

Markscheme

May 2023

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. Examine the importance of undertaking yatra (pilgrimage) to sacred rivers, shrines and kumbha-melas (special bathing fairs) in Hinduism.
 - A yatra is a pilgrimage or journey, which may also form a procession, to a site of special importance in Hinduism. The River Ganges, for instance, is a particularly significant river in India whose waters are regarded as sacred and purifying and to which hundreds of thousands of pilgrims travel annually, to sites such as the banks of the river at Varanasi.
 - Some sites are associated with Shiva, others with Krishna or from tales in ancient Hindu scriptures. This helps pilgrims connect with and feel inspired by epic tales in their traditions.
 - Kumbha-melas are special bathing fairs in Hinduism. Often taking place on special days, such as the annual date of “Amavasya”, a procession takes place which may include elephants, horses, banners and flags, Hindu monks or holy people and a particular Hindu deity such as Ganesh (the elephant headed god).
 - Whilst some pilgrimages are annual, others take place every 6 or 12 years.
 - Rituals of bathing begin with a prayer with a Hindu priest and may include shaving of the head, scattering of flower petals and singing of hymns.
 - The action of bathing symbolizes cleansing and may help a believer to overcome their misdemeanours and travel on the way towards moksha (liberation from the cycle of samsara). Traditions from early Vedic literature recommend this practice.
 - The bathing rituals have become popular and attended by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in recent years, marking a renewal in commitment to the Hindu faith and an inspiration for followers.
 - Talks about the religion and motivational social gatherings take place on the fringes of the festivals. At Kumbha-Mela holy men (Sadhus) are able to teach the followers and ensure the deities are protected and respected during the festivities.
 - It has been argued by some that such gatherings were partly inspired in the British colonial period as a revival of Hindu traditions. Others trace the origins to ancient times and find evidence of their development in the 8th century and in medieval texts.
 - Other ways in which yatra is important is that it is an expression of loving devotion to gods or figures in Hindu literature, ritual purification, affirmation of community and identity.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

2. “No two Hindu philosophical systems interpret sacred texts in the same way.” To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Agree

- Hinduism developed gradually over thousands of years, so has a rich heritage of sacred texts, including ancient Sanskrit texts, shruti texts such as the Upanishads and smriti texts such as the Bhagavad Gita.
- Different philosophical systems (darshanas) in Hinduism have evolved into six traditions: Nyaya and Vaishesika, Samkya and Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta. There are further individual interpretations made by the founding gurus of Hindu sampradayas (nine sects). These suggest that no two are the same.
- Samkhya is the oldest school which developed an interpretation that the universe was made of consciousness and matter. It takes an interpretation that there are three kinds of suffering, and that ultimate freedom (moksha) comes with knowledge of self.
- Vaishesika has a different emphasis on understanding experiences of the universe to achieve liberation. The texts of the Vedas are sources for dharma (laws or teachings).
- Nyaya uses logic in the pursuit of right knowledge. The Mimamsa darshana interpreted the texts of the Vedas as literal, infallible sacred texts whereas they saw the spiritual texts of the Upanishads as less important.
- By contrast, the Vedanta put emphasis on the Upanishads. The Vedanta emphasized self-knowledge and abstract spirituality.
- Each school of thought, and others, added their own writings. This contributed to no two philosophical systems interpreting texts the same way.

Disagree

- Although there are many different philosophical positions, they are not necessarily contradictory. These provide inspiration in many and varied ways and have enabled complementary interpretations to emerge.
- It could be argued that the existence of different schools is not that significant because the six main darshana schools of thought each accepts the Vedas as an authority. Each darshana also accepts that the atman (soul) exists.
- Whilst there were sometimes differences in different centuries and over interpretations leading to application of law in society, the significance of philosophical differences of interpretation might be considered different routes to achieving the same goal of liberation.
- The Yoga school agrees with the duality of consciousness and matter as in the Samkhya school. It developed this with worship of a personal god (Ishwara or Ishta-Devata) and mystical techniques but the interpretation was essentially the same.
- Whilst Vaishesika, Nyaya and Vedanta have different emphases, it could be argued that this helped people to the same realization, so these were not fundamentally different interpretations.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Buddhism

