

# World religions SL



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## Grade boundaries.

### Standard level overall

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 11	12 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 51	52 - 65	66 - 78	79 - 100

### Standard level internal assessment

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 4	5 - 8	9 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 30

### Standard level paper one

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 10	11 - 15	16 - 21	22 - 28	29 - 34	35 - 45

### Standard level paper two

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 13	14 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25	26 - 30

## Standard level internal assessment

### The range and suitability of the work submitted.

The research areas chosen were wide ranging and it is inspirational to see the topics that students focused on. In most cases, the topics were suitable for the IA format. However, sometimes students chose titles that were too broad or cannot be evidenced sufficiently. In such cases, more thought should be given to narrowing the scope of the response. Questions that begin: "How", "Why", "To what extent" facilitate further exploration of the area to be studied and narrow the focus of the research and provide a viable and well-evidenced response.

In some cases, students who had studied other IB subjects, such as History and Ethics were introducing topics that they had covered in those subjects, and there was concern over duplication. Advice on the distinctions between academic disciplines would be useful. The IA was introduced to encourage the study of lived religions rather than history or ethics.

Empirical study such as interviews, surveys and visits are to be encouraged but the results cannot stand alone as evidence or proof as in most cases the samples are too small. To be valid, they need to be examined and compared alongside secondary sources and primary texts.

### Student performance against each criterion

#### Criterion A

Students nearly always expressed a rationale that was personal. In a few cases, there was not enough momentum to develop the rationale. Although sources were often referred to for preliminary research, few students referred to the variety of sources needed to achieve the top mark bracket. Evaluation of the sources is essential and can be an evaluation of either the knowledge and understanding gleaned from the preliminary research or of the value of the sources. There are still students who present the preliminary research as the actual research undertaken from B to D and list the sources to be used in the project. The preliminary research should be independent and undertaken to inform the research question and develop the rationale.

#### Criterion B

A few students inferred their research question but did not state it. The research question must be stated explicitly in this section to score more than one mark. Students should be reminded that the research question must be written in full in Section B. Students should focus on explaining precisely which sources they will use for the plan of study, and WHY the sources are important, in attempting to answer the research question. However, many students do achieve the highest marks in this criterion.

#### Criterion C

Generally, this was well answered, with students referring to a range of significant findings. Some students could have attained full marks with further development of findings.

### Criterion D

Generally, all responses included some critical reflection, but strong responses focused on the religious experience or belief under investigation. There was limited critique of the research methods. There were some excellent answers, in which students demonstrated pertinent critical reflection, regarding the research question and chosen research methods. There are still instances of students repeating findings or extending findings that belong in Criterion C. Summaries are not required in Criterion D. Future implications were often stated, but sometimes lacked detail or relevance. Criterion D demands reflection on the research methods, the limitations and discussions of findings, and suggestions for successful future study.

### Criterion E

Most responses followed the format and were under the specified word limit. When students achieved below full marks, it was usually down to errors in or lack of a bibliography. Citations needed to be in alphabetical order and include all sources used in the main text of the IA. There should be a list of interview sources or surveys undertaken. Appendices should also be included (interviews, surveys etc). Strong scripts continued to drop a mark through inaccuracies in referencing.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future students

Teachers should focus on encouraging students to produce viable research questions, which are manageable within the word limits. Research questions should reflect the specific context of the religious tradition being researched, and over-generalised research questions should be avoided. Teachers should encourage students to develop research questions with a narrow, specific focus. Students must be fully informed of the requirements for each section of the internal assessment.

## Further comments

The students and their tutors should be congratulated for all the hard work invested in these IAs.

## Standard level paper one

### General comments

The paper differentiated well with a wide range of responses across the whole exam paper. There were some well-considered responses which focused on the demands of the question and showed an informed understanding of the importance of the distinctive beliefs, practices, and concepts of each tradition. This was particularly evident in Christianity and Taoism. It was apparent that many students understood the concepts of Taoism through the analogies they had been introduced to in their study. However, there were an increased number of responses where practices, beliefs and concepts were confused between traditions. This was particularly evident where students had responded to the Hindu and Jain tradition and the Christianity and Judaism tradition. In these instances, the conflation extended beyond a mix of religious specialist terms and involved the use of one specific perspective to describe the other tradition.

The use of relevant terminology is central to the marking criteria. Many responses included terminology which was relevant to the tradition. However, there were a significant number of responses where the terminology, although relevant to the tradition, was not relevant to the actual focus of the question. To gain the highest marks, responses are expected to **use** the relevant language to aid explanations.

The paper requires students to answer five questions, which have two parts with different demands; part (a) relates to a textual reference and requires a response directly from the passage and not an interpretation. Part (b) expects students to write a developed response on a specific theme.

