

Markscheme

May 2025

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 ashrams for individuals and groups within Hinduism.

- Ashrams are centres where Hindus can go to learn spiritual discipline. This might be to attend classes to practice yoga, practice meditation, learn from a guru or lead a life of contemplation as an ascetic.
- Ashrams were originally important for individuals who wanted to withdraw from worldly life and become ascetics. They were found in remote locations, far from towns and cities, enabling people to focus on religious devotions and meditations away from worldly distractions. In the Vedic tradition, devotees make rituals in front of sacred fires in ashrams.
- This provided a place for gurus to emerge as spiritual teachers. The Upanishads suggest wise men taught their pupils truths and they spent years studying in what we now know as ashrams. The ashrams enabled the gurus to overcome human desires and develop sincere and trustworthy characters.
- Ashrams are mentioned in sacred texts and have an important role inspiring individuals and Hindu communities. In the Mahabharata, a youthful Krishna goes to Sandipani ashram. Here, he learns about spiritual matters and gains greater knowledge and inspiration.
- Ashrams provided education for Hindus for centuries, before the modern school system developed, especially in some rural areas. They enabled those of religious background to gain an education focused on their faith.
- Ashrams have helped to develop the leadership of Hindu communities. Mahatma Gandhi stayed at Sabarmati Ashram. Sathya Sai Baba inspired millions of Hindus around the world. He taught Hindus about the way to Moksha (liberation) from his ashram in India.
- Swami Narayan, a Hindu revivalist leader in the nineteenth century, has an ashram named after him in India today, where Hindus from different places may come for spiritual retreat. Some make the journey to the ashram as a pilgrimage to attend an annual festival.
- For Hindu communities living in the west, ashrams can provide centres where they can go and learn more about their faith. They can learn meditation, yoga and attend spiritual retreats. They can be helpful to bring Hindus together where the population is living spread out amongst others. This can help develop interest and knowledge about the practices and spirituality of Hinduism.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

2. Compare the importance of Holi and Divali for Hindus.

- Hinduism has many different festivals and traditions associated with them. They help individuals, families and communities come together and focus their worship on deities. Each festival may have particular foci, but all festivals are important in bringing people together. The focus of the question is comparison and that candidates should move beyond description of the two festivals.
- Some Hindu festivals celebrate the seasons. These include Divali, considered the beginning of the year for many, and Holi, the festival of the spring. These link Hinduism with the natural world and the rhythms of nature.

Divali

- According to Hindu tradition, Rama returned home with Sita, leading a vast army by the light of candles as it was dark due to it being new moon. So, families light candles, share sweet foods and enjoy community festivities.
- Fireworks are set off, symbolizing the victory of light over darkness. This represents truth over falsehood. This reminds Hindus of the importance of religious principles behind the festival.
- There are particular traditions from sacred texts which are marked especially by particular groups of Hindus. In Kolkata, Kali is remembered at this time. In South India, the marriage of Vishnu and Lakshmi is celebrated. The story of Rama and Sita is marked by followers of Vishnu.
- The goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi, is welcomed and brings blessings of success to homes, for education and for businesses.
- Divali is a popular occasion during which those of other faiths may also join Hindus and learn more about Hinduism.

Holi

- Holi takes place at full moon in spring, celebrating the freshness of the season.
- In Hindu tradition, Vishnu protected Prahlada from his father's efforts to kill him by asking his sister Holika to throw him into a burning fire. She thought she would be safe, but Vishnu protected Prahlada and Holika became ashes.
- This is particularly important to followers of Vishnu as it symbolizes the victory of good over evil, which is celebrated at this time.
- It shows how devotional practice, represented by Prahlada, wins and inspires Hindus with their devotions.
- Krishna and milkmaids played tricks in fun at this time, so families recreate the fun and throw brightly coloured powders on each other, celebrating colourfulness and jollity.

Comparisons

- Conclusions might be made, drawing similarities in seasonal aspects, Hindu traditions, moral lessons and colourful celebrations, whilst recognizing differences in the particularities of each festival.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Buddhism

3. Discuss the importance of group religious experience in Buddhism.

Candidates might begin by discussing the purposes of religious experiences to frame their argument. Purposes might include:

- to gain a deeper understanding of the dhamma/dharma
 - to practice the dhamma/dharma effectively
 - for personal, spiritual development
 - to maintain the traditions of Buddhist beliefs, rituals and other practices.
-
- The importance of coming together as a group or community for religious experience is established by the sangha (community) being the third of the Three Jewels of Buddhism: Buddha, dhamma/dharma, sangha.
 - Many Buddhists consider the monastic sangha as the ideal, and therefore most important, lifestyle for practising and experiencing Buddha's dhamma/dharma because the monastic vows prioritize the dhamma/dharma, and the routine distractions of daily life are diminished.
 - In some forms of Theravada Buddhism, e.g. in Myanmar and Thailand, boys take temporary ordination in a monastery to experience the benefits of the monastic sangha. This shows that the group religious experience of the sangha is regarded as very important to Theravada schools of Buddhism.
 - Lay sanghas are important to Buddhists who have taken, or who are close to taking, lay vows because they are mutually supportive communities for practising and experiencing dhamma/dharma.
 - Group religious experience promotes accountability to practice the dhamma/dharma with conviction, and so may heighten its intensity.
 - Group religious experience can help to ensure rituals and other religious practices are performed correctly, and therefore are efficacious.
 - Some ritual artefacts necessary for religious practices can only be owned by monastic or official lay Buddhist communities because they are too sacred, or too expensive, to be owned by individuals. This may make group religious experience necessary as well as important for some Buddhists.
 - Celebration of festivals is an example of religious practice experienced by a group or community. This is important to Buddhists because festivals commemorate important events in Buddhist history.
 - Religious leaders (senior monks or nuns) give congregational lectures to explain the Buddha's dhamma/dharma to monks and nuns, and to the laity. This type of group religious experience is important because it enables Buddhist communities to come together in solidarity, and to benefit from the advanced spiritual knowledge of religious leaders. These congregational gatherings often begin with senior monks/nuns leading the congregation in devotional chants.
 - Many Buddhists practice group meditation at centres that encourage silent, group meditation.
 - Group religious experience is important for consolidating the unity of Buddhist communities.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

4. Discuss how the Three Marks of Existence are related to each other in Buddhist teachings.

- The Three Marks of Existence in Buddhism are anicca/anitya (change), dukkha/dukkha (suffering), and anatta (lack of permanent self). They are related because together they explain Buddhist teachings about the nature of reality in samsara (cycle of life).
- Anicca/anitya is a central Buddhist teaching. It observes that nothing in samsara is permanent and everything changes.
- Dukkha/dukkha means suffering (dissatisfaction is a better translation). Buddhism teaches everyone in samsara experiences dukkha/dukkha.
- Anicca/anitya and dukkha/dukkha are related because they are both features of samsara.
- Anicca/anitya and dukkha/dukkha are related because anicca/anitya triggers dukkha/dukkha. Anicca/anitya itself is not the cause of dukkha/dukkha; rather, our ignorant responses to anicca/anitya cause dukkha/dukkha. When things are going well, and then change for the worse, we experience suffering. When things are not going well, we experience suffering because we forget that they may change for the better in the future. So, dukkha/dukkha (suffering) is really caused by ignorance, not by anicca/anitya.
- Anatta is the Buddhist teaching that there is no enduring soul that migrates to a new body after death. This is opposite to the Hindu belief in a permanent soul (atman). Instead, Buddhism teaches that elements linked to human action and consciousness pass into a new body after death.
- Anicca/anitya and anatta are related because the self is subject to change just like everything else in samsara.
- Anatta (lack of permanent self) and dukkha/dukkha are related because it is the false belief in a permanent self that causes suffering. When painful things happen we falsely believe they are affecting our permanent self and this causes suffering.
- The Buddhist teaching of anatta explains that dukkha/dukkha ceases when we realize the truth of anatta, that there is no permanent self for painful things to affect. So, anatta and dukkha/dukkha are related because the realization of anatta brings about an end to dukkha/dukkha.
- Although anicca/anitya, dukkha/dukkha and anatta are three separate Buddhist teachings, they interrelate as The Three Marks of Existence. This is because together they explain why existence in samsara is dukkha/dukkha (suffering), and why realization of anatta brings about an end to dukkha/dukkha (suffering) and, in fact, an end to existence in samsara.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Sikhism

5. Discuss the importance of the Rahit Maryada (the Sikh code of conduct) regarding ethics and moral conduct for Sikhs.
- Sikhs follow the holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, as a living guru, and are not universally bound by a moral code. Meditation on the Guru Granth Sahib and developing spiritual focus might be seen by many as the main goals, which might be achieved without a moral code.
 - However, many Sikhs wanted guidance on various issues. Following Guru Gobind Singh, the book and the Khalsa gave rules on conduct. The Rahit Maryada code was agreed in 1936, formalizing earlier codes and teachings.
 - The Rahit Maryada helped answer the question of the definition of a Sikh, who believes in an eternal God, follows the Gurus and believes in Amrit sanskar (initiation into the Khalsa). The main beliefs of Sikhs as given by the Gurus are expected to be followed by individual Sikhs, including respect for all equally regardless of race, caste, colour or status.
 - The Rahit Maryada is significant in guiding Sikhs in spiritual discipline. The code expects Sikhs to practise personal devotions daily, and to practise Nam japna (meditation on God's name), and to study the scriptures.
 - Communal obligations are also given. Sikhs should attend services in the Gurdwara, listen to the teachings of the Guru, participate in Akhand Path (nonstop reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) and perform Kirtan (meditative singing), drawing strength by joining others in worship. It is a requirement to help by doing tasks such as serving Langar or cleaning the Gurdwara.
 - The code asks Sikhs to look after their extended families and to treat others as if they were also family. This is based on the principle of Vand chakna (to share one's wealth with others), as promoted by Guru Nanak.
 - The code includes Sewa/Seva (altruistic service given to anyone). Sikhs are asked to give 10% of wealth to help good causes; to support community services and build links with everyone, of any faith or background, in their communities.
 - A guide for morally upright living is given in the Rahit Maryada. Sacrificial meat (e.g. halal), intoxicants (e. g. tobacco), gambling and other things are considered evil and defined; and virtues of self-improvement are encouraged.
 - The Rahit Maryada code prohibits or restricts the observance of rites or rituals without understanding and superstitions. No worship of idols and images should be made. There should be no hair cutting, no adultery, no use of intoxicants and no eating of Kutha meat, which are all considered to break the code.
 - In sum, it could be argued that the code guides Sikhs in all aspects of their lives, but it is the principles and teachings of the Gurus on which it is based that carry original authority.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