3. Discuss the nature and role of sacred texts in Buddhism.

- In Theravada Buddhism the sacred texts are composed of the Pali Canon or Tipitaka/Tripitaka.
- The latter term means ‘three baskets’ (or ‘collections’) of teachings.
They comprise:
 - The Vinaya Pitaka (‘discipline’ teachings) containing guidelines, morals and regulations for monastic living.
 - The Sutta Pitaka, containing discourses on the dharma, including sermons of the Buddha.
 - The Abhidhamma Pitaka, containing special or further/extended Buddhist doctrines.
- They are written in Pali or Sanskrit.
- Sacred texts play a vital role in preserving, teaching and passing on the dhamma/dharma, the teaching of Buddhism and the practical path to achieving enlightenment.
- In Mahayana Buddhism, there are additional scriptures which focus on teachings of the many Buddhas.
- Some of the most influential of these are the Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom or Insight) literature (which includes the Diamond Sutra) and also the Lotus Sutra and the Sukhavati Sutras.
- The Lotus Sutra describes the ‘Pure Lands’ in which the Buddhas reside.
- It also contains a popular mantra, which is often recited daily by some Mahayana Buddhists schools e.g. Nichiren Buddhism and the popular Soko Gakkai International (SGI) movement. It is said to embody the entire essence of the Dhamma/Dharma. It can be translated as: “I devote myself to the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law”.
- Mantras, sacred phrases taken from Buddhist scriptures, can play an important role in the practice of Buddhism amongst all Buddhist schools.
- The Mahayana Buddhist sutras focus on the Bodhisattva, the enlightened being who remains in the world to help others achieve enlightenment. The Bodhisattva path is a way to achieve Buddhahood, the ideal goal of Mahayana Buddhists, but it is not shared by most Theravadin schools of Buddhism.
- All Buddhists maintain that their scriptures were passed down from the Buddha through his followers, (arahats/arhats) orally. Most Buddhists stress the importance of the role of the (bhikkhu) Sangha, the monastic community, as the preserver of the scriptures and the dhamma/dharma.
- Mahayana schools of Buddhism attribute their additional scriptures to Bodhisattvas, but even their words are traced ultimately to the Buddha.
- Mahayana Buddhist scriptures stress the importance of attaining wisdom and emptiness.

Credit should be given for pointing out that Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhist schools have additional scriptures such as the Book of the Dead. This is used to guide a person into a good rebirth after they have died.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

4. Examine Buddhist belief in the Three Marks of Existence: anicca/anitya, dukkha/duhkha and anatta/anatman.

- Buddhists believe that existence is marked by these three fundamental characteristics.
- Understanding them is an important part of understanding and achieving the path to enlightenment.
- The most common expression of the belief is found in the following statement of the Buddha [recorded in the Dhamma/Dharmapada, the Path of the Dhamma/Dharma]:
“All conditioned states are impermanent (anicca/anitya); all conditioned states are unsatisfactory (dukkha/duhkha); All states as they really are, are without self (anicca/anitya)”
- Anicca/anitya means ‘not permanent’. According to this belief, nothing in the universe is eternal, everything is impermanent. Everything is changing. All living things are born and die. All non-living things are constantly changing.
- This can appear negative, but in Buddhist belief it is also a source of hope in the face of suffering, because suffering itself is impermanent and can be brought to an end. The Buddha famously said, “Two things do I teach: suffering and its removal”. This mark of existence, therefore, is closely related to the Third Noble truth, that suffering can cease.
- Dukkha/duhkha, whose closest meaning is ‘unsatisfactoriness’, is often translated as ‘suffering’. It is a key Buddhist belief that everything in human life and experience ultimately is unsatisfactory. All states of happiness and joy are unsatisfactory in the end.
- This is not considered by Buddhists to be pessimistic. Rather, it is held to be a realistic and honest understanding of the way things are. It is regarded as important for finding the solution to suffering. It is vital for overcoming avidya (ignorance) and maya (illusion) and hence attaining truth and enlightenment.
- Anatman/anatta means “lack of permanent self (atman/atta)”. This is the Buddhist belief that there is no such thing as a permanent, eternal self or person. The Buddha taught that the belief in a permanent/eternal self is a dangerous illusion and a major stumbling block to attaining enlightenment. This is because it causes the self/person to crave for more existence and cling on to impermanent things and experiences which, in turn, is a major cause of suffering.
- The concept of a permanent self/person produces harmful, egocentric ideas of ‘me’ and ‘mine’. It also restricts a person’s understanding of themselves and their experience of reality.
- Buddhists believe that there is no eternal self or person that gets reborn. The ‘person’ merely is a combination of five bundles, khandas/skandhas (aggregates) of energies which are not permanent.

Credit should be given for pointing out that there is a change in terminology in the third mark of existence. The first two refer to “all conditioned states” whereas the third replaces this with the term ‘all things as they are’ (dhamma/dharma). This is to avoid any confusion of the Buddha’s teaching with the idea that there may be an unconditioned, permanent state of existence.

