



GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES A 8062/14

Paper 1 Hinduism

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Mark Schemes for GCSE Religious Studies

This paper requires expert markers who have wide knowledge and understanding of the particular subject content of the Specification. With the exception of the multiple-choice question, many of the questions asked have many different credible answers and students are able to bring to their answers their own knowledge, understanding and background. They will offer details, arguments and evidence which the examiner, with the help of the mark scheme, will need to judge as credible or not. It is therefore important that the examiner has a good understanding of the principles and spirit of the mark scheme in order to be fair and consistent when marking students' answers. The Content included is designed to be as helpful as possible but in many cases is not exhaustive. So Content sections are introduced by the sentence:

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

this is to remind examiners that there may well be additional correct answers which, with their expertise, they will be able to allow. With all questions if an examiner has any doubt about answers being creditworthy they should consult their team leader.

Structure

The mark scheme for each question shows:

- the question; Each question is printed in full before its target and mark scheme. It is always important that examiners remind themselves of the exact question being asked. In particular, they will need to do this in instances where the answer appears to be 'straying' from the question set or perhaps offers a valid alternative not included in the mark scheme
- target; The target provides the specific assessment objective which the question is testing. It reminds examiners of the skills the question is designed to test, eg knowledge and understanding, evaluation
- the total marks available for the question and if Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar is assessed
- the typical answer(s) or content which are expected
- generic instructions related to the question target of how to award marks (ie levels of response grid).

Themes papers guidance (Specification A and Short Course)

In questions where students may choose religions from which to illustrate their answer, there may be some general Content, ie credible comments which students will make which could be applied to any religion or perhaps to a secular viewpoint as well. Where these are appropriate they are usually given first. The mark scheme will also include, under separate headings, Content sections for each of the six religions allowed within the Specifications.

General Guidance

.../. means that these are acceptable alternative answers in the mark scheme, eg Guru Har Krishan / Guru Tegh Bahadur / Guru Gobind Singh.

Answers may include specialist terms, in Hebrew or Arabic for example. If this is the case, the mark scheme will usually indicate this by providing in brackets the English as well, eg 'Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)'. In such questions, answers will be credited whether provided in the original language or in English.

Some mark schemes use bullet points to separate content. Each bullet point refers to a different possible 'belief' or 'teaching' or 'way', depending on the question. Obliques (.../.) used within the bullet point indicate different ways in which the point may be expressed and points which may be made to give the further detail or development needed for the second mark.

Where a student has crossed out a complete answer, it should be marked if it remains legible, unless an alternative is provided in which case only the alternative should be marked. When part of an answer is crossed out, then only what remains should be considered.

In questions where credit can be given to the development of a point, those developments can take the form of:

- example or evidence
- reference to different views
- detailed information.

1-mark multiple-choice questions

Such questions have four alternatives and the one correct answer will be given together with the correct letter, eg 'Answer: D Trinity'.

2-mark short-answer questions

The principle here is provided in the mark scheme: 'One mark for each of two correct points.' Students may give **more than** the two answers required by the question. In such instances:

- **award for the first two answers only, wherever they appear**
- if a student gives more than one answer on the first line and another answer/other answers on the second line, the 'first two answers' will be the **first two** on the first line and **only these two** should be considered for marks. Other answers must be ignored
- if on the first line the first two answers given are correct, award two marks, regardless of what is written elsewhere in the answer
- if the first two answers can only be awarded one mark yet there is a third answer that is correct, this correct third answer must be ignored and no mark given for it
- however, if the student gives some **elaboration after the first answer**, which is clearly developing their first answer, (which they are not required to do), do not consider this elaboration to be their second answer (unless the elaboration happens to contain a second correct answer to the question asked), regardless of whether there are other answers provided. In this case, the second answer also, if correct, may be credited for the second mark.

4 and 5-mark answer questions

Examiners should take care to note the target of the question. Clear information is provided for these types of question on how to award marking points. Examiners should carefully read the additional instructions provided for each type of question (eg for influence questions the final sentence in the general guidance box reminds the examiner that the second mark (detailed explanation) awarded in each case must show clear 'influence').

12-mark answer questions

The 12-mark questions test Evaluation skills (AO2). The mark scheme for these answers is based on Levels of Response marking in which the examiner is required to make a judgement on the completed answer taken as a whole.

Level of response marking instructions

In GCSE Religious Studies, differentiation is largely achieved by outcome on the basis of students' responses. To facilitate this, level of response marking has been devised for many questions.

