a mikvah
- Those who convert to Reform Judaism are not considered by Orthodox Jews to be Jewish, resulting in converts being considered Jewish by some Jews and not by others. Only Orthodox authority is accepted in Israel
- It is not considered appropriate to convert because you want to marry someone Jewish
- In past times of adversity Jews have had forced conversions or undertaken conversion e.g. in 14th century Spain. Conversos was the term given to those who did not fully embrace Catholicism but continued to practice Judaism in secrecy.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Christianity

10. “Abortion is contrary to the moral law.” Discuss with reference to different Christian teachings about the right to life.

- “Right to life” is understood to be all human life is sacred and that murder is immoral. This underpins the sanctity of life argument
- Many Christians consider abortion as a violation of sanctity of life and something that violates the commandment “You shall not murder”
- Those who support the sanctity of life argument hold the view that the embryo deserves respect and protection from the moment of conception. Biblical teaching shows that life is precious from the moment of conception and that the embryo is as important as a fully-grown human
- The Church condemned abortion as early as the 2nd century CE: a document called the Didache, written in the 2nd century (some time after 100 CE), states: “You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the new-born to perish”
- The Roman Catholic Church agrees with the Sanctity of Life argument and is totally against abortion, regardless of the motives. The Roman Catholic Church believes life begins at conception. (The moment the egg is fertilised). Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. ‘Life begins at the same moment and place as the soul does’
- Other Christians believe life begins when the embryo breaths. “The Lord formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being” (Genesis 2). “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” (Jeremiah 1:5)
- The Methodist church believes the embryo develops throughout pregnancy so we cannot say exactly when life begins
- These diverse understandings lead to difference of opinion among Christians
- Understanding of the terms Pro-choice- used for the view that women should be able to choose and Pro-life- supporting the right to life of the foetus
- The pregnant woman's health and welfare are more important than that of the embryo or foetus
- The embryo or foetus does not have the same rights as the mother
- There can be conditions under which abortion may be morally preferable to any available alternative
- Although Church teaching has for a long time stated that a foetus becomes a person when the egg is fertilised, distinguished theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas said this didn't happen until between 40 and 80 days after conception
- The Catholic Church has affirmed the right and the responsibility of each Catholic to follow his or her own conscience on moral matters, even when it conflicts with Church teaching

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

11. Explain the inclusion of the Old Testament in the canon of Christian Sacred Texts.

- In CE 363, the Council of Laodicea stated that only the Old Testament (along with one book of the Apocrypha) and 26 books of the New Testament (everything but Revelation) were canonical and to be read in the churches. The Council of Hippo (CE 393) and the Council of Carthage (CE 397) also affirmed the same 27 books as authoritative
- There does not appear to be any argument over the inclusion of the Old Testament in the Christian Bible during the formation of the canon
- The same God is encountered in the Old and New Testament
- Jesus was a Jew and most of his early followers were Jews
- The book of Genesis is the foundation for events and stories throughout the Bible climaxing at Revelation. It provides both history and prophecy
- The Ten Commandments remain valid as a core teaching for Christians
- The Old Testament reveals the history of the covenants between God and humanity
- Christian tradition uses the Old Testament to legitimize the New Testament as the natural extension of the Abrahamic covenant
- The prophecies of the Old Testament or Hebrew scriptures are interpreted so that they foretell the coming of Jesus Christ as God's appointed Messiah
- The Old Testament is required to fully understand how God works in history
- The New Testament contains many references to the Old Testament. It would be difficult to understand the Christian message without knowledge of the Old Testament.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Islam