Credit should also be given for pointing out the close relationship between the Three Marks of Existence and other expressions of Buddhist teaching such as the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Sikhism

5. Discuss the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib for the ethics and moral conduct of Sikhs.

- Guru Nanak brought the word of God through his hymns and prayers, and Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das all composed Shabads (hymns). Guru Arjan standardized these and added some. Therefore, the ethical and moral teachings contained within it have special status for Sikhs as authentic in origin.
- The Guru Granth Sahib may be referred to as the book of Sikhism but it is often also referred to as more than a book. Guru Gobind Singh, who completed the Guru Granth Sahib, was the tenth and final human Guru and taught Sikhs thereafter to regard the Guru Granth Sahib as a 'Living Guru'.
- Sikhs meditate on the Guru Granth Sahib in order to discern right moral actions. In Sikhism there is no priesthood or jurists.
- The Guru Granth Sahib includes teachings from Hindu and Muslim holy people. It is regarded as a universal guide for humanity and applicable to all as equals, regardless of caste, race, religion, etc. Following on from this it encourages Sikhs to work against discrimination.
- The Guru Granth Sahib asks Sikhs to control the five vices of ego, temper, greed, attachment and lust. They follow five virtues which may be translated as truth, contentment, compassion, humility and love. These underpin ethical and moral teachings for Sikhs and help them to live in God's way/ command (hukam).
- The Guru Granth Sahib encourages Sikhs to be honest and work hard (kirat karna) and to share what they have with others and give service to the community (sewa). Modesty and humility in dress and conduct are important requirements. Following this, Sikhs can often be found serving meals to the homeless and those in need and supporting charitable campaigns.
- The Guru Granth Sahib encourages serving langar meals to anyone who needs it, in the gurdwara. This is another important aspect of ethics and moral conduct for Sikhs.
- The Guru Granth Sahib teaches that women should be treated equally to men. Sikhs do not follow cultural traditions such as requiring women to veil or requiring wedding dowry.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

6. Examine the links between Sikh rituals in the gurdwara (any place where the Guru Granth Sahib is installed) and Sikh doctrine.

- Rituals in the gurdwara are focused around the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, which is considered a living guru. Daily rituals installing and closing the Guru Granth Sahib at amrit vela or parkash karna (before dawn) and sukhasan (at night) take place, and the book is placed in a bed overnight reflecting the doctrine that it is a living guru.
- This special treatment reflects Sikh doctrine that the book contains the words of God through the prayers and hymns passed down from the ten living gurus.
- When Sikhs enter the gurdwara they may make symbolic offerings and bow in front of the throne where the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. This reflects the importance of this holy book in Sikh doctrine.
- The reciting of prayers including meditating on God's name (nam japna) may take place in the Gurdwara as well as at home, reflecting Sikh belief in realising monotheism in their lives.
- Men and women may take on any role in the gurdwara, reflecting Sikh doctrine in equality. This also applies to people from different social backgrounds.
- Serving langar meals is considered part of the worship in a gurdwara, reflecting the importance of developing humility and leaving behind the ego, so that a Sikh may leave behind the status of manmukh (follower of the ego) and try to achieve gurmukh (God-centredness).
- A special ceremony marks the festival of Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year. At the gurdwara, the Nishan Sahib flag is taken down, the flagpole washed in yoghurt symbolizing purity and a new flag installed. This, together with street processions, marks the importance of the foundation of the Khalsa community of committed Sikhs in Sikh doctrine.
- Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa and the five Ks by asking Sikhs to pledge their complete loyalty at this time in 1699. Sikh years date from then and the identity to which many Sikhs subscribe is formed around the five Ks. Sikhs remember how they are prepared, if necessary, to give their lives to defend their faith as their forebears promised to do following times of persecution.
- Rites of passage may also take place in the gurdwara. These rituals include amrit sanskar (initiation ceremony into the Khalsa), for those who opt to become khalsa Sikhs; anand karaj (marriage); and prayers for those who have died. These help to keep the community of worshippers united and focus the minds of everyone who has adopted a God-centred lifestyle, doing all actions for the service of God, and rejecting egoism.

Candidates who only describe what happens in a gurdwara cannot reach the highest markbands.

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—discuss the importance of meditation and worship.

Candidates should consider the importance (or lack thereof) of meditation and worship in the beliefs and practices of the religion they write about. It is acceptable for greater emphasis to be given to meditation or worship if the response argues reasonably that one holds greater significance than the other, though both should feature in the response.

Hinduism

It may be argued that meditation and worship are important religious practices for many Hindus for the reasons listed below (the lists are not exhaustive):

Meditation

- It forms part of jnana yoga (the path of knowledge), which is a philosophical method for attaining moksha (liberation) from samsara (the cycle of life, death and reincarnation).
- Regular and proficient meditation practice may lead to the realization that atman (Self/soul) is identical with Brahman (ultimate reality). This realization results in moksha.
- Meditation is discussed, analysed and explained in Hindu philosophical texts, which Hindus consider sacred and authoritative; for example the Brihadaranyaka and Svetasvatara Upanishads explain how knowledge of atman/Brahman as the highest universal principle can only be reached by internal stillness, observation and meditation.
- Many Hindus meditate on the universal sound ‘aum’/‘om’ in their quest for moksha, the meaning of which is explained in the Chandogya Upanishad.
- Many Hindus follow a living (or recent) guru who guides them in their meditation practice, which they believe to be important to their spiritual development.