Level of response marking requires a quite different approach from the examiner than the traditional 'point for point' marking. It is essential that the **whole response is read** and then **allocated to the level** it best fits.

If a student demonstrates knowledge, understanding and/or evaluation at a certain level, he/she must be credited at that level. **Length** of response or **literary ability** should **not be confused with genuine religious studies skills**. For example, a short answer which shows a high level of conceptual ability must be credited at that level. (If there is a band of marks allocated to a level, discrimination should be made with reference to the development of the answer.)

Examiners should **refer to the stated assessment target** objective of a question (see mark scheme) when there is any doubt as to the relevance of a student's response.

Level of response mark schemes include either **examples** of possible students' responses or **material** which they might use. These are intended as a **guide** only. It is anticipated that students will produce a wide range of responses to each question.

It is a feature of levels of response mark schemes that examiners are prepared to reward fully responses which are obviously valid and of high ability but do not conform exactly to the requirements of a particular level. If examiners have any doubt about what level to award a response, they should consult their team leader.

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before examiners apply the mark scheme to a student's answer they should read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. They should then apply the mark scheme. It may be necessary to read the answer more than once to be sure of assigning the correct Level.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in 12-mark questions.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) will be assessed against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
High performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. • Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.	3
Intermediate performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. • Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.	2
Threshold performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.	1
No marks awarded	• The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.	0

0 1

Hinduism: Beliefs

0 1 . 1

Which one of the following is an avatar of Vishnu?

[1 mark]

- A Hanuman**
- B Krishna**
- C Lakshmi**
- D Shiva**

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

Answer: **B** - Krishna

0 1 . 2

Give two Hindu beliefs about free will.

[2 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

One mark for each of two correct points.

If students provide more than two responses only the first two responses should be considered for marking.

Students may include two of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

Humans are able to make choices about their actions (free will) / positive use of free will brings good karma (punya) / helps with rebirth / free will is part of the human condition / animals do not have free will / free will allows humans to hurt others / free will allows humans to move further from moksha / free will allows humans to make choices / choices can be good or bad / free will allows a human to follow a religious path or yoga / free will is influenced by illusion (maya) / also by the Tri-guna, etc.

0 1 . 3 Explain two ways in which belief in illusion (maya) influences Hindus today. [4 marks]

Target: AO1:2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and societies

First way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

Second way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

To be a 'detailed explanation' the 'influence' of the way must be included.

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Hindus believe that the whole physical world is illusion (maya) / this prevents many people from seeing their own true nature / and that of all things / 'That same self, completely deluded by maya, abides in the body and does everything' (Upanishads) / believing this a Hindu would follow a spiritual path / so as to see past illusion (maya).
- They might devote their life to a specific spiritual path / such as bhakti yoga / devotion to one specific deity / focus on their teachings and worship of them / so as to always tread the right path / and to know (even when they cannot see) the true nature of things.
- They might work hard to develop the personal virtues within themselves / as these traits would help them avoid falling into the traps of illusion (maya) / for example, being more selfless and less selfish / because the ego is an illusion (maya).
- They might focus on doing good deeds / karma yoga / with selfless purpose / so as to deflect the effects of illusion (maya) / and so in spite of what their physical senses are telling them, they accrue good karma / to bring about a better rebirth / which is more free from illusion (maya).
- They might attend worship at the temple daily / as this gives them access to the deities / and to priests / and to rituals / which help them stay on the right path / and avoid the impact or influence of illusion (maya).
- They might take a job which helps others / thus reducing the impact of illusion (maya) in the lives of others / for example, as a police officer helping to keep order in the community, etc.

0 1 . 4 Explain two Hindu beliefs about Brahman.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Hindu belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

First belief

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate belief – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate belief – 2 marks

