



GCE AS MARKING SCHEME

SUMMER 2025

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES - UNIT 1
OPTION E: AN INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM**

2120UE0-1

About this marking scheme

The purpose of this marking scheme is to provide teachers, learners, and other interested parties, with an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess this specific assessment.

This marking scheme reflects the criteria by which this assessment was marked in a live series and was finalised following detailed discussion at an examiners' conference. A team of qualified examiners were trained specifically in the application of this marking scheme. The aim of the conference was to ensure that the marking scheme was interpreted and applied in the same way by all examiners. It may not be possible, or appropriate, to capture every variation that a candidate may present in their responses within this marking scheme. However, during the training conference, examiners were guided in using their professional judgement to credit alternative valid responses as instructed by the document, and through reviewing exemplar responses.

Without the benefit of participation in the examiners' conference, teachers, learners and other users, may have different views on certain matters of detail or interpretation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that this marking scheme is used alongside other guidance, such as published exemplar materials or Guidance for Teaching. This marking scheme is final and will not be changed, unless in the event that a clear error is identified, as it reflects the criteria used to assess candidate responses during the live series.

Marking guidance for examiners, please apply carefully and consistently:

Positive marking

It should be remembered that candidates are writing under examination conditions and credit should be given for what the candidate writes, rather than adopting the approach of penalising him/her for any omissions. It should be possible for a very good response to achieve full marks and a very poor one to achieve zero marks. Marks should not be deducted for a less than perfect answer if it satisfies the criteria of the mark scheme. Exemplars in the mark scheme are only meant as helpful guides. Therefore, any other acceptable or suitable answers should be credited even though they are not actually stated in the mark scheme.

Two main phrases are deliberately placed throughout each mark scheme to remind examiners of this philosophy. They are:

- “Candidates could include some or all of the following, but other relevant points should be credited.”
- “This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.”

Rules for marking

1. Differentiation will be achieved on the basis of candidates' response.
2. No mark scheme can ever anticipate or include every possible detail or interpretation; examiners should use their professional judgement to decide whether a candidate's particular response answers the question in relation to the particular assessment objective.
3. Candidates will often express their ideas in language different from that given in any mark scheme or outline. Positive marking therefore, on the part of examiners, will recognise and credit correct statements of ideas, valid points and reasoned arguments irrespective of the language employed.

Banded mark schemes

Banded mark schemes are divided so that each band has a relevant descriptor. The descriptor provides a description of the performance level for that band. Each band contains marks. Examiners should first read and annotate a candidate's answer to pick out the evidence that is being assessed in that question. Once the annotation is complete, the mark scheme can be applied. This is done as a two-stage process.

Banded mark schemes stage 1 – deciding on the band

When deciding on a band, the answer should be viewed holistically. Beginning at the lowest band, examiners should look at the candidate's answer and check whether it matches the descriptor for that band. Examiners should look at the descriptor for that band and see if it matches the qualities shown in the candidate's answer. If the descriptor at the lowest band is satisfied, examiners should move up to the next band and repeat this process for each band until the descriptor matches the answer.

If an answer covers different aspects of different bands within the mark scheme, a 'best fit' approach should be adopted to decide on the band and then the candidate's response should be used to decide on the mark within the band. For instance, if a response is mainly in band 2 but with a limited amount of band 3 content, the answer would be placed in band 2, but the mark awarded would be close to the top of band 2 as a result of the band 3 content.

Banded mark schemes stage 2 – deciding on the mark

Once the band has been decided, examiners can then assign a mark. During standardising (at the Examiners' marking conference), detailed advice from the Principal Examiner on the qualities of each mark band will be given. Examiners will then receive examples of answers in each mark band that have been awarded a mark by the Principal Examiner. Examiners should mark the examples and compare their marks with those of the Principal Examiner. When marking, examiners can use these examples to decide whether a candidate's response is of a superior, inferior or comparable standard to the example. Examiners are reminded of the need to revisit the answer as they apply the mark scheme in order to confirm that the band and the mark allocated is appropriate to the response provided. Indicative content is also provided for banded mark schemes. Indicative content is not exhaustive, and any other valid points must be credited. In order to reach the highest bands of the mark scheme a learner need not cover all of the points mentioned in the indicative content, but must meet the requirements of the highest mark band.

Awarding no marks to a response

Where a response is not creditworthy, that is it contains nothing of any relevance to the question, or where no response has been provided, no marks should be awarded.