Worship (puja)

- Puja (worship) can be an outward sign of orthopraxy (conformity to traditional practices), and so a public statement of religious identity and belonging.
- Puja forms part of bhakti yoga (path of devotion), which is a method to attain moksha.
- It is a way for Hindus to connect with and feel close to their God/s; for example, through ‘darshan’ (seeing and being seen by the deity), which equates to being in God’s presence.
- Puja (worship) features in important Hindu festivals, such as Durga puja in Navaratri and Dassehra festivals.
- The varieties of Hindu experience are reflected by the many different ways in which puja can be performed. These variations show the consistent importance of worship to Hindus. For example, puja can be performed individually or collectively; at home or at the mandir (temple).
- Women often have the responsibility of carrying out domestic puja at home. This is sometimes interpreted as women having special status within the home.
- Puja reflects Hinduism’s different theological standpoints. For example, Brahman (ultimate reality) is without form (nirguna) and so is not normally in receipt of puja. Whereas gods and goddesses with physical form (saguna) can be represented by murtis and are the objects of ritual puja.
- Hindus sometimes worship a preferred or personal God (the general term for this is ishwara/ishta-devata), which is an important aspect of their Hindu identity. Commonly worshipped deities are Vishnu, Shiva and the Goddess (Shakti).
- Puja is important to Hinduism’s spiritual, aesthetic and artistic cultures; e.g. mandirs (temples), images of deities (murtis), religious songs (bhajans), puja activities such as arti (candle-light offering).

Buddhism

Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana schools differ in their approaches to meditation and worship. Credit can be given where differences are acknowledged accurately.

Meditation. It may be argued that meditation is an important religious practice for many Buddhists for the reasons listed below (the list is not exhaustive):

- Buddha achieved nibbana/nirvana (enlightenment) through meditation. This is evidence and incentive for Buddhists to practice meditation.
- Dhamma/dharma (Buddha's teachings) is one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism. Dhamma/dharma teaches the importance of Bhavana (meditation / mental discipline).
- An important feature of the Dhamma/dharma is the Noble Eightfold path. Meditation is one of the three stands of the Path and includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.
- Buddhism teaches that meditation can lead to panna/prajna (wisdom). Wisdom, and especially realization of anatta/anatman (lack of permanent self), is necessary to attain enlightenment. Enlightenment ends dukkha/duhkha (suffering) by ceasing samsara (cycle of life).
- Buddhist monks and nuns often practice meditation with more intensity than lay people. This, in part, gives them spiritual authority, earning them respect and support from the laity.
- There are different types of meditation that combine as a holistic system for spiritual development in the quest for nibbana/nirvana (enlightenment); for example, wisdom (panna/prajna) meditations, compassion (karuna) meditations and meditations that involve concentration on breathing (anapanasati).
- For some Buddhists meditation is important to their religious identity, and they might practice individually or together as a community (sangha).

Worship

- Puja (ritual devotion) is important to some Buddhist's religious identity and may be practiced individually or communally, at home or at a temple.
- Many Buddhists practice puja to venerate the Buddha's qualities and show their respect for the Buddha. This may appear to be similar or the same as worship; especially when a Buddha image is in receipt of offerings. Responses might argue whether puja in Buddhism is or is not worship. Evidenced arguments either way can be credited.
- It could be argued that worship is not important in Buddhism for the following reasons (the list is not exhaustive):
 - Buddhist teachings do not include creator God/s comparable to the Abrahamic traditions, so there is no divinity to worship.
 - Buddhists do not worship the Buddha because he is not an incarnation of God.
 - Worship does not feature on the Noble Eight Fold path as a means to nibbana/nirvana (enlightenment).
 - Buddha instructed his disciples to follow his dhamma/dharma (teachings), not to worship him as an individual.

Sikhism

It may be argued that meditation and worship are important religious practices for many Sikhs for the reasons listed below (the lists are not exhaustive):

Meditation

- Mukti (liberation) and sach khand (realm of truth) can only be achieved by God's grace (gurprasad/nadar) and by God's will (hukam). However, meditation on God's name cultivates gurmukh (God-centeredness) and diminishes manmukh (self or ego-centeredness), which is essential self-preparation for liberation.
- Nam simran, meditation on God's name (representative of God's personality or essence), is important in Sikhs' daily practice; to feel close to God's presence, for spiritual development, and for religious identity.
- Nam japna, continual meditation on God's name, is an important act of pious devotion practiced by many Sikhs.