6. Discuss the importance of the Khalsa as a source of authority for Sikhs.

- The focus of the question is the Khalsa as a source of authority, so candidates should go beyond describing the nature of the Khalsa.
- Sikhs refer to the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text, as the most important source of authority. The wisdom of the ten Gurus is also an important source of authority.
- Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Guru of Sikhism. He established the Khalsa, which refers to committed Sikhs who have gone through an initiation ceremony called Amrit sanskar. As the tenth Guru and the one who completed the tradition, this gave the Khalsa particular importance as a source of authority.
- The tradition of how this was started is based on an event under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh. Five men called the Panj Piare (beloved ones) had such faith in the Guru that they went into the tent expecting to die for their Lord. Instead, they were rewarded and became initiated members of the community of Sikhs, known as Khalsa Sikhs.
- It was at this time that the names Singh and Kaur became taken by the initiated and the traditions of the Five Ks were taken, giving Sikhs special identity, focus and pride in their faith.
- The beginning of the Khalsa is marked by an important festival in Sikhism called Vaisakhi. This gives it special authority for Sikhs and makes it a focus for the year in the life and worship of Sikhs. It is a time when Sikhs remember their traditions of loyalty and sacrifice as they look to the authority of the Khalsa to guide their lives and worship. The Khalsa is referred to as a putting into practice on earth what was intended by God.
- Not all Sikhs are Khalsa Sikhs. However, many do go through the Amrit sanskar ceremony to join the Khalsa.
- Sikhs make a personal choice to enter the Khalsa. This is one of life's most important events for Sikhs and helps them commit their lives to God following the rules of their tradition. It means they always look to those rules, as an authority for their lives, and if they should fall short, they make repentance and recommit themselves to the Khalsa.
- Many matters arise nowadays which Sikhs may ask for guidance about. Consulting the Khalsa is a way of getting expert advice from those who have committed their lives to Sikhism and its rules and practices. This means their guidance will be both knowledgeable and given with the authority of the spiritual traditions.
- The Khalsa may refer to particular committees, such as the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, based in Amritsar, or the local Gurdwara management committee. This enables Sikhs to receive local guidance appropriate to their needs.

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—examine the argument that killing is never morally justified.

For Hinduism

- The idea of moral justification for killing might be scrutinized within the complexity and diversity of Hindu traditions and religious practices. Hindus do not share a unified, fixed position; but hold a variety of positions influenced by religious, cultural and personal beliefs.
- Many Hindu traditions promote a philosophy of ahimsa (non-violence), which means killing cannot be morally justified. This may be true of householders, and also of renouncers, people who have given up ordinary household life to focus on spiritual development.
- For many Hindus the doctrine of samsara (life, death and reincarnation) means killing cannot be morally justified because of unknown family relationships; for example, an animal slaughtered for meat may have been a former relative.
- Some might argue that the doctrine of atman (self or soul, sometimes seen as identical with Brahman) means the actual act of killing is impossible. The physical body may be killed, but the real self is the atman, which is eternal and cannot be destroyed. However, this can be criticized as a weak moral justification, because the act of killing a physical body causes harm and suffering.
- Varnashramadharma is a classical Hindu doctrine. It teaches that it is a Hindu's moral duty to follow the obligations of their varnas. Therefore, it may be argued that killing can be morally justified as a dharmic or varna obligation, for example in the case of the kshatriya, the warrior varna, although candidates might debate whether varna obligation still holds relevance in contemporary times.
- The Bhagavad Gita is a classic Hindu religious text from the Hindu epic the Mahabharata. In the text the hero, Arjuna, a kshatriya (warrior), expresses doubts about the war he is about to fight. Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, alleviates Arjuna's doubts through philosophical explanation of the importance of upholding one's dharmic duty and being able to detach oneself from the karmic consequences of action through absolute devotion to God. Some Hindus interpret this story as a moral justification of killing in warfare in the context of dharma yuddha, righteous war in defence of sanatana dharma (the eternal truth of Hindu teachings). Candidates might examine whether the philosophical strengths of this moral justification continue to hold relevance in contemporary times.
- Beliefs about abortion and euthanasia are likely to be shaped by cultural as well as religious attitudes. Hindu religious texts typically argue that abortion is morally unjust because the atman (soul) joins the body at the moment of conception giving the foetus personhood, so abortion is equivalent to killing a person. It may be argued that to end a person's life before its natural time through abortion or euthanasia prevents the person from working off their karma, which is detrimental and therefore immoral. Moral justification for abortion and euthanasia is also precluded by the doctrine of ahimsa (non-violence) central to many forms of Hinduism.
- Many Hindus are vegetarian on the grounds of ahimsa, but many are not. Moral justification for slaughtering animals for meat is likely to be influenced by religious, cultural and personal beliefs.
- Animals are ritually sacrificed in some Hindu religious rituals. Here killing the animal is morally justified on the grounds of religious necessity to perform the ritual. The conviction of such moral justification is likely to depend on personal belief in the purpose and necessity of the ritual.