AS Generic Band Descriptors

Band	Assessment Objective AO1 – Part (a) questions [15 marks] <i>Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including:</i> - <i>religious, philosophical and/or ethical thought and teaching</i> - <i>influence of beliefs, teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies</i> - <i>cause and significance of similarities and differences in belief, teaching and practice</i> - <i>approaches to the study of religion and belief.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Thorough, accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • An extensive and relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates extensive depth and/or breadth. Excellent use of evidence and examples. • Thorough and accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language /vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A detailed, relevant response which answers the specific demands of the question set. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth. Good use of evidence and examples. • Accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Mainly accurate and relevant knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. • A satisfactory response, which generally answers the main demands of the question set. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates depth and/or breadth in some areas. Satisfactory use of evidence and examples. • Mainly accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Basic level of accuracy and relevance. • A basic response, addressing some of the demands of the question set. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates limited depth and/or breadth, including limited use of evidence and examples. • Some accurate reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • Very limited knowledge and understanding of religion and belief. Low level of accuracy and relevance. • A very limited response, with little attempt to address the question. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • The response demonstrates very limited depth and/or breadth. Very limited use of evidence and examples. • Little or no reference made to sacred texts and sources of wisdom, where appropriate. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication. N.B. A maximum of 1 mark should be awarded for a response that only demonstrates 'knowledge in isolation'
0	• No relevant information.

Band	Assessment Objective AO2- Part (b) questions [15 marks] <i>Analyse and evaluate aspects of, and approaches to, religion and belief, including their significance, influence and study.</i>
5	13-15 marks • Confident critical analysis and perceptive evaluation of the issue. • A response that successfully identifies and thoroughly addresses the issues raised by the question set. • The response shows an excellent standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Thorough, sustained and clear views are given, supported by extensive, detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Thorough and accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Excellent spelling, punctuation and grammar.
4	10-12 marks • Purposeful analysis and effective evaluation of the issue. • The main issues raised by the question are identified successfully and addressed. • The response shows a very good standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • The views given are clearly supported by detailed reasoning and/or evidence. • Accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Very good spelling, punctuation and grammar.
3	7-9 marks • Satisfactory analysis and relevant evaluation of the issue. • Most of the issues raised by the question are identified successfully and have generally been addressed. • The response shows a satisfactory standard of coherence, clarity and organisation. • Most of the views given are satisfactorily supported by reasoning and/or evidence. • Mainly accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Satisfactory spelling, punctuation and grammar.
2	4-6 marks • Some valid analysis and inconsistent evaluation of the issue. • A limited number of issues raised by the question set are identified and partially addressed. • Partially accurate response, with some signs of coherence, clarity and organisation. • A basic attempt to justify the views given, but they are only partially supported with reason and/or evidence. • Some accurate use of specialist language and vocabulary in context. • Some minor, recurring errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
1	1-3 marks • A basic analysis and limited evaluation of the issue. • Very limited accuracy within the response, with little coherence, clarity and organisation. • An attempt has been made to identify and address the issues raised by the question set. • Little attempt to justify a view with reasoning or evidence. • Some grasp of basic specialist language and vocabulary. • Errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar affect the meaning and clarity of communication.
0	• No relevant analysis or evaluation.

GCE AS RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1

OPTION E: AN INTRODUCTION TO HINDUISM

SUMMER 2025 MARK SCHEME

To be read in conjunction with the generic level descriptors provided.