Worship

- It could be argued that meditation and worship are not easily differentiated in Sikhism because meditation practices concentrate the mind on God's qualities in order to simultaneously honour God and cultivate personal humbleness; for example, recitation of the Nam japo (remembrance of the name) mantra, and especially chanting "waheguru" ('wonderful Lord!').
- Worship (devotional) practices are important because they recognise and honour the truth of God's message articulated by the ten gurus and preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib. Though Sikhs regard the ten gurus with enormous respect and affection, they are not worshipped because they were human men; worship is preserved for God.
- Worship/devotion takes the form of, for example, morning and evening prayers, including Ardas (standing prayer); kirtan (meditative singing of God's word); and katha (talks) explaining the meaning of passages from the Guru Granth Sahib.
- It could be argued that sewa (altruistic service given to anyone) is a form of worship because service to others honours God, and also helps to cultivate gurmukh for the individual. Sewa is important to Sikh religious practice and community identity.
- Worship can take place individually or communally; at home or at the gurdwara. It is unusual for Sikh households to have the right conditions to keep a Guru Granth Sahib, so worship at home is more likely to consist of nam simran, nam japna and kirtan. If a Sikh family does invest in obtaining a Guru Granth Sahib, it would normally be kept at the highest level in their home. Worship at home is important for Sikhs to feel close to God, even when they are not at the gurdwara.
- Communal worship at the gurdwara is important to Sikh religious practice and community identity.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is the focal point of worship in the gurdwara; for example, out of respect Sikhs cover their heads and bow to the Guru Granth Sahib on entering the gurdwara (diwan hall), and they will not turn their backs to it or point their feet towards it. When in the gurdwara the Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a raised and richly decorated platform and is attended by a granthi (ceremonial reader of the Granth) who wafts it continually with a chauri (fan) as a sign of respect. At the beginning of the day (amrit vela) the Guru Granth Sahib is ceremonially installed in the gurdwara, and ceremonially installed in a separate room at the end of the day (sukhasan).
- Though the Guru Granth Sahib is treated with the ritualized respect of a living guru (described above), many Sikhs maintain that it is gurbani (divinely revealed words of God) within the Guru Granth Sahib, not the book itself, which is the object of worship. Candidates' responses may argue whether or not the attention given to the Guru Granth Sahib counts as worship. Evidenced arguments either way can be credited.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Section B

Judaism

8. Discuss Jewish practices regarding divorce.

- Although Judaism places great emphasis on marriage it accepts the practice of divorce if all attempts at reconciliation have failed.
- It is considered by many better to divorce than to have an unhappy home.
- In the Torah (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) there is an outline of the practice of divorce “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favour because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce, and puts it in her hand...”
- There are different practices between different Orthodox and Reform communities. Within the Orthodox community a get (divorce contract) is required before remarriage is allowed.
- In the Orthodox community the couple will apply to the Beth Din (rabbinic court) where the judges will question the witnesses and give their verdict. For couples outside of Israel, a religious and civil divorce must be obtained.
- The get must be agreed by the husband and is overseen by the Beth Din. The divorce takes effect as soon as the woman receives the document.
- References may be made to the agunah (chained woman) whose husband’s do not agree to granting a get.
- In some religious communities, e.g. the Reform, a civil divorce is all that is needed while in some communities a get is required, but the woman can initiate the process.

Accept other relevant answers.

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

9. “It is always wrong to interpret the Torah.” Discuss.

Arguments for

- It is a common belief in Judaism that the written Torah (laws of Moses) is the most important source of authority as it contains the laws of Moses that were given directly by God. It is considered important to learn Hebrew and engage in scholarly study of the Torah to perform the 613 mitzvot (duties).
- The practices of Judaism are built upon obedience to the Torah rather than subscribing to a set of beliefs. For Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox, all the mitzvot that can be obeyed are binding and should not be interpreted.
- For many Jews the Torah is a revelation from God and therefore all of the teachings must be followed as they are written. Human beings cannot change what is divine. The importance is to observe as they are God given and not to question their relevancy.
- As the practices of Judaism have always been based on obedience to the mitzvot (duties) of the Torah so it is not right to change an existing tradition.

Arguments against

- It depends upon what is meant by interpretation. There has been a tradition of interpreting the teaching of the Torah throughout Jewish history, but this does not mean altering the teaching of the Torah but expanding the teaching. Discussing the teachings of the Torah has been a central activity of the many Rabbinic schools. Historically these discussions have become sources of authority themselves e.g. the teachings of Maimonides and Hillel.
- Some Jews, especially, Reform and Liberal consider the ethical underpinning of the mitzvot as important but that the ritual aspects may be modified. They consider that there needs to be a balance regarding the practice cited in the Torah and 21st century living. Particular examples refer to what work should be carried out on Shabbat and the keeping of kashrut (food and lifestyle laws).
- Interpretations have to be made to meet the demands of the 21st century. Issues have arisen that are not referred to in the Torah e.g. the use of fidget spinners on Shabbat.
- Although Orthodox Judaism would not consider interpretation of the Torah as a positive action, pikuach nefesh (saving of a life) will always be a consideration.
The Talmud contains debates on Torah texts which some may consider as interpretative.