It was evident that some students struggled to understand the specific demands of the question and therefore wrote responses that were too generic. There were an increased number of part (b) responses written in bullet points. This method of response often prevents the required 'well-developed explanation' in order to gain three to six marks. The use of bullet points is, however, an appropriate format for part (a) where responses are not required to have explanations.

The majority of students engaged well with all questions and were able to complete the exam within the allocated time. Very few students appeared to not have adequate time in which to complete the exam. It was pleasing to see the number of students who had highlighted key rubric demands or specific commands in the question stem. This practice supported students to fully focus on the demands of the question. There were an increased number of responses which did not fulfil the rubrics. There were an increased number of responses where students had attempted all questions on the exam and not chosen the options indicated. This practice results in students not having enough time to answer questions in the depth required, and in many cases, responses are likely to have been about religions they had not studied.

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the students.

As there are distinctive differences between part (a) and part (b) questions, each are referred to separately.

Some students showed little understanding of what was an appropriate answer for part (a) questions. There were a significant number of responses where students gave detailed paraphrases on aspects of

the tradition. Such responses did not fulfil the requirement to 'identify' the teachings in the passage. This was particularly apparent when students were writing about a religious tradition they identified with. Such responses included a personal interpretation and understanding and did not directly relate to the text or identify any teachings.

In part (b) questions, there were a significant number of responses which did not directly relate to the demands of the question. Such responses often gave a description of a particular religious tradition. For example, in Buddhism, Question 2 (b), some responses gave a description/ explanation of tanha/trishna (craving). However, the question required an explanation of how tanha/trishna 'can lead to dukkha/dukha'.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which students appeared well prepared.

- The majority of students understood the rubrics of the paper and the requirements of the question.
- Students showed a strong understanding of the themes of the paper in their responses. Although this is not a requirement, it showed an awareness of the constructs of the chosen traditions.
- There were distinctive strong responses for distinctive for each religious tradition. These are identified further in the report.

### The strengths and weaknesses of the students in the treatment of individual questions

#### Hinduism

##### Question 1

(a)- Most students identified the three teachings, with many achieving maximum marks.

(b)- The question required students to explain why Hindus want to liberate themselves from samsara to reach moksha (liberation). Responses, however, often explained what Hindus needed to do to gain good karma and liberate themselves from samsara. Such responses did not give a considered explanation of 'why' or refer to relevant examples.

#### Buddhism

##### Question 2

(a) - Many good responses, a pleasing number with references to direct words from the passage.

(b)- Some responses gave a description/ explanation of tanha/trishna (craving). However, the question required an explanation of how tanha/trishna 'can lead to dukkha/dukha'.

#### Sikhism

##### Question 3

(a)-There were very few responses to this question.

(b)- There were some well-informed responses to this question which showed a sound understanding of the construct of the religious tradition. There were some responses which included Hindu teachings about reincarnation and did not focus on the distinctive beliefs of Sikhism. Such responses often included a use of terminology relevant to Hinduism.

## Judaism

### Question 4

(a)- Generally, well answered with many students being able to clearly identify three relevant teachings.

(b)- Although there were some excellent answers, it was disappointing that some responses showed no knowledge or understanding of the Shema. They were therefore unable to explain how Jews might observe it in their daily lives. Some students demonstrated awareness that the quotation from part 'a' is a part of the Shema, and these students generally scored higher marks. Very few students showed any knowledge of the contents of the Shema, beyond the instruction to remember that God is one, and their responses only gave a general explanation of worship.

## Christianity

### Question 5

(a)- Although the passage appeared accessible there were some responses which ignored the specific teachings of the passage and instead indicated the students' personal beliefs. Paraphrases often resulted in responses that were different from the teachings in the passage.

(b)- Responses were noticeably better answered than both the other Abrahamic religions. Many students understood the demands of the question and had a clear understanding of the concept of 'salvation'. Many responses competently referred to the impact of distinctive beliefs on a diversity of practices within the wider Christian tradition.

## Islam

### Question 6

(a)-Generally, well answered.

(b)- Although there were some well -focused responses a significant minority of responses were limited to a generalised description. In such responses, descriptions would be given regarding the importance of sources that teach Muslims about acting correctly e.g. Sunnah, Hadith, Qur'an, Five Roots of Usul ad-Din or the Six Articles of Faith. However, there was limited application (if any) of this knowledge to explain why following the prescribed actions is desirable.

## Taoism

### Question 7

(a)-Very well answered. The majority of responses correctly identified three specific teachings found in the passage.