For Buddhism

- The idea of moral justification can be scrutinized in Buddhism from the position that decisions are personal and bring about personal consequences through the principle of karma (action). There is no divine punishment similar to that found in some monotheistic religions.
- The idea of moral justification can also be scrutinized from the strong moral framework set out in the dhamma/dharma (teachings of the Buddha); this is summarized by Buddhism's central

ethical principle of karuna (compassion for all), which teaches against causing any type of harm to others.

- Sila (ethical conduct) is a strand of the Noble Eightfold Path that includes Right Action (incorporating the Five Precepts), Right Speech and Right Livelihood (happiness) for oneself and for others. The fact that sila (ethical conduct) is a distinctive strand on the Noble Eightfold Path shows that high moral conduct is important for Buddhists in their spiritual, and therefore personal, lives. It is therefore difficult to reconcile killing as being morally just.
- The Five Precepts also provide a strong moral framework for Buddhists. Ahimsa (non-violence) is the first of the Five Precepts and underpins the other four of the Precepts. It is difficult to reconcile the doctrine of ahimsa with killing or causing harm to others.
- Causing violence to others is a serious transgression of the monastic vows (vinaya) that would cause a monk or nun to be expelled from their monastery. This demonstrates the importance Buddhist traditions give to upholding ahimsa (non-violence) as a moral and spiritual standpoint. This argues against any moral justification for killing.
- Doctrine of karma precludes violent actions, even in self-defence, as this would generate demeritorious ('bad') karma for oneself and hinder one's spiritual progression. Though whether or not concern about karmic consequences is a moral justification for not killing is debatable. In Buddhism, the intention behind action matters; so, refraining from killing for self-centred rather than compassionate reasons may not be considered as moral action.
- There are no universal or fixed positions on abortion or euthanasia in Buddhism. Many Buddhists cannot reconcile the doctrines of ahimsa with abortion or euthanasia. Many argue that to end a person's life before its natural time through abortion or euthanasia prevents the person from progressing spiritually, which is detrimental and therefore immoral. Other Buddhists might argue that it is compassionate, therefore moral, to prevent or end a life of suffering. Beliefs about abortion and euthanasia are likely to be shaped by cultural as well as religious attitudes.
- Buddhist teachings do not have a 'just war' theory that is clearly defined or universally accepted. Many Buddhists argue that violent warfare is never morally justified on grounds of ahimsa. Others argue that defensive warfare is permissible when it diminishes wider suffering, on the grounds of compassion and because there is no definitive statement against defensive war in Buddhist teachings. The Dalai Lama opted for a peaceful rather than violent resistance to China's occupation of Tibet. In other conflicts Buddhist responses have been violent, e.g. Sri Lanka's civil war. This shows that moral justification for killing during times of conflict is dependent on context.
- The Buddha stood against the ritual killing of animals and Buddhists do not sacrifice animals for religious rituals. This is morally justified by the doctrine of ahimsa. At the time of the Buddha, abandonment of animal sacrifice put a clear distinction between the Buddha's teachings and some Hindu traditions of the time.
- Buddhists are not always vegetarian. Vegetarianism is more common among western Buddhists where it has become more culturally normative. Buddhists who practise vegetarianism voluntarily are likely to do so on the moral justification of ahimsa; that it is morally wrong to kill animals for food (or other produce such as leather).
- In many Buddhist traditions mendicants accept food from the laity as alms. Here the principal doctrine is to accept what is given with a mind-set of non-attachment. This disassociates mendicants from the action and karmic consequences of slaughtering animals for food. Some Buddhists may argue that this removes the need for moral justification regarding eating meat, others might find this argument unconvincing because an animal has still been slaughtered for food.

For Sikhism

- Sikhism teaches that there is one God (nirguna; God as one and formless). God created the universe and is present (immanent) in every part of creation. People are invested with God's divine spark (jot). Therefore, killing cannot be morally justified because it is a transgression against God's creation, and against God's presence within creation.