Accept other relevant answers.

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

Christianity

10. Discuss diverse Christian understandings of baptism and its relationship to becoming a Christian.

- All Christian denominations believe that baptism is an important rite and plays a role in establishing Christian identity.
- All denominations believe that people are not born Christians but have to become a Christian.
- Baptism literally means “immersion” and refers to the immersion of the individual in water which represents death.
- Baptism is also understood as a process of cleansing from sin. Some Christians see this as cleansing from “original sin”.
- Baptism is understood to be a way for an individual to identify with the death of Jesus Christ, dying to what may be called their “old”, “sinful”, self and then identify with the new, resurrected life of Jesus Christ.
- Some Christians, e.g. Orthodox and many independent, reformed Christian churches, practice complete immersion at baptism.
- Others e.g. Catholic, Anglican, Methodist and Lutheran, practice baptism through pouring water over the head.
- All Christians baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Baptism is understood by many traditional denominations (e.g. Orthodox, Catholic and Anglican) to be a sacrament, a sacred rite, which communicates the grace of God.
- Baptism can be understood by these denominations to be essential to the process of becoming a Christian and entering into the Church or “body of Christ” with all the benefits of grace that this confers.
- Some Christian denominations (e.g. some Protestant and also non-conformist and independent Churches) understand baptism to be an “ordinance” or command of Jesus Christ, which believers should undertake as part of the process of becoming a Christian. However, it is often expressed as an outward, public display of the process of conversion that occurred within the heart of the believer.
- Some Christians use the term (taken from the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Bible) “born again” (or “born from above”) to describe the process of becoming a Christian or converting to Christianity.
- All Christian denominations believe that becoming a Christian is made possible through God’s grace (his love for humanity) and through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Most Christian denominations believe that becoming a Christian has to be a choice of the individual in which they have to consent.
- For traditional denominations (e.g. Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran and Anglican) this is a function of the sacrament of confirmation, in which a person confirms the promises made on their behalf as an infant by parents/carers/godparents at baptism.
- Some Christian churches practice adult baptism only. This is to emphasize the importance of individual consent as being integral to the process of becoming a Christian.
- All churches believe in baptism of the Holy Spirit as well as water (as mentioned by Jesus Christ in the Gospel). However, there are different understandings of this process.
- Most traditional Churches (Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran etc.) believe that this takes place at the same time as the sacrament of Baptism and is affirmed at confirmation. It is embodied in the anointing of the head with sacred oil (a symbol of the Holy Spirit).
- Some evangelical and Pentecostal churches believe that baptism in the Holy Spirit is marked by receiving of gifts of the Holy Spirit, which may include the spiritual gift of speaking with tongues.

Credit should be given for pointing out that repentance is also seen as essential to the process of becoming a Christian and hence the rite of baptism. This is seen as a process in which an individual sincerely pledges to turn (or “return”) the direction of their life towards God and away from their self, the world and the Devil.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

11. “The incarnation is the most important doctrine in Christianity.” Discuss.

Argument for

- The incarnation is the Christian doctrine that the Son of God became a human being, whom Christians call the Lord Jesus Christ. The word “incarnation” literally means “becoming flesh”.
- The incarnation is believed to be the heart of the Christian gospel (“good news”) which claims that God, out of his unconditional love (*agape*), takes the initiative to save humanity from sin and death.
- Without the incarnation and the subsequent life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians believe it is impossible for humanity to be reconciled with God.
- The incarnation is integral to the Christian belief that it is not possible for God to simply forgive all sins without the ultimate price or consequences of sin being paid for (atonement).
- According to Christianity, if God simply forgave all sins without this atonement, this would contradict God’s qualities of justice/righteousness and holiness.
- The doctrine of the incarnation requires that the eternal Son of God became fully human so as to fully take on (identify with) human nature.
- The doctrine of the incarnation states that Jesus Christ remains fully God. Otherwise he could not have taken on and atoned for the sins of all humanity, past, present and future.

Argument against

- However, the incarnation can be seen as inseparable from other equally important Christian doctrines and beliefs.
- It is inseparable from the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This is the belief that within the oneness of the God, there are three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the eternal Son of God who is incarnated.
- It is inseparable from the Christian belief that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God as personal love (*agape*).
- The incarnation is inseparable from the Christian belief in the resurrection. The resurrection is regarded by Christians as the proof of the success of the incarnation, that death has been defeated.
- The incarnation can also be seen as inseparable from the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth which explains how the eternal Son of God became the living human being, Jesus Christ.
- The incarnation is closely connected with the Christian doctrines of redemption and atonement. Christians believe that it is Jesus Christ’s death on the cross that atones for sin. It thereby redeems (releases/frees) humanity from slavery to sin and death.