(b)- There were some excellent responses with students having a sophisticated understanding of the nature and impact of the fu and were able to apply their understanding to the focus of the question.



## Jainism

### Question 8

- (a)- The few students who answered this question were usually able to identify three teachings.
- (b)- There were few responses. Some explanations were well informed and focused. Some responses showed no understanding of the Five Great Vows and instead focused on ways to achieve liberation. Some students explained ways to liberation from a Hindu stance.

## Bahá'í Faith

### Question 9

- (a)- There were a limited number of responses to this question, but many were able to identify some appropriate teachings.
- (b)- Some responses were generic and many failed to explain the beliefs about God's prophets and instead had a general focus on salvation.

## Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future students

- Students understand the different requirements for completion of part (a) and (b) questions and know how many religious traditions and questions they are expected to answer.
- Students have a working understanding regarding the difference between descriptions and explanations. This would include understanding *how* to apply knowledge and relevant examples to their explanations.
- Students focus on the actual demands of the question and ensure their response is planned to meet those demands.
- Students recognise that part (a) responses must relate directly to the teachings in the passage and that interpretations are usually not creditworthy.
- Students should not be encouraged to make connections or comparisons between religions. In particular students should not refer to Christian practices and beliefs in their response to Question 4 (Judaism).

## Standard level paper two

### General comments

Students' work contained reference to examples and case studies and successfully incorporated the opportunities the IB approach has for wider research in this subject. This was not consistent across responses, as some did not refer to any.

It was also clear that some students had worked hard to learn some aspects of topics and repeated them in their answers. Teachers might now need to spend more time helping students to structure their learning and differentiate between different types of enquiries. Examination in depth requires precision, knowledge and accuracy; discussion and response to a quotation needs a different focus with detail deployed to substantiate an argument. Developing discussion and evaluation in a structured way will help enable students to achieve their full potential in these questions.

### The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the students.

- Students found it more difficult to make comparisons than to show importance. More than one question asked for this. Where asked 'most important', many students simply wrote about 'importance', and did not include words to make judgements. Some referred to a degree of importance in general terms, such as 'very important', but did not give any reference point for judgement. Stronger responses made comparisons e.g. the most important festival or equally important, with substantial comparison to another to show why and on what terms. This might be in terms of social occasion, religious commitment or expression of beliefs, for example.
- Students sometimes struggled to focus on the question and appeared to structure responses in the same way they were taught a topic. For example, in Buddhism some repeated information about the Four Noble Truths, or in Islam about the Five Pillars. Neither were the focus of the question. Both could be applied in an explanation, but the focus should be on the requirements of the question.
- Students sometimes did not provide a clear structure to their responses. Logical paragraphs showing a clear line of reasoning are required for a full explanation. In some cases, students included paragraphs which did not link to or contradicted their responses. Students sometimes struggled to consider the flow of essays.

### The areas of the programme and examination in which students appeared well prepared.

- Almost all students followed the rubric, answered two questions and gave roughly the same length of answer for both questions attempted. It was rare to see a script with a considerable imbalance. This shows that students have sufficiently covered the syllabus and different religions in their learning.

- Students were well prepared on questions mentioning festivals, and to some extent religious practices. They were able to describe details of various events, using appropriate knowledge and terminology.
- Students had good general knowledge about the concepts, as seen by the different religions, in the way they are presented in the guide. They were familiar and confident at referring to where are we going and how do we get there, two of the headings from the guide, and applied these to the religions studied.
- Students were very aware and proficient at discussing modern issues, especially those of LGBTQIA+ and abortion. Students included them in their responses to church and state as well as to directly address attitudes to abortion. They appeared to engage well with topical debate, and this is clearly well facilitated by teachers. Incorporating topical debates and connecting them to world religions, their beliefs, and various attitudes toward them, can engage students' interest and inspire them to pursue further research.

## The strengths and weaknesses of the students in the treatment of individual questions

- Some responses showed good use of terminology, with accurate definitions of key terms and relevant reference to concepts in order to strengthen their arguments.
- Many responses were weak at making comparisons, even when directed to by the question or statement given. Other practices or aspects were not referred to in order to make detailed, comparative comments. Responses were often concluded with a reference to importance in general, having given more explanation than evaluation.
- Some questions were more popular than others. The less familiar topics were the Three Objectives and Three Debts in Hinduism; Gurmukhi in Sikhism; Kabbalah (mysticism) in Judaism and tafsir (the science of interpretation or exegesis of the Qur'an) in Islam.
- Popular questions which students seemed familiar with included: the personal and non-personal supreme being in Hinduism; veneration of the Buddha in Buddhism; Pesach (Passover) in Judaism; Church and state in Christianity and the role of Allah in Islam. The open-ended question about attitudes to abortion was also one of the most popular and well answered questions.

