

Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 2

Cambridge O Level Hinduism 2055 for centres in Mauritius

For examination from 2026







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Introduction

These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge International ahead of the examination in 2026 to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge O Level Hinduism. We have included a selection of part (c) 5-mark questions, and part (d) 10-mark questions from Specimen Paper 2.

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could be obtained. There is also a list of common mistakes and guidance for candidates for each question.

The specimen materials are available to download from Mauritius School Support

2026 Specimen Paper 02

2026 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 02

Details of the assessment

The syllabus for Cambridge O Level Hinduism 2055 is available at Mauritius School Support

Paper 2 - Hindu Scriptures, Life and Ethics

Written paper, 1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks

This paper assesses the syllabus content for Paper 2.

Paper 2 has three sections:

Section A Aspects of knowledge, action and devotion

Section B Hindu life and ceremonies

Section C Religious and social reforms.

There are two questions in each section.

Candidates answer three questions, one question from each section.

Sections A, B and C

In Sections A, B and C, each question has four parts:

- Part (a) questions assess knowledge and understanding of the syllabus content (2 marks).
- Part (b) questions assess knowledge and understanding of the syllabus content (3 marks).
- Part (c) questions assess knowledge and understanding of the syllabus content (5 marks).
- Part (d) questions require candidates to evaluate and discuss. Candidates are required to provide reasons to support their discussions (10 marks).

Parts (c) and (d) are marked using levels of response marking tables.

Question 1(c)

Explain why Krishna advised Arjuna to fight his cousins.

Specimen answer

Krishna is one of the most famous avatars of Vishnu and comes down to earth when a charioteer called Arjuna asks him for advice. Arjuna is on a battlefield and about to start attacking the enemy opposite when he sees some of his family on the opposite side of the battlefield. He then thinks again about attacking because he doesn't want to potentially kill any of his family members. When Krishna does come down to earth to advise Arjuna, he says that above anything else he must do his caste dharma or duty which as a member of the warrior caste, it is Arjuna's duty to fight even if it means killing any of his relatives. Also, it would be a bad example Arjuna would be setting to his followers if he didn't do his dharma. What message would this send out? Part of Krishna's response to Arjuna is to say that ultimately the wider Hindu society would thank him for protecting them as is his job and also he can earn good karma by doing so.

Mark awarded for 1(c) = 4 out of 5

Examiner comment

The response is of a satisfactory level but at the top end of the satisfactory level. One of the major teachings Krishna gives Arjuna is about dharma which the response states but it is also about adharma which the response does not state. There is certainly some accurate knowledge and understanding offered in the response and there is some breadth and depth too, but the story famously speaks of Arjuna's cousins that he is fighting so family connections are mentioned exactly. The response could also have mentioned that Arjuna was showing a weakness in his heart and that he needs to stand up to life's problem so there is a major teaching in this story for Hindus. Also, there is no mention in the response that Krishna stated that it should be an honour for Arjuna to act as a Kshatriya as that is his caste and fulfil his duty. Equally, the idea of honour Arjuna would feel following his dharma might be something to mention. Furthermore, there is no mention of future generations, for example, the idea of Arjuna acting as a role model for future generations is a key message in the teaching.

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Question 1(d)

'Karma yoga is the most important path in seeking union with the divine.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of Hindu values to support your discussion.

Specimen answer

Karma yoga is all about selfless action, so we can see why the statement would be correct because if a Hindu is not asking for rewards for what they do or praise, then you can see why it would be the best way to link with Brahman. Brahman is the ultimate supreme spirit in Hinduism and there are many paths to achieve one with Brahman, but karma yoga is all about actions and in this world, you get things by doing things. Karma is all about being responsible for your actions too and this, through the yoga path, could be said to be the way to achieve moksha.

There are other types of yoga though, so this means that there are other ways of joining up with Brahman and these other ways could be as important or even more important than karma yoga. The other types of yoga are bhakti and Inana yoga. Anyone can do bhakti yoga for example because it is all about your own devotion to Brahman so if this means it is more accessible then maybe this is the most important path to Brahman. I also think that karma yoga is the most difficult path to reach Brahman because particularly in today's world, it is very difficult for Hindus to be totally selfless.