- Sikhism has a strong moral standpoint that is difficult to reconcile with killing. Sikhism teaches the ethical principle of equality towards all people regardless of their gender, religion or other characteristics. The Sikh practice of sewa/seva (altruistic service to God and all humanity, regardless of birth or gender) intends to promote friendship and a caring attitude towards others. Sikh religious beliefs and practices promote diplomacy and community spirit, not hatred or violence.
- The Rahit Maryada is a code of ethical and practical guidance for Sikhs. The Rahit Maryada stipulates that Sikhs must not kill their daughters, nor maintain any relationships with persons known to kill girls. This is set against a cultural backdrop in India where boy children were favoured over girls. The code unambiguously rejects any moral justification for killing daughters.
- Outright pacifism has not been normative in Sikhism since the martyrdom of the fifth guru, Guru Arjan. Sikhs are duty bound to protect the weak and vulnerable. This is symbolised by the kirpan (small, curved dagger worn by Khalsa initiated Sikhs), which is one of the five K's. The term kirpan is derived from the Panjabi 'kirpa' (grace) and 'ana' (honour). Sikhism has a military history and Sikhs are expected to take military action against oppression. So, it can be argued that Sikhism justifies killing on moral grounds under military circumstances.
- Guru Gobind Singh formed the Khalsa, in part, as a martial fraternity to fight oppression. Guru Gobind Singh also established dharam yudh, the principle of a 'righteous war'. This restricts reasons under which war can be declared and constrains violence during warfare; for example, war should be a last resort after peaceful means have failed, and civilians should not be harmed. Therefore, it can be argued that moral justification for killing during warfare has strict limitations.
- In recent history a Sikh separatist movement resorted to bloodshed in their fight for Khalistan, an independent Sikh state. Some regarded the movement as freedom fighters, others as terrorists. This means moral justification for killing during a military struggle is subjective.
- Sikh views on abortion and euthanasia are likely to be shaped by cultural as well as religious attitudes. A traditional view would argue that abortion and euthanasia are morally unjust because human life is a manifestation of God's divine spark (jot). Only God has the authority to end life. To interfere with God's plan through abortion or euthanasia is an expression of haumai (ego-centredness) and manmukh (follower of ego and base instincts) because it prioritises personal wants over God's intended plan.
- There is no religious obligation for Sikhs to be vegetarian, though many choose to follow a vegetarian diet for personal moral reasons. Most gurdwaras serve only vegetarian food in their langar (kitchen). This is to promote hospitality, so that meals can be shared with people who have different dietary requirements. This is not due to a religious belief that slaughtering animals for food is morally wrong.
- Sikhs do not conduct or condone the ritual sacrifice of animals for religious purposes and such action is not morally justified within Sikhism.

Section B

Judaism

8. “The Mishnah and Talmud have little importance in Judaism.” Discuss.

The focus of the question is on the considered importance of the Mishnah and Talmud not on a description of them.

Reference might include comparisons of the Mishnah and Talmud in relationship to the written Torah.

Responses would be expected to indicate that there are differences of opinion both between and within Orthodox and non-Orthodox traditions.

Points against the argument

- Both the Talmud and Mishnah have a significant history and have been used for many centuries.
- Both the Mishnah and the Talmud have distinctive roles in Judaism. The Mishnah is the written version of the oral law, and the Talmud is the source from which the Halakhah is derived.
- Both the Talmud and Mishnah give guidance on every aspect of human experience. They are the basis of everyday life for many Jews.
- The Talmud records the legal and religious discussions that thousands of rabbis had over the centuries until it was compiled in about 500 CE. It acts as a foundation of Jewish law, practice and customs. The debates between rabbis and other scholars that can be found in the Mishnah and the Talmud act as a source of guidance and authority.
- The Mishnah is considered by many Jews to have been revealed at the same time as the written Torah/law and is considered a continuous and infallible chain of transmission from Moses.
- There are many yeshivot world-wide where the study of the Mishnah and Talmud is a key element of study.
- Many consider the Mishnah is even more important than the Talmud as it contains debates between rabbis and theological, philosophical and ethical works.

Points in favour of the argument

- Although the Mishnah and the Talmud are important, they are not the actual Torah and are not seen by most Jews as divine revelations from God.
- The Talmud is composed in a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic (the latter was the spoken vernacular of Babylonian Jews), which makes it less accessible to many Jews.
- Although The Talmud and Mishnah make references to a particular time many consider they do not supply reliable historical information.
- Some Jews do not consider that teachings from the Mishnah and Talmud are relevant for life today as they were compiled so long ago.
- Some Jews consider the Talmud is not a sacred text at all. The Karaite sect in Babylonia, refuted the oral tradition and denounced the Talmud as a rabbinic fabrication.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

9. Examine attitudes to divorce within Judaism.

Relevant references to different attitudes (including practices) within Judaism should be credited.