## Hinduism

### Question 1

This was a popular question. Stronger responses gave specific examples of each understanding in Hinduism, both in theory and in practice, showing how the understanding of the supreme being was part of Hindu ritual and underpinned beliefs and teachings in both a personal and non-personal way.

There were many generalised answers, but better responses gave definitions and used specific terminology, such as nirguna and saguna.

### Question 2

Few chose this question. The key was to show the importance, thereby going beyond describing the Three Objectives and Three Debts. The best responses named them, and explained in detail how they are important, as a whole and individually.

## Buddhism

### Question 3

This was a very popular question. Responses tended to focus on how the Buddha is venerated through specific monastic and individual rituals; or, as veneration in terms of following the teachings of in everyday life. The strongest answers included both.

### Question 4

The majority of students explained why Ahimsa was important, but fewer took a comparative approach to cover why it might be considered *most* important. Those who did often agreed, whereas some considered all were equal. Responses that considered that they were all interlinked and interdependent made a more nuanced point.

## Sikhism

### Question 5

Very few students attempted this question. Note that there are two similar words which have different meanings, which students confused. Gurmukhi is the text in which the Guru Granth Sahib is read; gurmukh means a person who is focused on God and lives by the teachings of the gurus. These definitions can be found in the World Religions Guide.

### Question 6

Note that this question was about attitudes, not any particular ceremony, although the Amrit Sanskar might be mentioned. Many different attitudes and the beliefs behind them were explored by some students, showing wide-ranging enquiry in their studies.

## Open-ended question

### Question 7

Not many chose this question. Those who did often chose Hinduism to illustrate their comparisons. Many wrote separate paragraphs with implied comparisons, but fewer took a more analytical approach drawing more direct comparisons in terms of beliefs and rituals involved. Both approaches had levels of success, depending on the quality of the language, accuracy of the description and understanding of the explanation demonstrated by the student.

## Judaism

### Question 8

Very few students chose this question.

### Question 9

This was a popular question. Almost all of the students explained the background of the festival, with many contextualizing its significance within Jewish family life as a special occasion that continues the tradition. Some referenced other traditions, and many concluded that other festivals, particularly Yom Kippur, hold greater importance due to their focus on atonement and repentance in the spiritual life of Jews.

## Christianity

### Question 10

A few chose this question. Some responses showed greater knowledge about the background to denominations but were weaker in specifying exactly the position on biblical authority taken by each.

### Question 11

This was a fairly popular choice of question. Many chose to approach it from a particular region, especially the United States, and discussed issues such as sexuality and morality, and how these might be affected if the church were part of the state law making process. Others gave a detailed historical background to church state relations.

## Islam

### Question 12

Few students chose this question. Tafsir is a specific term, which is defined in the Guide and was given in the question. Despite this, some students wrote widely about Islamic practices without focusing on tafsir. Good responses mentioned its importance in understanding the meaning of the Qur'an, and its influence on Islamic practices, morality and spirituality in the lives of Muslims.

### Question 13

Many students explained why Allah's role as creator was important. Some described the Five Pillars, which needed to be linked more closely to Allah's roles to be relevant. A few responses made comparisons by considering Allah's roles as judge and forgiver, and the understanding of those roles as manifested in the effect of inspiration given by each role to Muslims in their lives.

## Open-ended question

### Question 14

This was a very popular choice. Responses were strong, often considering social issues. However, few mentioned textual sources of authority which lay behind some attitudes to abortion held by religious believers.

### Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future students

- Students should practice directly addressing the question set rather than writing in general around the topic. They should be encouraged to review and highlight their work in preparation in order to see to what extent they directly address practice questions. This may reveal gaps in their knowledge, which could provide a focus for revision and exam preparation.
- Students could be given guided frameworks to help organise their writing. Definitions to begin essays and conclusions at the end are not the only way to structure responses but can help students to organise their learning. Some might benefit from using essay plans; noting down the main point of each paragraph and evidence to back it up, when preparing an essay. This will help them to focus more clearly on the question set.
- Comparative writing can be developed in many ways. One way is to have classroom debates about topical issues with students arguing for and against. Whilst it is not necessary to take a binary stance, for and against can be a simple and lively way to engage students in debate. After establishing this, they can then develop more nuanced positions showing different and varied perspectives.
- Students have been showing improved contextualised knowledge and applying it correctly, there is still room for further progress. Taking advantage of the flexibility in the IB approach may inspire students and help expand their knowledge, by including research projects and visits to places of worship, as well as interviews with religious leaders, which may be referred to in responses.