Second belief

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate belief – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate belief – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Hindu belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Brahman is Nirguna Brahman / Brahman without form / so different to humans that humans cannot comprehend Brahman / transcendent / beyond the physical world and illusion (maya) / the only true reality / even though Brahman is in everything (Upanishads) / humans can only try to understand Brahman.
- Nirguna Brahman can be partially described through many concepts / Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 391 describes Brahman as eternal, immanent, transcendent, pure consciousness.
- Brahman is described through the three features of the divine (sat-cit-ananda) / sat is pure existence / everywhere as a non-personal part of the universe / eternal / cit is divine consciousness / the controller within (antaryami) / Ananda is supreme spiritual contentment / bliss / transcendent / supreme and loving / provoking great devotion.
- Brahman can be understood as saguna Brahman / Brahman with form / murtis at home and in the temple / darshan / accessible / able to build a close relationship of devotion with Brahman in this form.
- Brahman is partly understood through the Tri-murti / Vishnu (sustainer), Brahma (creator) and Shiva (destroyer) / Vaishnavites believe Vishnu to be the Supreme Lord / with his own heavens for their rebirth / Shaivites believe Shiva to be the Supreme Lord / followers of Ganesha (Ganapati) believe Ganesha to be the Supreme Lord / all groups show this belief through total devotion to and worship of their deity.
- Brahman can be partly understood through the deities / for example Ganesha stands for wisdom / Saraswati stands for the arts and learning / each form allows the believer to understand a little more about the nature of Brahman.
- Humans achieve oneness with Brahman through moksha / Vaishnavites believe moksha is reunion with Brahman / Shaivites believe moksha is to become one with Brahman / the atman is believed to be part of Brahman / moksha is the goal of life for all Hindus, etc.

Sources of authority might include:

‘Brahman is pure consciousness, without parts, without form.’ (Teachings of Advaita Vedanta school)

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 391 describes Brahman as eternal, immanent, transcendent, pure consciousness.

‘He is the God of forms infinite in whose glory all things are--smaller than the smallest atom, and yet the Creator of all, ever living in the mystery of His creation. In the vision of this God of love there is everlasting peace. He is the Lord of all who, hidden in the heart of things, watches over the world of time.’ (Krishna Yajur Veda, Shvetashvatara Upanishad 4.14-15)

“In the beginning there was existence alone...One alone, without second.” (Altreya Upanishads 1.1.1)

The general message of the Upanishads – “Everything is Brahman.”

“God is One but wise men call Him by many names.” (Rig Veda Samhita 1.164.46)

“He cannot be seen, but He is the seer; He cannot be heard, but He is the Hearer; He cannot be thought, but He is the Thinker; He cannot be known, but He is the Knower. He is the Internal Ruler; your own Immortal Atman. Everything else is destroyed except the atman.” (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.4.2)

Accept all other sources of authority that correctly support the beliefs given.

0 1 . 5 'For Hindus, Dharma is the most important of the four aims of life.'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Hindu teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[Plus SPaG 3 marks]

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10–12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7–9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons/evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4–6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1–3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) will be assessed against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
High performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. • Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate.	3
Intermediate performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. • Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate.	2
Threshold performance	• Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate.	1
No marks awarded	• The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- It is the first aim of life / because it makes Hindus fulfil the other aims / hence must be the most important as it is foundational.
- Dharma is ethical and moral living / it is what makes someone a good person / respected by others / it is what makes the world a better place / as it leads to compassionate behaviour / so that those in need are helped / charities are set up / and people care about each other.
- Dharma ensures people do what is right / so that society functions appropriately.
- Vishnu's avatars come to earth because of the Dharma being in danger / "For the protection of the good, and for the destruction of the wicked, for the establishment of Dharma, I am born from age to age." (Bhagavad Gita) / so it must be the most important for such action to happen, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- There are four aims of life / all are important in their own way / all have prime importance depending on the context / so it is wrong to label any one as most important.
- For ordinary people with families, other aims are more important / such as Artha which includes the accumulation of wealth / without wealth a person cannot support their family / cannot live comfortably / which makes it difficult to have the peace of mind to follow a spiritual path / and might encourage criminal actions in some.
- An appreciation of the material world is the most important to ensure it is protected and defended / thus kama is the most important / as it is sensory pleasure / which comes from an appreciation of what is in this world.

- For those whose familial responsibilities are over, moksha would be the most important aim / the final stage of life (ashrama) is about focusing on moksha / so that aim must be most important to those Hindus / similarly for priests moksha is the most important aim / as they devote their lives and ministry to it, etc

0 2 **Hinduism: Practices**

0 2 . 1 **Which one of the following is a tradition within Hinduism in which Shiva is worshipped?**

[1 mark]

- A Astanga**
- B Jnana**
- C Shaivism**
- D Vaishnavism**

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

Answer: **C** - Shaivism

0 2 . 2 **Give two reasons why worship at a temple is important in Hinduism.**

[2 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

One mark for each of two correct points.

If students provide more than two responses only the first two responses should be considered for marking.