- Judaism has recognized the concept of ‘no-fault’ divorce for thousands of years, although sometimes divorce was discouraged due to the need of payments to wives.
- Although divorce is seen as a last resort it is allowed in the Jewish tradition and not seen as sinful. Most Jews consider divorce as a sad ‘fact of life’. Many Jews consider divorce preferable to remaining in a negative relationship in which family members can be emotionally harmed.
- Traditionally, under Jewish law, reasons do not have to be given by the husband for the intention of divorce.
- In the Talmud there is reference to a number of reasons why a man might want to divorce his wife, for example, for spoiling his dinner. Jewish law also refers to divorce being required if the wife commits a sexual transgression.
- In some Jewish traditions rabbinic authorities, e.g. Beth Din, should be consulted regarding the process of divorce.
- Many Jews believe that a civil divorce is not sufficient to dissolve a Jewish marriage. As far as Jewish law is concerned, a couple remains married until the woman receives the get.
- According to Orthodox traditions divorce is granted when a get is given. This is a bill of divorce which is handed to the woman. It is referred to in the Torah in Deuteronomy 24:1. In the Talmud this is referred to as sefer k’ritut (scroll of cutting off) and allows the woman to be free to remarry. Women who cannot get a ‘get’ are known as agunot (chained women) as they cannot remarry in an Orthodox religious ceremony.
- The granting of a divorce is seen as so important that historically Jewish courts and synagogues have put pressure on males who refuse to give their wives a get. This has included not allowing males who refuse to grant a get the mitzvah of being called to read the Torah in the synagogue.
- The Reform movement does not require a get as they consider that divorce is a civil matter. Many Reform movements have ‘caring community committees’ to support those going through the process of divorce.
- Traditionally only the Orthodox Jewish male could request a get but in most communities males and females can now request divorce.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Christianity

10. “Christian churches have never given women the high status that Jesus Christ did.” Discuss.

There are various approaches which may be applied to this question, as outlined below. To gain marks in the higher bands, candidates should show an awareness of more than one, as reflected by different sections of the markscheme.

The New Testament evidence that Jesus treated women with a high status include:

- talking to the Samaritan woman at the well and then choosing her to be his first messenger of the gospel;
- having women followers/disciples (e.g. Mary Magdalene, the sisters Mary and Martha);
- touching and healing a woman with a permanent flow of blood;
- defending and protecting the woman accused of adultery;
- choosing women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection (which Christians regard as the most important historical event ever and in a time/culture where a woman’s witness was regarded as less reliable than that of a man’s);
- choosing a woman to be the means through which he would manifest his divine presence in the world (the incarnation through the Blessed Virgin Mary).

New Testament evidence that Jesus did not treat women equally:

- Jesus chose only males to be his 12 Apostles.
- Only males were chosen to be writers of Holy Scripture.

Evidence that Christian churches have not treated /do not treat women equally:

- Women have been and still are excluded from important roles and responsibilities such as priests, Deacons, Bishops in many churches.
- Women have been and still are excluded from other leadership roles in worship and the exercise of authority and administration.
- The Church has upheld the Blessed Virgin Mary as the model of virtue, yet no woman can follow her example of being both virgin and mother.
- Women have frequently been portrayed in Christian cultures as responsible for sin entering the world, tempters of men, unreliable and untrustworthy.

Evidence that women have and are increasingly being given more equal status and roles in Christian Churches:

- New Testament evidence that women had important roles in the early Church e.g. Phoebe, Priscilla and Lydia
- Women Priests, Deacons and Bishops now accepted in some Churches (e.g. Anglican and Methodist)
- Women taking on roles of deacons and chaplains in schools and Universities, hospitals in both Protestant and the Roman Catholic Church
- Women have always had an important role in teaching, healing, and pastoral work in the community in all Churches, e.g. the important role of female Religious orders, nuns, convents, etc.
- The Blessed Virgin Mary has always been venerated as supreme role model, of Christian virtue and Mother of the Church.
- There have always been very important and widely respected women mystics, saints and theologians e.g. St Helena, St Winifride, St Hilda, St. Julian of Norwich, St Agnes, St Theresa of Avila, Mother Theresa.

Candidates may also refer to the role of culture and its influence (positive and negative) on the status of women in the Christian churches.

Candidates may also be rewarded for authoritative scriptural references to support reasons for and against the statement e.g. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Galatians 3v28.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.
1 Timothy 2v12

Accept any other relevant answer.
Marks should be allocated according to the markbands on page 3.