Section A

1. (a) **Outline the Hindu understanding of Saguna Brahman (God with characteristics), with reference to the Trimurti.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Many Hindus understand the concept of Saguna Brahman through the Trimurti.
- The three gods of the Trimurti are Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva and are regarded as different aspects of God – Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Shiva the destroyer. This can be seen in representations of the Trimurti as one God with three heads.
- Although they are male in nature, they are associated with Shakti (female energy) since each one has a female consort. This represents the Hindu belief that Brahman is neither male nor female.
- Brahma is the creator of the universe and is usually depicted as a man with four heads, four faces and four arms. Hindus believe that Brahma after the end of each universe meditates before creating the next and that the symbols he holds represent this belief. This reflects the Hindu understanding that Saguna Brahman is the creator of all things.
- Vishnu is known as the preserver both in the cosmic sense of preserving the universe as it should be and in a personal sense in the preservation of dharma.
- For the followers of Vaishnavism, he is the Supreme God and not just one aspect of him. Vishnu is frequently presented in blue to represent his all-pervading nature. Vishnu is worshipped in many forms including the tulsi or basil plant which many of his followers grow and use as murtis. However, he is mainly associated with his avatars as Saguna Brahman.
- This is also related to the Hindu understanding of the all-pervading nature of Nirguna Brahman.
- The third member of the Trimurti is Shiva who is the god of destruction. This must be understood in the context of Hinduism's cyclic understanding of life – in order to move through successive rebirths, the atman must die, and death is as important in the cycle of life as birth. Shiva is the god of reproduction and is worshipped in the form of the linga, the male sexual organ. Shiva is the god of opposites – creator and destroyer, old and young, fierce and gentle and as Ardhanarishwara both man and woman. His trident represents the three aspects of the Trimurti. Again, Shiva reflects Hindu understanding of both Saguna Brahman in his characteristics but also Nirguna Brahman in having ultimate control over life as a whole.
- The Trimurti is a visual representation of the concept of God.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘It is possible to worship an impersonal God.’**
Evaluate this view, with reference to Hinduism. [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Brahman can be understood as both personal (Saguna) and impersonal (Nirguna) within Hinduism. There are different emphases about these two forms of Brahman. The earlier Upanishads and some schools of Philosophy emphasise the personal forms while later schools of thought emphasise the impersonal form.
- Brahman Saguna is the Brahman that can be characterised. It is the underlying essence of the material world as well as the atman, the innermost self. It is manifested in the Trimurti which show the three divine energies – creative (Brahma), preserver (Vishnu) and destroyer and recreator (Shiva). Brahman is also the ‘being’ of all things in existence – sun, oceans, plant life and all creatures. They all have their origin in Brahman and Brahman as their essence.
- Brahman Nirguna is Brahman beyond all attributes – invisible, ungraspable, eternal and without qualities. It is unconditioned and without origin or end. Brahman is also transcendent and beyond the created universe. It is an all-pervading self-existent power.
- Many Hindus would argue that it is not possible to worship an impersonal God. This is why personal deities are much more in evidence in the popular culture of India and feature in every aspect of life in homes, offices and in street shrines and temples.
- The two major traditions of Hinduism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism are based on devotion to personal manifestations of Brahman, Vishnu and Shiva. Many people support the view that humankind needs a tangible, manifest and anthropomorphic conception of God to worship. It is difficult, if not impossible, to worship a formless ‘It’ which is why manifested aspects of Brahman are so important within Hinduism.” This is why personal deities such as Krishna and Rama have such importance for Hindus.
- Relating to impersonal abstract forces is very difficult since all meaningful human relationships are based on the personal and as such knowing God through personal deities is more possible and meaningful to many Hindus. Many popular forms of worship such as bhakti and daily puja are based on this personal relationship with specific deities. These deities represent higher forces and energies and are the means or channels of divine grace and blessings.
- Many Hindus would argue that it is a common misconception that the Hindu concept of God is ultimately impersonal, and that any personhood is anthropomorphic. Another misconception is that the various gods and goddesses and the stories about them are merely ways by which Hindus relate to an Impersonal Supreme. They would argue that there are many schools within Hinduism, mainly Vaishnavas but also within Shaivism and Shaktism who believe that God possesses personality.
- However other schools of philosophy within Hinduism such as Vedanta maintain that knowing God in personal forms is a lower level of truth than knowing God in its impersonal form. This is reflected in the belief that jnana yoga is the highest form of yoga since it enables Hindus to know God in the impersonal forms. This is the ultimate goal for Hindus, self-realisation or realisation that the innermost being atman is one with Brahman. Most Hindus believe in the impersonal abstract force of Brahman symbolised by the symbol OM which is just as much in evidence as personal deities.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

