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Examiner's Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2018

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 2E Hinduism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies

Religious Studies A Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second Religion

Option 2E - Hinduism

This was the first examination series for the revised GCSE 9 - 1 Level 1 and 2 qualification in Religious Studies. Whilst the new specification shares some common feature with the legacy specification, the new qualification is markedly different, both in format and the range of skills and knowledge that it has been designed to test.

Overview:

- **a** type questions require that the candidate give three pieces of information in response to the question. It is important that the candidate not simply give a list of items, but that each piece of information conveyed is presented either in its own sentence, or at least in its own clause within a sentence.
- **b** type questions typically require that the candidate should be able to present two pieces of information; typically two reasons for something, two attitudes to something, two ways for something. To gain full marks on this question, the candidate should aim to develop each of those reasons, attitudes or ways. This can be done by adding additional relevant information, by giving an example or by citing a religious source.
- **c** type questions are answered similarly to **b** questions, except that here the candidate has the potential to gain an additional development mark from the use of a source of wisdom and authority that is relevant both to the question asked and to the point that they are making. The use of a source of wisdom and authority on its own does not automatically gain the additional mark but is a means for the candidate to gain a further mark where they have already given a developed response. On the basis (outlined above for **b** questions) that a source of wisdom and authority can be used as a means of developing a response, candidates can use two, relevant, sources of wisdom and authority in a **c** question to access the third mark for that particular explanation, reason etc.
- **d** type questions represent the single biggest change between the legacy specification and the new. On the one hand candidates present as similar to the old specification's d question (an invitation to present reasons for and against, while giving a conclusion), but on the other hand the introduction of appraisal into the mark scheme means that we are really looking for the candidate to evaluate the various merits of the arguments for and against and not simply present them.

Overall, the most successful candidates tended to understand key terminology - and whilst 'keywords' are not assessed on this paper, it became apparent that some candidates had benefited from being taught them. Successful candidates were able to develop their responses, however simply, and were able successfully to deploy a range of sources of wisdom and authority to support and develop their responses. In **d** answers, the most successful candidates considered the various merits of the arguments they were presenting by, for example, appraising the relative authority of different sacred texts or the comparative validity of secular or scientific arguments in an integrated manner. In future examination series, this latter capacity would seem likely to be key to accessing the highest grades.

1RA0_2E_Q1a

The question asked was:
'Outline **three** Hindu beliefs about Shakti.'

The majority of candidates knew what shakti is, but one or two overstated their case slightly and made statements about it that at least some Hindus would find contentious.

1RA0_2E_Q1b

The question asked was:
'Explain **two** reasons why prakriti is important in Hinduism.'

Those candidates who did not gain full marks on this question had misread it and did not explain Prakriti's importance, but rather gave a full description of it.

1RA0_2E_Q1c

The question asked was:
'Explain **two** ways Hindus respond to suffering.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

The single biggest challenge for candidates attempting this question was integrating a source of wisdom and authority into their response. Candidates are advised that the source of wisdom and authority they use has to be developing one of the points that that have made and cannot simply be added to the end of there response because it too relates to the question.

1RA0_2E_Q1d

The question asked was:
"The most important aspect of the divine is Bhagavan."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.
In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.'

Where this question was not well answered, it tended to be because candidates were not able fully to develop another aspect of the divine to contrast with Bhagavan. The question could have lent itself to the kind of appraisal that the new examination is looking for in these **d** questions.

1RAO_2E_Q2a

The question asked was:

'Outline **three** features of Raksha Bandhan.'

Few candidates were unable to identify three elements of Raksha Bandhan, although some leant towards the less obvious features.

1RAO_2E_Q2b

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why Holi is celebrated.'

Again, the most common issue with this question was a simple misreading of the question's intent, with some candidates leaning towards a descriptive response as opposed to explaining *why* Holi is celebrated.

1RAO_2E_Q2c

The question asked was:

'Explain **two** reasons why cow protection is important for some Hindus. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

As with question 1c, whilst the majority of candidates were able to present a good response to this question, the greater challenge was in using a source of wisdom and authority appropriately, such that it served as a development of one of the points they were making.

1RAO_2E_Q2d

The question asked was:

"All Hindus should worship in temples."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- refer to different Hindu points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.'

There were some good responses to this question, but little by way of genuine appraisal. Some candidates veered towards considering non-religious reasons which could not be credited and candidates are advised to read the specific advice given about responding to the bullet points in **d** questions.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- Any technical vocabulary used in the question paper will also be in the Specification. Check your understanding of this vocabulary, especially where there are similar looking words with different meanings (arti and artha, karma and kama).
- Allow yourself enough time to both read and understand the questions. Make sure that you explain things that require explaining and that you are in fact answering the question that has been set.
- The Specification gives some key texts for each section of the exam. Take time to learn some of these. When you use the quote in your exam, make sure that it is 'doing something' in your answer and not just dropped in as an afterthought. The quote will gain marks only if it is developing one of the points you've made.
- Read the bullet points in part **d** questions carefully and make sure that you cover them - if you are asked to provide non-religious reasons, make sure you do. If non-religious reasons are not asked for, you can save time in the exam by not giving them. Remember that reasons from another religion are not *non-religious* and will not be considered as such.
- **d** questions require you to say how effective or 'strong' the elements of the argument you are giving are - but do not limit yourself to saying that x is stronger than y, tell the examiner why x is stronger than y. Is it supported by a more authoritative text for example?