11. Discuss the importance of the Trinity in Christian belief.

- The Trinity is the Christian doctrine that God is one, but within the oneness there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who all share the same, eternal essence/substance.
- The focus of this question is about the importance of the Trinity, rather than a description of it, and may be answered from the perspective of various different strands within Christianity.
- The Trinity is a very distinctive doctrine of Christianity, and it is part of what distinguishes it from other monotheistic religions such as Judaism and Islam.
- The term Trinity was first used in the Second century AD to describe the belief that within the oneness of God there are three divine and eternal persons.
- Images used to try to explain the three in oneness of the Trinity include the oneness of water and its manifestation in forms of ice, steam and liquid; St Patrick's use of the Shamrock leaf which is one, but has three petals and the illustration of a person being one person yet having three roles, e.g. mother, daughter and sister. All these illustrations have limits because the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is regarded as being ultimately a mystery.
- Christians see examples of the Holy Spirit being manifest in the Baptism of Jesus when the Holy Spirit descends like a dove onto Jesus, the Son and the voice of God the Father speaks and declares that this is His beloved son.
- The Holy Spirit is understood by Christians to be the presence and power of God left on earth after Jesus the Son of God ascends to be with God the Father.
- Christians believe that the Trinity is also evident in the description of creation in Genesis which refers to the Spirit of God hovering, God the Father commanding and God's Word (the Son of God) being the means through which he creates. Many Christians also believe that references to the Angel of the Lord and God's appearance to Abraham are appearances of the Son of God before Jesus.
- The appearance of three angels to Abraham who addresses them as 'Lord' is regarded by many Christians as another example of the Trinity and icons illustrating this event are often found in Christian Churches, both Eastern and Western.
- The Christian sacrament or ritual of Baptism is always undertaken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- Christian blessings and many other prayers use the formula or words of the Trinity.
- Christians believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is inseparable from the Christian doctrine of the incarnation: the belief that the eternal Son of God took on human form in the person of Jesus Christ in order to manifest the love of God and bring salvation.
- The Doctrine of the Trinity is inseparable from the Christian doctrines of salvation, atonement and redemption, according to which Jesus Christ took on the sins of the whole world and paid the price for them when he was crucified. Christians believe that if Jesus Christ was not the eternal Son of God, it would not be possible for him to have taken on all the sins of the world and atoned for them on the cross.
- Christians believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is inseparable from their belief that the most important characteristic of God is love, as revealed in the life, teaching and death of Jesus Christ.
- The doctrine of the Trinity is incorporated into the Nicene Creed, the official statement of faith which has been and is still used by Christian churches across the world as an important confession of faith.
- In the history of the Christian church, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been and remains the key test for assessing whether various groups claiming to be Christian, or Bible based are authentic or heretical. For example, the Church of the Latter Day Saints (aka Mormons) and Jehovah's Witnesses are well-known examples of groups claiming to be Christian or based on the teachings of Jesus Christ, yet deny the doctrine of the Trinity and therefore are regarded by all mainstream Christian churches as being heretical.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

Islam

12. Examine the importance of marriage as a rite of passage for Muslims.

- Rites of passage in religions are special points during the lives of believers, such as ceremonies at the times of birth, marriage and death.
- Islam regards marriage as an important time, which many Muslims see as a religious expectation. It is considered important to marry, continue the faith through having children within marriage, and look after the extended family which are brought together, often under the same roof, through marriage.
- Traditionally, Muslims see parenting children outside of marriage as prohibited, so they see marriage as a requirement to go through as a necessary stage in the forming of families.
- As such, the family are often involved in discussion arranging or assisting the choice of marriage partner. Marriage is seen less as a personal romance, as dating before marriage is frowned upon, and more of a religious commitment.
- In a Hadith of Muhammad, he said that 'Marriage is half of faith.' He also set conditions about who a Muslim can marry, with Muslim women restricted to marrying Muslim men, and Muslim men restricted to marrying believers who are normally classified as Muslims, Christians and Jews.
- The marriage ceremony itself is focused on a contract which must be agreed between the parties in front of witnesses. An Imam usually reads from the Qur'an and seals the contract so that it can be said to be religiously approved, and a social gathering occurs. This makes the contract considered a religious rite.
- Obligations to support the family and wife are given to the man at the time of marriage, to satisfy her, as well as provide for her. She also has rights of independent finance and must be provided with conditions in the case of divorce, including compensation which may be stated on the marriage certificate. These obligations are conferred from the time of the rite.
- Marriage rites vary in different parts of the world for Muslims. Some take on local traditions in common with others, such as those in South Asia who sometimes have several days of feasting and gifts of large amounts of gold.
- Some Muslims may accept marriage of one man with up to four wives. There are different opinions about this, but generally it is thought a condition that all should be treated equally and all should be in agreement with this arrangement.
- Some see it as acceptable to respect local culture whereas others choose to follow the traditions of humility and reject displays of extravagance as being not in keeping with Islamic teaching. This shows diversity in the enactment of the rite as well as retaining the importance of religious simplicity.
- Temporary marriage is permitted by some, including Shi'a Muslims, as a means of avoiding sinful conduct outside of marriage and legitimizing short-term relationships which may be dissolved before entering a long-term marriage.

Accept any other relevant answer.

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

13. “Love for human beings and protection of the weak should be the most important considerations for ethics and moral conduct of Muslims.” Discuss.

Definitions might be made about ethics and moral conduct and what sources might be considered to guide Muslims in making decisions about relevant issues.

Arguments in favour

- Muslims believe that God created everyone, so love and care for them is part of respecting God’s creation.
- Even criminals may change and be forgiven by God. Muslims should therefore show love towards them. Perhaps showing love might encourage someone to change, or to take interest in Islam and start to practice the faith.
- Prophet Muhammad encouraged Muslims to care for the needy and less well off. The Qur’an also tells Muslims to care for orphans and suggests Allah will reward those who treat them fairly.
- Love for human beings can be seen through many Islamic traditions, including the way Muslims pray together as equals before God, give money to support the poor through zakaht (alms-giving) and sadagah (charity), and share food with those in need.
- There are numerous different situations Muslims may find themselves in nowadays, so it may be impossible to set rules of conduct to instruct how to deal with each one of them. Therefore, love for human beings and protection of the weak may be the most practical guiding principles.
- Some might refer to traditions that Muhammad showed love for his grandsons Hassan and Hussain as children. He played with them all afternoon, passing two prayer times, showing the importance of love for human beings.