2. (a) **Explain the views of Shankara and Madhva on the relationship between Brahman and atman.** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Shankara was born in Kerala in 788 CE and is regarded as a very significant contributor to both Indian and world philosophy.
- Shankara was also known as Shankaracharya and is the most renowned scholar of the Advaita Vedanta darshana.
- Advaita Vedanta believes that the atman and Brahman are one and the same, making it a non-dualist philosophy.
- Everything in the world is an expression of God, every living thing has Brahman residing inside them. Brahman is impersonal as you are not trying to have a relationship or connection with God like Bhakti yoga; with Advaita Vedanta, you just need to realise you are Brahman. The key argument is that Brahman is noncorporeal, having no attributes (Nirguna Brahman) and he is beyond our understanding. For an Advaita, God is present but you cannot see him.
- Moksha is achieved by recognising and experiencing this. Everything else is an illusion(maya).
- Shankara gave Advaita philosophy a new direction – he was the first philosopher to give a detailed difference between the idea of Brahman Nirguna and Brahman Saguna. He suggested that humans understand Brahman on one of these two levels, arguing that Brahman Nirguna is a higher spiritual level.
- Madhva was an exponent of Dvaita Vedanta – dual Vedanta.
- Dvaita Vedanta is the belief that two things exist, separate and distinct from each other – the atman referred to as jiva which exists independently within all living things and Brahman Saguna the personal god underlying reality usually referred to Ishvara.
- Madhva set out to refute the non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta. He rejected that the material world is maya and argued that although things are temporary and ever-changing does not mean that they are not real.
- Madhva believed that each jiva is an image of Ishvara – they are distinct and separate and completely unrelated.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The atman cannot exist without Brahman.'

Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Brahman and atman are often referred to as God and soul, but these Western terms are misleading. It can be argued that a better understanding of both would be spirit. The relationship is much more profound and mysterious.
- The followers of Advaita Vedanta believe that Brahman and atman are identical. There are no separate atmans in living things only Brahman penetrating and supporting the entire universe. Moksha is achieved by recognising and experiencing this. Everything else is an illusion (maya).
- However, the proponents of Dvaita Vedanta would argue that they are different, separate and distinct from one another. This is the belief that two things exist, separate and distinct from one another – one is the atman (usually referred to as jiva) which exists independently within all living things and Brahman Saguna the personal god underlying reality (usually referred to as Ishvara). They refute the non-dualistic Advaita philosophy.
- They disagree that everything is Brahman and believe that each jiva is an image of ishvara – they are distinct and separate, have similar qualities but are completely unrelated.
- There are passages in the Upanishads which seem to support the idea of the relationship between Brahman and atman being dual. However, the main message of the Upanishads is a monistic one that Brahman and atman are one and that the goal of a Hindu's existence is to experience that oneness that is the self becoming the Self. This is the meaning of the well-known words of the Chandogya Upanisad – 'Tat tvam asi' – 'That art thou'.
- In support of a monist view is the comparison of space in a jar and space outside it. The space in the jar is temporarily confined as the atman is confined in the body. However, the space inside the jar and outside it are the same and when the jar breaks they become one just as atman and Brahman are really one.
- Many Hindus would argue that it is impossible to know the relationship between Brahman and atman rather than to say that it is without doubt a close relationship.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

Section B

3. (a) Explain the importance of two of the following during congregational puja:
(i) darshan
(ii) circumambulation
(iii) accepting prashad [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Puja is a Sanskrit word which loosely translated means reverence or worship and refers to the worship Hindus perform daily.
- **Darshan** comes from the Sanskrit root *drs* which means to look at or view and refers to the sight, or glimpse, of a holy being or natural spectacle like a sudden ray of light striking a mountain peak. The darshan of a living guru is thought to be very special.
 - i. The importance of the experience is that it opens the heart and gives peace, blessings and divine energy or Shakti. At the moment of darshan the entire focus of the devotee is absorbed in the image of the deity and Hindus believe that the person who receives darshan is also seen by the deity. It is very important in the relationship between devotee and deity as it creates a bond between them.
 - ii. In order to receive darshan Hindus have to follow practices in terms of personal cleanliness which are similar to preparing the murti for puja.
 - iii. It is not simply a matter of viewing the deity, its importance is in experiencing the deity and entering into a personal, reciprocal exchange with the Supreme Personality in the form of the Deity.
- Pradakshina the Sanskrit word for **circumambulation** literally means to the right. Therefore, devotees walk around the garbha griha, the innermost chamber of the shrine housing the temple deity or deities, in a left-hand direction keeping the shrine on their right.
 - i. It is one of the customary aspects of temple worship and usually done after completing puja. Its importance is that it expresses the belief that God is the centre of existence and that thought, and actions should always be centred on God.
 - ii. Pradakshinam is usually done in a clockwise direction because Hindus assume that God is always on their right side. It is also important because it reminds them that they should always lead a good life, on the right path called Dharma.
- The word 'prashad' means that which gives peace and refers to the food Hindus offer to God during any form of worship, ritual or ceremony. It can include offerings of sweet rice, fruits, milk and coconut. After they have been offered, they are shared between the devotees either at home or in the temple so that they receive the blessings of the deities. That is important to the devotee.
 - It is important because the offerings signify that the devotee is offering his heart to God. A special form of prasada is the Charanamrit, which is the water or milk used to wash the feet of the murtis, or of a holy saint. Many Hindus believe that it has tremendous powers.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