Students may include two of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

Shows devotion to the deities / shows effort to go to the temple rather than stay at home / temples have a richer religious atmosphere because of priests and statues there / allows community worship / allows attendance to rituals which only priests can carry out / allows access to priests for private worship rituals, such as havan (fire ritual) / is traditional to attend temple for worship at festivals and special occasions / generates positive karma (punya) / every Hindu worships every day, many at a temple as part of their upbringing and culture / allows a Hindu to connect to the deity through darshan / brings blessings from the deity / part of dharma or duty / taught throughout Hindu history by religious leaders and scriptures as something which should be done / devotion is bhakti, which is a form of union with the divine, etc.

0 2 . 3**Explain two contrasting reasons why holy land, hills and rivers can be important places of worship for Hindus.****[4 marks]****Target: AO1:3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs****First contrasting reason**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 2 marks

Second contrasting reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 2 marks

Contrast may mean opposing or mean different views.

If similar reasons are given only **one** of them may be credited up to 2 marks max.**Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:**

- These places are worthy of worship / 'Brahman is all' (message of Vedas/Upanishads) / meaning that all of the material world reflects Brahman / so any holy land, river or hill must be worthy of being a focus of worship.
- These places are part of the created world / based on the story of cosmic man, Purusha / or on the various Vaishnavite creation stories / hence they either are manifestations of the deity, or are part of the deity and their will / so providing information about the deity / giving a focus for worship.
- To help a believer to understand Brahman / since these places are a manifestation of Brahman / observation of these places gives insight into the reality of Brahman / reflecting many truths such as co-dependence, and compassion / 'Nature's beauty is an art of God. Let us feel the touch of God's invisible hands in everything beautiful.' - Rig Veda 1.6.3.
- To fulfil religious obligation or duty / Since Hinduism teaches that Brahman pervades all / 'Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions trees and plants, rivers and seas, they are all organs of God's body. Remembering this, a devotee respects all species' – Srimad Bhagavata Mahapuran 2.2.41 / so worship and devotion must be shown to holy lands, hills and rivers as a fulfilment of religious duty.
- To gain karmic benefit / for example, the Ganges is considered a deity / Ganga ma (mother Ganges - goddess) / as such it deserves to be a focus of worship / worshipping in it, bathing in it, having ones ashes scattered in it all bring karmic benefit / belief that India has a great advantage over other countries from the Ganges being there / 'Like a moonless night, like flowerless trees, such are the countries and regions deprived of the benefits of the Ganga' – Mahabharata.
- To come closer to a specific deity / the river Yamuna which is personified as a goddess and linked with Krishna / this gives a reason for it to be a focus of worship / for example by ISKCON members / there are places which are considered holy to specific deities / such as Vrindavan (Krishna) for ISKCON members / such as Mt Kailash (Shiva) for Shaivites / since the deity is linked to that place, the place itself becomes a holy focus for worship.
- To celebrate a festival / or complete pilgrimage / for example, the festival or pilgrimage of Kumbh Mela is focused around the conjunction of actual and mystical rivers / it brings great karmic benefit to attend the festival and bathe in the rivers / so is a focus for worship.

- It has always been part of the religious practice of Hinduism to use nature as a focus for worship / so Hindus see it as something very normal to do / are brought up to do so / are taught by holy scripture to do so, etc.

0 2 . 4 Explain two reasons why pilgrimage is important for Hindus.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Hindu belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

First reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Second reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Hindu belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Personal link to a place, for example a familial link as the family came from that place before moving elsewhere / for example a link to a guru who lives there or is staying there with whom a person has studied / a traditional practice within the family or religious community / this can be in India or many other places / for example, Kataragama for Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus.
- Many places of pilgrimage are ancient and traditional / giving them pre-eminence / for example, Varanasi is the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world / so a very long tradition for Hindus to go there / the premier place for Hindu pilgrimage throughout history including now.
- Legend suggests deities might have lived there / for example, Shiva and his consort, Parvati live(d) at Varanasi / after Shiva established Varanasi as his sacred place / after defeating Brahma / he used a pillar of light to mark the place / Shiva meditates at Mt Kailash / making those the places to go for a Shaivite / as they hope to connect with Shiva more closely / blessings given here are thought to carry greater power / Vaishnavites go to Vrindavan because of Krishna's links there.
- Scriptures might encourage them to go / for example, the Ramayana states that Rama came to Varanasi to pay penance having killed the demon, Ravana / hence Vaishnavites go to Varanasi in penance for their own actions / to show devotion to Rama (and Vishnu) at specific temples.
- They can gain merit by making pilgrimage / even greater merit from specific places / for example, the River Ganges which is a goddess (Ganga Ma) flows through Varanasi / making it a special place to bathe / also Mt Kailash has streams flowing from it / the hair of Shiva / visiting and bathing helps one to attain positive karma, and reduce negative karma / thus aiding the journey to attain moksha.
- Many Hindus believe that if their ashes are spread in holy rivers / especially the Ganges, Saraswata and Yamuna / they gain positive karma (punya) / and may attain moksha instantly / hence many Hindus want to have their dead body cremated beside the Ganges at the Varanasi ghats / and the ashes spread at this holiest of places / even if they are not cremated beside the Ganges, their ashes can be taken then to be scattered / or for their ashes to be spread during Kumbh Mela / hence it becomes an individual or family pilgrimage to scatter the ashes.