Arguments against

- Muslims may turn to the Authority of the Qur’an, Hadith, Sunnah and interpretation of the Ulama for guidance on how to lead ethical and moral lives.
- Muhammad said in his farewell sermon that he left behind the Qur’an, the holy book for Muslims, and his examples, the Sunnah. This suggests that these should be used as the most important guiding principles.
- They may try to follow Shari’ah (divine law) within the context of qanun (secular law) in the countries where they live. These given specific frameworks with defined laws and rulings about how to conduct affairs.
- If showing love for others and protecting the weak involve an act that transgresses laws of modesty, then many Muslims might consider such laws as more important to uphold within divine law. As these sources of authority can be traced to divine revelations, and interpretations by knowledgeable scholars, then any specific commands given should be regarded as important instructions to follow.
- Where Muslims are unsure about new situations today, they could consult scholars and their traditions rather than make moral judgements themselves, which might be subject to individual misinterpretation.
- Conclusions might be drawn, weighing up the factors and making a personal response to the statement, bearing in mind the focus of what is ‘most important’.

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 composition of the Torah **or** the Bible **or** the Qur'an.

The focus of the question is on composition.

Judaism

- The Torah is believed by many Jews to be a revelation given by God to Moses and therefore divinely inspired.
- The Torah is composed of five books which narrate from creation to the death of Moses. The five books making up the Torah are Bereshit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bemidbar and Devarim, which in the English Bible correspond to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- Bereshit tells the story of creation up until the creation of the tribe of Israel and the presence of Israelites in Egypt.
- Shemot contains three main sections relating to the liberation from Egypt, the giving of the Law to Moses on Sinai and the start of the 40 years of desert wandering.
- Vayikra has little narrative but contains many teachings regarding practices considered as clean and unclean. Many of the mitzvot are referred to in Leviticus e.g. the laws relating to which foods are kosher.
- Bemidbar contains important narrative regarding the wandering in the desert.
- In Devarim claims are made regarding Moses as author. It contains reference to the giving of the Torah to Moses and how Israel is to live. It contains the covenant between Moses and God and concludes with the blessing of the tribes of Israel and the death and burial of God as the people of Israel are poised to enter the Promised Land.

Christianity

Reference to compositions of the Bible depending upon the denominations is creditworthy.

- The Bible is composed of many books which were written by a number of authors and are written in different styles. Each book addresses different themes or times of history.
- Although the authors have different styles and foci it is believed by many Christians that all authors were inspired by their experience of God.
- There are two main sections in the Bible – the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written before the time of Jesus's birth.
- The Old Testament is composed of the five books of the law, or Pentateuch. (Genesis—Deuteronomy), twelve books of history (Joshua—Esther), five books of poetry (Job—Song of Solomon) and seventeen books of prophecy (Isaiah—Malachi).
- The Old Testament, originally written in Hebrew, encompasses 39 books in the Protestant Bible and 46 in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles. The books that make up the difference between the Protestant and Catholic Old Testaments are referred to as the "Apocrypha" by Protestants and "Deuterocanonical books" by members of Catholic and Orthodox churches. In Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, the books of the Apocrypha are placed in their intended positions within the Old Testament. They are often not in Protestant Bibles or in a separate section to the Old and New Testaments.
- There are 27 books in the New Testament, originally written in Greek, which are compiled into three different sections: the five books of history, (Matthew—Acts), twenty-one books of doctrine (Romans—3 John) and one book of prophecy (Revelation).

Islam

- The Qur'an consists of 114 surahs or chapters with each surah being divided into verses or ayahs. The term ayah can be translated as 'sign' and is often explained as Muslims regarding the Qur'an as God's greatest sign.

- Each surah has a name from a prominent event, theme or topic which is directly referred to in the chapter. Examples include the first chapter which is referred to as al-Fatihah (the Opening) and surah 26 which is called al-Shu 'ara' (the Poets) because it includes a discussion of the conduct of ancient poets.
 - Each chapter (with the exception of chapter nine) begins with the bismillah 'In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful'.
 - The Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Jibril. It is not in a chronological order. The first surah in the Qur'an was not the first revelation to the Prophet Muhammad but he was told to put it first. The first revelation the Prophet received was the first part of surah 96.
 - Some verses were revealed in Mecca and others in Medina. Meccan verses were usually composed with short, sharp vocabulary and style to convey a sense of urgency for taking on the main beliefs. By contrast, Medinan verses were often lengthy, detailed and sometimes allegorical.
 - As a revelation of the direct words of Allah to the Prophet Muhammad all copies of the Qur'an are the same. It is written in Arabic.
 - The prophet, Muhammad, was seen as the messenger, the mediator, of the Qur'an rather than the author.
-