- (b) **‘Personal worship is far more important in Hinduism than congregational worship.’**

Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- Home puja is part of a Hindu’s dharma, but temple worship is not. Hindus, according to their religion do not have to visit a temple regularly to worship. Many only visit temples on special occasions or as part of pilgrimages.
- Home puja is more intimate and personal. The fact that home puja is conducted every day gives it extra importance and that it enables the worshipper to build a personal relationship with God. It also gives the woman of the household a role of importance in washing and feeding the murtis, something that would not be possible in a temple. In this respect home shrines can be said to be far more intimate.
- Home puja plays a significant role in passing the traditions of Hinduism from one generation to another.
- Another importance of home puja is its educational role in passing on the traditions of Hinduism through the family and to unite the family in the worship of their favourite household deity. In this context home puja can be seen by many as being more important than temple puja as it is the worship of a personal deity rather than the more generic gods at the temple.
- Hindu temples bring dispersed Hindu communities together.
- Temple puja plays an important role in safeguarding Hindu identity and culture. Some would argue that Hindus are more likely to visit temples on a regular basis in countries where Hinduism is not regarded as the official religion. Visiting temples gives Hindus in these countries an opportunity to meet as a community. The temple provides a social environment for the Hindu community to meet and prevents Hindus feeling alone. They are important in the celebration of festivals and as the focus of pilgrimages.
- Practices and rituals performed in temples are performed to the letter in accordance with Hindu scripture and therefore are preserved in all their glory and tradition.
- In Hinduism temples are regarded as where God lives and therefore are regarded as the best place to receive darshan, a glimpse of God. The murtis in a temple are thought to have much more significance than home murtis as they have been consecrated. In fact, the temple itself might be considered a giant murti. Therefore, the presence of God is thought to be far greater in the temple than the home.
- In the context of offerings made to the deities, the adherents of both home and temple puja refer to them as examples of the importance of both forms of worship.
- It is clear therefore that home and temple puja are very important and significant in Hinduism and in the everyday lives of Hindus.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

4. (a) Explain the practicality of the concept of ahimsa in the modern world.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The literal translation of ahimsa is to be without harm that is to be completely harmless to all forms of life from the largest mammals to the smallest bacteria. Jains believe that the only way to save your own soul is to protect every other soul.
- In Hinduism 'ahimsa' literally means 'without violence'. Ahimsa means not inflicting pain or injury upon others. However, nonviolence is only one aspect of ahimsa. It also means showing compassion to all living beings, the practice of love, forgiveness and friendliness, and the support of peace.
- Gandhi developed the concept of ahimsa with his teaching of satyagraha. It literally means 'holding onto truth' or as others have referred to it 'truth force'. It was introduced by Gandhi to represent a determined but nonviolent resistance to evil. Gandhi was adamant that satyagraha was not a weapon of the weak - "Satyagraha is a weapon of the strong; it admits of no violence under any circumstance whatever; and it always insists upon truth."
- Many believe that if people adopted the principles of ahimsa which include non-harm and compassion then conflict and violence would be curbed and perhaps there would be an end to war and terrorism.
- They also believe that Gandhi's interpretation of ahimsa is more relevant than ever. People should always fight for truth, no matter what. They should be nonviolent in their fight and should follow the principle of sarvodaya that is the upliftment of everyone – all classes, all castes, all religions, all regions and all sexes.
- However, many would say that peaceful protests do not work but others would say with the right leadership to move and utilise people they are a practical and effective way. In this context there are many examples referred to – Gandhi himself, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela
- However, many others believe it is an impractical concept in the twenty first century. Today's problems are very different and that the principles of ahimsa will not work in the face of extremism, terrorism, fanaticism and oppressive dictatorship. Nonviolence is based on diplomatic resolving of conflicts but in some of today's situations there is no reasonable way to engage with the perpetrators of violence.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'Ahimsa is only relevant in an ideal world.'

Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- There have been many attempts made in history to overthrow evil which apparently had truth and justice on their side but were unsuccessful in attaining their goals. Only in an ideal world does good always overcome evil.
- Today's problems are very different and that the principles of ahimsa will not work in the face of extremism, terrorism, fanaticism and oppressive dictatorship.
- Nonviolence is based on diplomatic resolving of conflicts but in some of today's situations there is no reasonable way to engage with the perpetrators of violence.
- Modern society is far more complex than the society from which ahimsa originated, and it is not easy or practical to apply an absolutist principle to the issues of modern society.
- Sometimes force is needed to maintain law and order and sometimes force and the use of violence is the only choice.
- Some would argue that ahimsa could be relevant to an individual but not to society as a whole.
- Many would refer to Gandhi's example as being a strong endorsement of ahimsa as relevant concept in the modern world, not only in the religious context but in the political one as well.
- Others would argue that many Hindu communities have successfully combined the principle of ahimsa with life in the modern world. This is seen in the context of care for the environment.
- Gandhi introduced a new dimension to the concept of ahimsa which he called satyagraha, which means truth force, and many would argue it is this new dimension that makes ahimsa relevant in the modern world.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.

5. (a) **Explain the role of the Mahabharata in teaching the importance of doing one's duty .** [15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Mahabharata is the longest epic in world literature.
- The Mahabharata is widely used in the teaching of moral and ethical values in the Hindu community. One very important teaching is its teaching on dharma. The thread of dharma runs right through the epic teaching that dharma has a tremendous cosmic influence in that it holds the cosmos together. Everyone has a dharma to fulfill and not fulfilling dharma will have cosmic consequences.
- Krishna warns Arjuna not to focus solely on the rewards of fulfilling duty – “do your duty and do not think about its rewards” - and not to fight for his own benefit on the basis of greed and desire. Arjuna must fight for the good of others.
- This reminds people that they are social as well as moral beings and decisions taken must take into consideration their impact on others. In this context the Mahabharata discusses the proper conduct of leaders such as kings and warriors.
- The Mahabharata also teaches the importance of family values and tradition and the duty of a Hindu to uphold and defend them. This can be seen in the portrayal of Arjuna as a supporter of family values and as a defender of tradition.
- The Mahabharata also raises many other ethical and moral issues. One issue is justice and fairness – Krishna was intent on the triumph of good over evil whatever the cost. It could be argued that this promotes a Utilitarian approach – the common good.
- It raises the issue of the legitimate use of violence, honesty and the abuse of women (Draupadi's story).
- It teaches that blind pride and wrong actions have serious consequences.
- It can be said that the Mahabharata contains all that a person should know to achieve the four human goals of Dharma ,Artha ,Kama and Moksha.
- Two of the eighteen chapters of the epic, Santi and Parvas deal with useful aspects of human life – code of conduct, values, morals Anushasana and philosophy.

This is not a checklist, please remember to credit any valid alternatives.

(b) 'The Ramayana is the most important Hindu text.'

Evaluate this view.

[15]

Candidates could include some of the following, but other relevant responses should be credited.

- The Ramayana is one of the great Hindu epics and teaches the ideal way of life.
- It deals with love, duty, devotion, selflessness, and charity.
- The characters of the Ramayana represent the sentiments of Hindus and are role models in life. The festival centered around the principal character – Rama - Diwali – exhibits the ideals upheld by the Hindus.
- It also lists the codes and rules which govern the actions of Hindu communities.
- It is open and accessible to all and effectively teaches the ideals and values of Hinduism to all Hindus, regardless of social background and education.
- However, many regard the Vedas as the most important Hindu texts as they are regarded as the oldest scriptures in the world.
- It is believed that the teachings of the Vedas were first revealed by God at the beginning of time for the benefit of humankind and that they are inseparable from Brahman. They embody the entire range of knowledge spanning the sacred and the secular.
- The Vedas are shruti texts because they are not regarded as being of human origin but to have been revealed by Brahma, the creator God. They are still used today as a basis for ritual ceremonies and as a source of great wisdom and truth.
- The Upanishads also have a very special status because they explain the Vedas and in so doing reveal sacred truths in philosophical formulas. They are not products of human intelligence but the whisperings of God to man.
- Others would argue that the Ramayana is a smriti scripture which means that the teachings are remembered rather than being directly revealed by a divine power. Some would argue that this diminishes its importance but many point to the fact that they are well known by all Hindus.
- Although the Bhagavad Gita is a section of the Mahabharata many Hindus give it a special status. It is the most famous and well known of all Hindu scriptures. It has inspired many great thinkers and is referred to often as the jewel of ancient India's spiritual wisdom. Many believe it not only gives wisdom but very valuable practical advice for life.
- Others would argue for the Mahabharata itself.

Overall, candidates should engage with the debate and come to a substantiated evaluation regarding the issue raised.