12. Discuss the roles of female mystics in Islam.

- A mystic is someone who engages in meditation, thought and giving up worldly possessions to lead a simple life. They search for spiritual truths, which for Muslims are based on oneness and unity with God. There are different opinions about mystical traditions amongst Muslims
- Rabia of Basra 716–801 CE is a well-known mystic. She led a life of prayer and contemplation but never asked for any reward from God. She said she only wanted to become closer to her Lord
- Rabia did not raise her head upward, out of humility. She said there was no point in gaining worldly possessions, because the world is passing away
- She ran about town with two buckets of water. She explained that she wanted to put out the fires of hell and the fires of desire for heaven. Lifting the veils of both would then allow seekers to see truth
- Rabia lived a detached, celibate life, but also wrote poetry and stories which inspired Muslims and explained the mystical approach
- Aisha Al-Manoubya 1199–1267 CE from Tunisia provided food, cooked it herself and gave it to the poor. Male scholars of Islamic law came to her for advice
- She was said to have worked miracles and inspired a book of her saintly life to be written. She is commemorated at shrines to this day
- Hazrat Babajaan was a twentieth century mystic of Pashtun origin. She travelled to Mecca and nursed pilgrims who fell ill. She went to Pune in India, dressed in rags and lived as a homeless person in slums
- Zoroastrian Sheriar Irani was inspired by Hazrat Babajaan and sat by her for long hours. She kissed his forehead, giving him an enlightening experience from which he went on to become the famous guru Meher Baba. This shows how Muslim women mystics inspired those outside their faith
- Most of the leaders and famous people in Islamic history have been men. Many believe that an Imam is a role to be led by men, though some accept female Imams. Mystics hold a very different position within Islam and there is no restriction on women becoming mystics, other than cultural tradition
- This means the role of some mystics has been special to inspire all who seek a mystical approach
- Female mystics provide an example of piety for Muslim women. Rabia said: 'Take note of what a woman of my community has accomplished.'

There are many shrines containing the tombs of female mystics, venerated particularly by Muslim women. These provide a gender specific space for their devotions.

There are many of these tombs in South Asia and Iran, for example, where Rabia Balkhi, a mystical poet, has a tomb which is a centre for devotion.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

13. Explain how Hadiths and, for Shias, the sayings of the Imams, clarify the messages of revelation for Muslims.

- Hadiths are sayings of Muhammad, collected by several people including Bukhari who lived about 250 years after Muhammad's death. They went to much effort to try to verify the accuracy of the sayings
- There are different collections as well as sayings made by Imams for Shi'a Muslims. They believe the twelve Imams (for Twelver Shi'a), or the Imam of the time, the Aga Khan, for Ismailis, make inspirational sayings to guide Muslims without error
- Revelation is usually equated with the Qur'an, a directly revealed text from God. Some Hadiths, known as Hadith Qudsi, are also considered God's sayings arising through inspiration to Muhammad. The Arabic word wahy, for revelation, can also mean inspiration
- Shariah (Islamic law) considers the Qur'an its first source and the Sunnah the second. The Sunnah is the sayings and actions of Muhammad, a perfect example for Muslims to follow. The source for the Sunnah are the Hadiths, Muhammad's sayings and actions
- Muslim scholars use Hadiths as an authority and refer to many when they make legal rulings
- Many verses in the Qur'an are open to multiple interpretations. Hadiths can help to provide a context for each revelation. Sometimes they are divided into those revealed in Mecca and those in Medina, with context from Hadiths explaining what those revelations meant to Muhammad at the time
- The Qur'an tells Muslims to follow the straight path and entrusts authority in Muhammad. His sayings tell Muslims what the straight path is. It is Hadiths, for example, which contain the Five Pillars
- The Qur'an often refers to general practices such as to pray in the morning and evening, without specifying exactly when and how. Hadiths provide the details, referencing how Muhammad prayed, the actions, and the exact timings. In this way, Hadiths explain the revelation
- Hadiths also provide explanation for how to undertake social matters, marriage, divorce, special prayers for festivals and so on
- Revelations may be interpreted as outward instructions or inward thoughts. The says of Imam Ali provide special inspiration for Shi'a Muslims, offering explanation texts in a way which might be called esoteric: an inner, spiritual interpretation, as well as some outward guidance
- Some Muslims, known as Qur'anists, do not accept the validity of the Hadiths and only refer to the Qur'an itself, as a source of wisdom, interpreting it directly themselves.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

Open-ended question

14. With reference to **one** religion—Judaism **or** Christianity **or** Islam—discuss the importance of rituals associated with marriage.