I think all the yoga paths are equally important or they would not have been taught about. Everyone can find their own path which suits them most to reach Brahman and earn good karma for a better rebirth next time. However, maybe because Karma yoga is often considered as the most difficult path to follow, Brahman would create this to test out how devoted Hindus are.

Mark awarded for 1(d) = 8 out of 10

Examiner comment

This response is a good attempt to answer the question and scores marks accordingly. On the whole, different points of view are well considered and there is some reasonably well used and detailed evidence to support different points of view. There is some reasoned discussion also and the conclusion drawn is justified.

The response could have made more of the union with the divine being a deeply personal journey and perhaps how this often involves a quest for spiritual connection, transcendence and a desire to merge with a higher power or the divine essence.

Certainly, karma yoga may be seen as the main path by some Hindus to achieve this because it does not seek reward or self-promotion. Karma is about responsible actions affecting future lives and existences and the response could have developed this idea that there may be a belief that good karma could contribute to attaining moksha. There are other yogas too and many Hindus may practice bhakti yoga and others practice jnana yoga. The response could exemplify that many might consider karma yoga to be the most difficult path for Hindus to take of all the yogas, suggesting its relative importance or not.

The response could have stated that there is an argument to suggest that karma yoga is not separate from the other paths of yoga. The Bhagavad Gita, a sacred Hindu text, teaches that all four paths of yoga are necessary for spiritual growth and that they are interdependent. Therefore, while karma yoga may be emphasised as a primary path for some, it is important also to incorporate elements of other paths, such as jnana (knowledge), bhakti (devotion) and raja (meditation), to achieve a well-rounded spiritual practice. This type of response would have achieved full marks.

- Candidates should always ensure they respond to an evaluation-based question in a balanced way. An evaluation response shows different skills from a knowledge and understanding based response.
- Candidates should offer arguments for and against the statement (though these do not need to be of the same length).
- Candidates should try and offer a justified conclusion as it helps to tie in all they have written.
- Candidates are free to argue in favour or against the statement as it is an evaluative one.
- Responses which examine different points of view and are supported with evidence from the candidates' studies will be credited.
- Responses may include the detailed discussion of a few points or a less detailed discussion of several points.
- Time management can be a key issue on the evaluation responses as these come towards the end of each exam question.

Question 2(d)

'Sabri's meeting with Rama in the Ramcharitmanas is only about devotion.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of Hindu values to support your discussion.

Specimen answer

Sabri was a woman who Hindus might class as one of the outcastes, but she was totally devoted to Rama. The ways in which she was totally devoted to Rama was to live a very severe life in the forests in a hut just waiting for Rama to even walk by. Then when she met Rama, she tasted every single item of food that she offered to Rama to make sure it was right for Rama to eat. This shows real devotion. I know that Rama thought that Sabri was offering him berries and other fruits out of sheer devotion for him, so I could agree with the statement made.

I have learnt that this story is about other things in Hinduism too though such as someone showing complete faith even though they are of the lower caste group and that Sabri was doing something very simple, but it was really appreciated. She obviously had a really good heart too to go out of her way to show her love for Rama and there are many things Hindus can learn from this story for how they should live their lives today. I don't think Sabri's meeting with Rama is only about devotion as there are some other lessons Hindus can learn from it.

Mark awarded for 2(d) = 5 out of 10

Examiner comment

The response has given a two-sided analysis in the evaluative comment, and there are some different points of view, but they are only partially considered. This would sit at the top of Level 2 with a mark of 5 out of 10.

It fulfils the criteria for some use of relevant evidence plus a partially developed evaluative comment but there is limited discussion. For example, in the second part of the response, whilst it alludes to 'other things in Hinduism' that can be learned through the story of Sabri meeting Rama, it becomes very generalised without any specific real examples. It could have stated how Rama gave Sabri moksha; the importance of humility shown in the story alongside the value of service. The story does reflect the Hindu concept of pure intentions being able to guide actions. Aspects of gratitude, passion, sincerity, love and service all seem much more than devotion.