Credit should be given for pointing out that: The incarnation is expressed in creeds (authoritative statements of belief) such as the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. These were developed by the Church to clarify Christian belief in the light of various confusions and so-called heresies that arose in the early centuries of Christianity. Following the rise of Western secular humanist and naturalist philosophies in the 19th and 20th centuries, attempts have been made to interpret the doctrine of the incarnation in symbolic or moral terms.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Islam

12. Examine the relevance of shari'ah (divine law) and qanun (secular law) for the ethics and moral conduct of Muslims.
- Ethics and moral conduct might include individual decision-making on what is right and wrong; matters of personal and family life, marriage and divorce; medical ethics and laws set by a state covering many matters applicable to everyone equally, regardless of religion.
 - Shari'ah (divine law) is found in many different forms according to different traditions and legal rulings. Many Muslims hold the concept in high standing as they believe that it is based on the words of Allah/God in the Qur'an. These have been interpreted in the light of Muhammad's example, the Sunnah, and by various scholars, to form guidance on many matters ranging from religious duties to family life.
 - In shari'ah, the pillar of zakat/zakaht (alms-giving) is a moral duty that involves paying alms tax for the benefit of the poor, those in need, travellers, pregnant and nursing mothers and so on.
 - Marriage and divorce may be settled by shari'ah or by secular law. Some Muslims consider it their moral duty to marry and divorce according to shari'ah as this is God's law; others that shari'ah laws and courts, which operate in some countries, do not provide a fair platform for deciding such matters, especially for women.
 - There are many aspects of modern-day life not covered by shari'ah, such as aspects of medical ethics.
 - Qanun (secular law for Muslims) originated in the early days of Islam and developed particularly under the Abbasids, when the Khalifah appointed judges to deal with matters of trade and criminal laws and made decisions about them separate from the religious authorities of the time.
 - In the present day, Muslim scholars have issued rulings that it is an obligation upon Muslims to obey the secular laws of the country where they are residing. Many Muslims go further and say that it is important to become involved in communities, even stand for election to contribute towards making secular laws, as this is a moral duty for the benefit of everyone.
 - Some Muslims believe they should create religious states in which everything is governed by their form of shari'ah, whereas others believe that secular law is more in keeping with the way Muhammad ruled Madinah in the early years. Different Muslim countries have created different systems to reflect the two (examples may be credited).

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

13. Examine Sufi religious experiences in Islam.

- Religious experiences may take on many forms. Muhammad reported dreams and sensations and often withdrew into seclusion in the desert to contemplate deeper meaning.
- Sufis claim to draw on this tradition in Islam. Sufis follow various practices to assist them in drawing nearer to Allah/God.
- These practices may include dhikr (recitation/remembrance of the name of Allah), chanting on the names of God, singing hymns, jumping and dancing in a state of ecstasy and whirling in a formal dance.
- The use of misbahah (prayer beads), counting whilst reciting the names of God, is a practice of dhikr shared by many Muslims.
- Sufi dance and meditation usually take place in organizations which have grown up over the centuries. Followers join by giving an oath of allegiance to their spiritual master, a Shaykh, who guides them in developing their religious experiences. They commonly recite prayers in the morning and evening, and attend gatherings on Thursday evenings, to practice dhikr.
- These events may include whirling dances, in which whirling dervishes perform a symbolic routine to help them feel a connection with God.
- Dance may also include a large group holding hands and following moves led by a conductor, whilst chanting or singing Arabic hymns (qasidas), leading them into a state of ecstasy in which they lose all thought of the physical world around them and concentrate only on dhikr.
- Some visit the tombs of Sufi saints and feel a connection with Sufis who, through their experiences and examples, may be remembered as 'friends of God'.
- Some refer to Sufism as an individual approach and feel that through seclusion and contemplation they may draw near to God, removing all barriers in between so that they find union with God.
- Sufis speak of the joy and bliss of personal, direct experience of God, the merciful and loving. All practices are means to this end.
- Some Sufis refer to the traditional practices, such as prayer and the Five Pillars of Islam, as helpful starting points on a journey of religious experience, which they leave behind as they follow a course of less formal religious experience.
- Over the centuries, many Muslims were converted to Islam by travelling Sufi traders who communicated Islam through drama, stories and engaging people in their rituals and experiences.

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 the dying and the dead.

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 context of beliefs in Judaism, Christianity or Islam.

Judaism

There are differences in rites and practices depending upon the level of Jewish observance and also cultural inheritance e.g. Ashkenazi or Sephardic.