The emphasis of the question is on the **importance** of the ritual not the description. Candidates should explain the reason for the practice within the contexts of the beliefs of Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

Judaism

There are different rituals depending upon the level of Jewish observance and also cultural inheritance. References to betrothal as a ritual might be made and where explanation is accurate this can be credited.

- The kiddushin (betrothal) is the ceremony which marks that a couple have agreed to marry
- Some Jewish brides will attend a mikvah to ensure they are purified before marriage
- Some Jews choose to fast before the actual ceremony to symbolise that they are clean and entering marriage in a fresh state
- Blessings will be given by the rabbi for the couple and the extended family
- Seven blessings are stated which praise God for creating the human race and bringing happiness to the couple
- The ketubah is the formal marriage contract traditionally stating how the husband will care for his wife. This is retained throughout the marriage and shows they understand and accept the individual roles
- The bedeken ceremony often takes place after the signing of the ketubah and symbolises that the groom will clothe and protect his wife
- The wedding normally takes place under a chuppah which is often considered a symbol of the new home being created
- The groom makes a declaration and reads the ketubah aloud. This shows the commitment of the groom to support his partner
- A ring is placed on the bride's index finger which is believed to be connected to the heart. The ring is round as a symbol of eternity
- The groom stamps on a glass which is often considered as symbolic to show the fragility of marriage. Some consider it is a reminder of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Christianity

There are different rituals depending upon the Christian denomination and also cultural inheritance.

- In some denominations banns are read before the actual marriage ceremony. These are read to show a couple's commitment to marriage
- Vows are usually exchanged which reflect the main Christian beliefs about marriage and the importance of Christian values such as faithfulness
- Rings are often exchanged to represent the unending nature of marriage
- In a Roman Catholic wedding service there might be a Nuptial Mass which gives the couple God's grace and strength to support and comfort each other
- Often a homily is given by a priest/minister to explain the importance of marriage in Christianity
- The priest/minister will often ask the couple three questions to make sure that they understand the responsibilities of marriage
- In the Orthodox Church two lit candles are presented to the couple representing Christ's light to the world
- In the Orthodox tradition wedding crowns are placed on the couple's heads as they participate in giving themselves to each other and to God
- In some denominations of Christianity marriage is considered a sacrament
- It is important for the marriage ceremony to be witnessed by God and the community.

Islam

There are different rituals depending upon tradition followed and also cultural inheritance.

- Rituals associated with the wedding may take place over a number of days
- Rituals vary but most weddings will be held in public as the Prophet Muhammad commended holding a public wedding celebration or feast
- Some Muslims choose a pre-wedding ritual in which the Imam performs a prayer in order to seek Allah's blessing and to officially announce the wedding
- The bride's family and female friends gather together and create a supportive community, for example the mehendi ritual. The male members of the groom's family also gather to give gifts and to show similar support
- The bride and groom sit separate, and both must give their consent three times
- Often the ceremony will contain dancing, feasting and Quranic recitations
- There will often be a wedding procession (baraat) of the groom's side of the family. This sometimes happens with the groom on horseback. This has no religious significance but gives an opportunity for family members to joyfully celebrate
- The signing of the contract (nikah) which includes all the conditions of the marriage. Traditionally this takes place in a mosque with the imam officiating. It is an important ritual and the nikah should be as simple as possible so the couple can fully understand it and are not placed with a financial burden. This ceremony results in the couple being married under Islamic law and makes the wedding official and legitimises the marriage in front of Allah
- The wedding feast shows the importance of a joyous public event but might be held two days after the actual wedding
- Readings from the Qur'an show the importance of Allah within the relationship
- Dowry or mahr of money or jewellery is normally given by the groom to the bride and is hers to keep even if there is a divorce. This practice is based on sura 4.4
- A walimah (party given by the husband's side after the marriage) serves the function of announcing publicly the couple are legally married and can live together.

Accept any other relevant answer.

Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.