The conclusion is quite short and comes across as a little too generalised.

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Question 3(d)

'The varna system works well for Hindu society in the modern world.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of Hindu life to support your discussion.

Specimen answer

The varna system is the way that Hindus are classed in society and everyone in society has certain jobs to do because they belong to a certain varna so yes, it looks as though the system works well for Hindus today. There are actually four varnas such as the Brahmin Priests, the Kshatriya warriors, the Vaishya traders and the Shudras who are the lowest varna who help all the others out.

However today we could say that many have lost sight of what the varnas are and who belongs to what. There are many subgroups now as well. I do think when it works, it works well because people know what their jobs are and who to marry and everything is passed down from one generation to another so in a way life is quite simple like this. On the other hand, it is so hard to move up a varna however hard you try so perhaps this is not so good because people may see that they cannot improve their lives. It is also wrong in some people's eyes today because society does not discriminate as much as it used to so perhaps the varna system has had its best days and is no longer relevant in the modern world.

Mark awarded for 3(d) = 5 out of 10

Examiner comment

This is close to the satisfactory level, but it remains at the top of 'limited', i.e. Level 2. Different points of view are considered, but it reads in a very generalised way and requires some better, more specific examples to achieve the higher levels. Some of the discussion is reasoned out, which is why the response scores 5 out of 10.

It is difficult for the examiner to pinpoint a justified conclusion from the response and there are some arguments that could have been included such as many Hindus may see the varna system in the modern world as archaic; a historical artefact rather than a system which works today for the benefit of all Hindus. As a possible counterargument, the response might have discussed the different complexities of modern society for Hindus and possible the varna system helps Hindus navigate through these complexities. Also, more could have been made of the family lineage point where the varna system might be seen as a system that preserves culture and family lineage from generation to generation, thus still working well in the eyes of some. Some things included worthy of credit but with limitations and more that could have been said too.

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Question 4(c)

Explain the significance of what happens during the namakarana samskara.

Specimen answer

The namakarana ceremony marks the time when a Hindu child is given their name. This ceremony is done by a Hindu Priest who will also bless the child too. The parents could choose any name in this ceremony, but they often chose one related to a quality one of the gods or goddesses might have. Family members who might attend the ceremony would want to wish the child well and as it happens so early in a Hindu child's life, it may be the first time a relative has seen the newborn child. There is also a consideration of the horoscope for when the child was born, and this could have an impact on the name chosen for the child. Prayers are offered and sometimes rice grains are scattered too.

Mark awarded for 4 (c) = 4 out of 5

Examiner comment

This is quite a short response, but it covers enough ground for four marks to be awarded as it includes what the ceremony is about and is accurate on the rituals that take place. It is a satisfactory attempt to answer the question. Some accurate knowledge and clear understanding is shown, but the response could have mentioned the traditional eleven days after the birth of a Hindu child for when the namakarana ceremony should take place. It should also have included something about the purpose of the namakarana ceremony to establish a connection between families and tradition. This could be accompanied by greater use of some technical terminology such as nakshatra, the birth star sign base for a child's name. More could also have been included of the coming together of family and friends. It is alluded to in the response but could have been developed much more in terms of how this may then nurture the child's character and links with a god or goddess.

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Question 4(d)

'No varna is superior to another in Hinduism.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of Hindu life to support your discussion.

Specimen answer

It is important to say what varna is to start with before assessing whether one varna is more important than another. Varna is all about jobs; which job particular Hindus have in this world. This divides Hindu society up into four main categories and if everyone does their job, then in theory, Hindu society should work well. So, the four varnas are the top one, the Brahmins. These are mostly Priests who do all the religious jobs in society. Then there are the Kshatriyas who protect communities and rule over them. Then there is the Vaishyas and they are the ones that bring in money for the Hindu community by doing say, agricultural work and making sure everyone is fed alongside being traders and merchants. At the bottom of the varna list is the Shudras and these do serving jobs and the service industry generally such as washing, cleaning roles as well as helping to run Hindu society. If we look at the list, then we can see that each varna is needed for society to run smoothly so to this extent there is no one varna more important than another because they all have particular responsibilities.