- The Shema prayer is said as someone is dying. This prayer is central to Jewish beliefs and illustrates the belief in the one God.
- Some Jews render their clothes either at news of death or at the funeral. This is an ancient tradition and expresses the depth of grief.
- Funerals should not be elaborate and where possible within twenty-four hours of death. All bodies should be dressed in a plain white shroud. It is believed that all are equal at death and therefore, that it is wrong to have displays of ostentation. This belief in equality is also reflected in the custom of marking the grave with stones rather than elaborate flowers.
- The tallit (prayer shawl) may be placed in the coffin or on the body to show the importance of having observed the mitzvot during life. The fringes will sometimes be cut to show they are now free of any further religious duties.
- The chevra kaddisha (group preparing the body) prepare the body. It is believed that the body should be treated with dignity and that someone from the community should be with the body until burial. Respect should be given to the body at all times as it was the earthly vessel for the soul.
- Orthodox Jews will be buried while many Reform will now have cremation. As many Orthodox Jews believe there is a physical life after death.
- Once the grave is filled, the mourners pray and the kaddish is recited. Sephardic Jews will walk around the coffin seven times (seven often being considered the perfect number and relates to days of the Creation). Their prayers relate to the angel of mercy to accompany the coffin.
- For the next seven days the close family will sit shiva (seven-day period after the funeral). This includes staying at home and family friends visiting to support the family. Shiva gives time to remember the blessed memory of the deceased and the kaddish prayer will be recited. Mirrors will be covered so the bereaved aren't distracted by worldly activities. This rejection of worldly activities is continued for the next thirty days. These rituals show that life cannot return immediately to normal.
- Candles are lit to represent the person's soul and relate to Proverbs 20:27 "A person's soul is the candle of the Lord."
- Each year on the anniversary of the death prayers are said for the dead person and a yahrzeit candle is lit. This shows respect to the deceased and keeps alive memories of loved ones.

Islam

There are many differences in rituals and the reasons for those rituals. There are often due to cultural influences. Credit should be given where candidates have explained the importance of these rituals.

- When a Muslim is close to death, they try to repeat the final words of Prophet Muhammad as the Prophet Muhammad is the most important Prophet in Islam.
- The Shahadah (kalimah) is whispered into the ears of the dying person as these words were whispered into their ears as a baby. So, the belief is emphasized that at death they are returning to the creator Allah/God.
- The body is treated with great respect with only Muslims washing it (ghusl). This reflects the importance of the person as one of Allah's creations.
- The body will be placed in a plain shroud which represents purity and equality as all are equal before Allah in death. Similarly, funerals should be simple as all are believed to be equal before Allah.
- Prayers are said at the grave including the first chapter of the Qur'an and the takbir. These prayers emphasize the greatness of Allah and the belief people will be brought back to life.
- Muslims are buried facing Makkah as this is the holy city and the direction that Muslims worship throughout their lives.
- A little earth is placed over the grave to reflect the teachings of the Qur'an "From the (earth) did we create you, and into it we return you and from it shall we bring you out once again" Surah 20:55. For this reason Muslims prefer to be buried without a coffin in countries where this is allowed.

Christianity

There are many differences in rites and practices depending upon the Christian denomination. Responses may refer to a range of traditions or just one.

- Anointing of the sick is a sacrament carried out within some denominations, e.g. Catholic, when a person is seriously ill or dying. It is carried out by a priest who will anoint oil to a sick person. This helps ease the dying person into the afterlife having asked God for forgiveness.
- Other last rites for the dying may include confession and eucharist.
- Many Christians practice a wake. This is a period of waiting, prayer and observation around the body of the deceased before burial. They can vary between one and three days.
- Funerals are usually held in a place of worship as this reflects the community of the worshipper.
- In a Catholic service a Requiem Mass will often be held which allows prayers to be said for the deceased and for the comfort of the bereaved.
- There will be prayers and candles lit to reflect teachings from Jesus such as John 11.25 “I am the resurrection and the life”. The candle represents Jesus as the light of the world guiding a path to heaven.
- Psalm 23 will often be recited to reflect that God will comfort those who mourn.
- Some Christians prefer to be buried so that the bones of the dead are intact for the Day of Judgement. Orthodox Christians do not allow cremation. Since Vatican 2, Catholics are now permitted to cremate their dead.
- In some denominations there is a tradition that a mass is celebrated with the main intention being to pray for the repose of the deceased’s soul. This can be at any time but is often in November or on the anniversary of the deceased.
- Some Christians practice periods of mourning. In Orthodox traditions this is 40 days.
- Different denominations will have practices where a source of authority (e.g. priest, minister, chaplain) reads or states words of comfort (including sacred texts and prayers).

Accept any other relevant answer.

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