- To attend worship at a certain temple or holy site / for example, there are thousands of temples and Hindu holy sites in Varanasi / covering every form of Hinduism / many are centuries old / some stand on sites which have housed a temple for thousands of years / so many Hindus want to be able to worship at the holiest temples in their religion / for example, Shaivites going to Kashi Vishwanath Temple / many pilgrims attend worship daily at the same or different temples / or at the ghats beside the Ganges / Vrindavan now has hundreds of temples devoted to Krishna and Shiva.
- At any place of pilgrimage there are gurus and teachers / for example, there are many gurus and teachers in Varanasi / for example, Shaivites believe in the need to be a student to a guru to attain moksha / a guru might be found here to aid that journey / the diver and the pearl analogy / Hindus might just want to seek advice from an important religious leader or guru, who resides in Varanasi / making it necessary to go there, etc.

Sources of authority might include:

“A pilgrim must go with total surrender, with a total faith in God, that it is only by God’s grace that he can finish the pilgrimage.” (Ma Yoga Shakti)

“Flower-like the heels of the wanderer, His body growth is fruitful: All his sins disappear, Slain by the toil of sacred journey.” (Aitareya Brahmana 7.15)

“Pilgrimages may be undertaken for many personal reasons, such as penance for sin or spiritual regeneration.” (Swami Chidanand Saraswati)

“They (pilgrimages) have unified the Hindus, increased the generosity of people.” (Swami Chidanand Saraswati)

“My bones are destined to make corals in the Ganges.” (Swami Vivekananda)

Accept all other sources of authority that correctly support the beliefs given.

0 2 . 5 'For Hindus, devotion (bhakti yoga) is the best way to gain freedom from rebirth (moksha).'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Hindu teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10–12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7–9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4–6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1–3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- Every Hindu worships every day / this is a form of devotion / so it is a Hindu's learned practice and easy to do / making it more consistently done / and more likely to help them achieve moksha (attain union with the divine).
- Devotion to Krishna is believed to result in reincarnation into Krishna's heavenly abode (Goloka) / which is bliss / making further rebirths more likely to achieve moksha.
- Bhakti yoga is the most commonly followed of the yogas (pathways to union with the divine) / so must be the best way to attain moksha / since yogas are only followed for the purpose of attaining moksha / Vaishnavism is the largest group in Hinduism (80%) and stresses the need for devotion to Vishnu.

- Some yogas require significantly more complex commitment / for example, jnana yoga requires large blocks of time consistently to study scripture / plus the intellect to understand / and determination to learn / not everyone has the time, intellect or context to do this.
- Bhakti yoga is love for the deity / which leads to the other yogas / it acts as a platform or foundation / through love for the deity, a person acts positively in service to others (karma yoga) / through love for the deity, a Hindu will want to know more about the deity and their scriptures (jnana yoga) / through love for the deity, a person will meditate to become closer to the deity (astanga/raja yoga), etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- There are four yogas (pathways), not one, and all are followed by Hindus / every path to the divine and to moksha is covered by one of these yogas / that one yoga is more common might show it to be easier, rather than more popular.
- It can depend on the deity a Hindu follows / for example, Shaivites would argue that jnana and astanga or raja yoga might be the most important / because they devote personal spiritual energy and practice to achieving moksha.
- Raja (king) yoga is the best way / because it uses all the other forms, and then adds to them to finally attain moksha / the other yogas are stepping stones, but raja yoga is the final step.
- Karma yoga is the best way / because it is all focused around service to others / and to the world / which is a socially aware and beneficial form of yoga / selfless / bringing positive karma (punya) and building 'invisible wealth', etc.