Having said this, it is clear that there is a particular order of the varnas and if you are a Brahmin Priest doing all the religious devotional stuff for Hindus then this is a role that is highly respected and possibly more important than the other varnas. Then again, what about if your village ort town was attacked? You could not expect a Priest to take up arms, so the Kshatriyas would be needed. These do not do the framing jobs though for example so if a society is going to get fed properly, then the Vaishyas are needed. Who will do all the tasks that no one else wants to do if it wasn't for the Shudras? So, we can see that all groups are important. In our society, we might think a brain surgeon is one of the most important jobs but anyone with a house will produce rubbish and this will need collecting to stop the spread of disease, so a bin collector may be just as important.

Overall, I think because each has a part to play in society, they all are equal though some people might still think that the order is there for a reason; some are more important than others.

Mark awarded for 4(d) = 8 out of 10

Examiner comment

This is close to the top level, but in places the response includes generalisations and platitudes. It is certainly a satisfactory attempt at evaluating this statement though. Different points of view are well considered, particularly when considering the different types of varna and the hierarchy of the varna system in Hinduism. There is reasoned discussion and a line of argument on both sides of this issue that the reader can follow. The conclusion has clear justification but could be a little more developed to achieve a Level 4 mark.

It is good to see that there is a two-sided analysis in this response, but where the response could have been improved would have been to develop the idea that the varna system has its roots in the scriptures and is related to Brahma's manifestation of the four categories or groups of Hindus. This is quite important for candidates to see that the original list of varnas claimed no superiority for any one varna which would help to automatically agree with the statement made in the evaluation question.

The response gives a basic outline of the duties and responsibilities of each varna and goes some way to suggest the equality of the varnas as one cannot exist independently of the other. There is a good modern-day example that this response gives too.

More could have been included about some misinterpretations of the varna system over the years which has probably resulted in some sort of hierarchy. Maybe this is all artificial or Hindu society has devised the varna system itself and the natural order of things in terms of roles and responsibilities in society has come to the fore over time. Maybe some mention of the Vedic period and the manifestation of Brahma too might be useful in this response and would provide a top-level response.

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Question 5(c)

Explain why the education of girls in Indian society was important for Savitribai Phule.

Specimen answer

Phule was a female reformer in the Hindu tradition who was involved mostly with the rights of Hindu women in a society often thought as unequal in terms of its attitude to women. She campaigned in favour of a girl's right to go to school and gain an education and she thought that through being educated, women would have a better chance in the world of looking after themselves without the need for men to do so. Phule often said that without education women would always be second class citizens and they would never be able to get some of the better jobs in Hindu society. If women had an education at a young age, they could go on and get higher qualifications and even degrees and this would help them to make a better contribution generally to life of society with employment and bringing in money to their communities.

Mark awarded for 5(c) = 4 out of 5

Examiner comment

This is a solid response and quite knowledgeable about this female reformer. The response identifies several things that Phule wanted to achieve for women in education and some of the reasons why she wanted to do this.

The response does not identify which century Phule tried to achieve education equality for girls though and one of the major reforms Phule tried to instil was about health and hygiene in the sense that Phule recognised that education would help to improve the health and hygiene of girls and women. Educated girls would be more aware of basic hygiene practices, which would reduce the incidence of diseases and improve overall health outcomes and speak up for their rights if they had a proper education. The response could have exemplified some of the gender equality issues that Phule campaigned for such as the idea of entry onto professional courses which could happen more for girls if they had been properly educated. This in turn would have benefitted the economy of the whole of India.

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Question 5(d)

'The Brahmo Samaj has been an effective force for lasting social change.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of religious and social reforms.

Specimen answer

The Brahmo Samaj is still going strong in India and is still very influential. It campaigned about lots of social issues over a hundred years ago and some of the campaigns have made major differences for the better for the lives of Hindus today, so we could say that, in part, the Brahmo Samaj has had some sort of lasting effect on Hindu society.

One of the first things the Brahmo Samaj tried to do was to get rid of the caste system. The group saw the caste system as very discriminatory and a problem in Hindu society. They also fought long and hard to get rid of sati which is when women throw themselves on the funeral pyre of their husbands if their husbands have died before them. The Brahmo Samaj saw this as barbaric and with the help of the British Government who controlled India at the time when this was rife, they outlawed the practice.

Another thing they were opposed to was child marriage. Before their campaign against child marriage, the average age for a girl in Hinduism could be between 12 and 14 and now it is more likely to be 18 or suchlike.

No doubt there are places in India where, because of an arranged marriage system, girl's might be married off a lot earlier than the law now really allows but the Brahmo Samaj certainly organised an effective campaign and we can see the benefits of their campaigns in Hindu society today, so I would say there has been a lasting social change there.

I am not sure that, despite what they tried to do, the campaigns are that well recognised today in Hindu society. Maybe change was bound to happen and there have been other groups like the Arya Samaj who have done similar or better things, so it is not just down to the Brahmo Samaj that things in India changed.

As a conclusion, I would say that what the Brahmo Samaj tried to do in terms of religion was to make religions in India more accepting of each other, a bit like Gandhi did so I do think that this change has lasted and I would say that in India, there is greater acceptance of a variety of faiths worshipped than there used to be.

Mark awarded for 5(d) = 8 out of 10

Examiner comment

This response is awarded 8 out of 10, as there is some clear knowledge and understanding on display, not least the era being correct when the Brahmo Samaj were effectively operating. There are not too many different points of view stated but there are arguments and counterarguments which are fairly clear to follow. Alongside this, there is a reasoned discussion with the inclusion of the main campaigns the Brahmo Samaj fought to try and make India and Hindu society a more cohesive and fair society.

It is perhaps easy to slip into some generalisations with this type of question, but the response does consider some specific issues that the Brahmo Samaj tried to make a social comment on and suggests that some have lasted better than others. The arguments in favour of what the Brahmo Samaj have done outweigh the counterclaims and this is reasonable as responses do not have to have the same length of discussion on both sides of the argument. In this case, and why this response does not achieve a higher-level mark, is because there are, on the counterarguments, some generalisations without going into enough depth.

Equally, the conclusion would benefit from a more detailed explanation of the points made. For example, the conclusion could have stated how many of the practices in society (at the time the Brahmo Samaj were formed) were oppressive as well as discriminatory. There could have also been some comment perhaps on how the Brahmo Samaj influenced many other reform movements in Hindu society, such as the Arya Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Theosophical Society. The Arya Samaj is mentioned very briefly but could have been developed more.

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Question 6(d)

'Vivekananda's most important message was that Hinduism is a world religion.'

To what extent do you agree with this view? You should use evidence from your study of religious and social reforms.

Specimen answer

Hinduism is a world religion and Vivekananda tried to promote Hinduism throughout his life, so I could agree with the statement. He did believe that there are many paths to the ultimate supreme spirit and so in this sense all religions are world religions, Hinduism included. Vivekananda was very respectful of all religions and he even attended a conference about this years ago. I think that he saw Hinduism to have some teachings and thoughts that were important for the world and not just Hinduism. Things like yoga from Hinduism are very important to lots of people today for example. Also, lots of people are meditating today and this was a Hindupractice originally too. I guess you could say that encouraging everyone to explore their own religion and trying to understand other faiths, he didn't really promote Hinduism as a world religion. If he was promoting lots of things and any missions that followed Vivekananda's teachings promoted all religions, not just Hinduism. The mission he set up is still popular today though and because he formed this we could say that Hinduism was finally established as a world religion amongst the others.

Mark awarded for 2(d) = 5 out of 10

Examiner comment

This response generalises a fair amount, so it is difficult to award more than 'limited' in terms of a level. It achieves the top of that level because there are some reference points such as the conference Vivekananda attended, even if the name and date are not included. The Ramakrishna mission is not named either but referred to.

There are different points of view, but the response fits the levels for 'limited' almost exactly as these points are partially considered and there is limited discussion of all the points made rather than examples being developed. Some evidence from the point being made can be seen in this response but the conclusion is difficult to pick out and so there is also limited justification within the conclusion given.

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