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# Examiners' Report Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)  
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second  
Religion  
Option 2E: Hinduism

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## Introduction

This was the third, full, examination series for the revised GCSE 9 - 1 Level 1 and 2 qualification in Religious Studies, following on from the two year suspension of normal GCSE examinations. It is clear that many centres have learned considerably from the preceding series and are schooling their candidates in the technique required for success in this examination.

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. If the piece of information is both correct and has a verb attached to it, it is likely to attract marks.

b type questions 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. The number of reasons/ways etc. is limited to 2 and so candidates are not able to access a third mark by giving a third reason/way.

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 or reason. A number of candidates used a source of wisdom and authority to develop both of their responses. Whilst this did not allow them to gain a sixth mark, it was, for some, an effective insurance policy against the source of wisdom and authority in one not being truly relevant.

d type questions allow candidates to give reasons for and against a particular proposition, whilst coming to a justified conclusion. The response needs to show evidence of appraisal if it is to access the higher levels available, and this appraisal should not be superficial. Importantly, appraisal is not the only factor in accessing Levels 3 and 4, but one of several. An answer may show good appraisal, but be full of disparate, undeveloped, ideas that fail to make connections and so be a better fit for the lower levels of the mark scheme. Centres are advised that, in addition to the resources currently available to support candidates in answering d questions, there is now a set of exemplars that have been marked by the Chief Examiner – with accompanying commentary. The resources can be found on the Pearson qualifications website.

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 which showed the capacity to link connected ideas. This latter capacity is likely to be key to accessing the highest grades.

### **Question 1(a)**

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

**Bullet point. 1.3** Three aspects of the divine – Brahman, Antaryami and Bhagavan; the nature and significance of the divine as Brahman (everywhere and non-personal), Antaryami (within the heart) and Bhagavan (beyond, as a personal loving God); how the three aspects are shown in Hindu scriptures, including Mundaka Upanishad 2.1; why belief in the three aspects of the divine are important in Hindu life and for religious pluralism today.

**The question asked was:** Outline three Hindu beliefs about the divine.

The wide range of potential answers to this question meant that there were few who did not gain full marks.

### **Question 1(b)**

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

**Bullet point. 1.4** Manifestations of the Divine: the nature and importance of how the deities are shown in Hindu scriptures; avatars and murti; the nature and role of male deities: divergent understandings of the importance of Vishnu (including Rig Veda 1.22) and Shiva; the nature and role of the female force, Shakti, including Parvati and Lakshmi.

**The question asked was:** Explain two beliefs about the nature of Shakti.

There were many competent answers to this question, reflecting some excellent teaching. Where some candidates struggled was with presenting two developed beliefs, rather than three or four separate beliefs.

### Question 1(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

**Bullet point. 1.1** The nature of Brahman: the nature of Brahman as spirit, ultimate reality or absolute truth; how the characteristics of Brahman are shown in Hindu scriptures, including Katha Upanishad 2.2.6–8.

**The question asked was:** Explain two characteristics of Brahman. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Here too, the wide range of potential answers meant that many candidates scored highly and were able to present a relevant source of wisdom and authority. Those who failed to access the upper mark range tended not to have identified characteristics of Brahman.

### Question 1(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Beliefs and Teachings

**Bullet point. 1.7** Hindu responses to suffering, knowledge and ignorance: Hindu teachings about suffering, knowledge and ignorance, such as ahimsa, respect, empathy, mind/sense control, humility, and love, including Mahabharata 5:39; divergent Hindu understandings as to why there is suffering, knowledge and ignorance for Hindus today.

**The question asked was:** "Human action is the main cause of suffering in the world."

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.

Many candidates found it relatively easy to discuss the relationship between moral and natural evil, and there were some quite sophisticated answers in which candidates considered the extent which human action might lie behind some things that might otherwise be considered natural evils; flooding, climate change etc.

### Question 2(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

**Bullet point. 2.5** Hindu sacred festivals: the nature, history, purpose and significance of Hindu sacred festivals; the origins and meaning of specific festivals, including Diwali, Holi, Navratri Dussehra, Ram Navami, Ratha-yatra, Janmashtami, and Raksha Bandhan, including interpretations of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 1.3.28.

**The question asked was:** Outline three ways Diwali is celebrated by Hindus.

Very few candidates were unable to outline three ways that Diwali is celebrated.

### **Question 2(b)**

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

**Bullet point. 2.1** The nature and purpose of Hindu yoga: the nature and purpose of different forms of yoga: karma yoga (action), jnana yoga (knowledge), astanga/raja yoga (meditation) and bhakti yoga (devotion); examples of when each form of yoga might be used, how and why; the importance of having different types of yoga; reference to Bhagavad Gita 6.44–47.

**The question asked was:** Explain two reasons why Hindus might practise different types of yoga.

Where candidates struggled with this question it was because they had lapsed into description of types of yoga, as opposed to responding to the question as phrased: reasons why Hindus might practise different types of yoga.

### **Question 2(c)**

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

**Bullet point. 2.3** The importance of Hindu places of worship: the nature, features of use and purpose of worship in different places, including in the temple, in the home, outside, including shrines and festival celebration and in the space of the heart, with reference to interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 9.13–27; the benefits for Hindus of having different places to worship in

**The question asked was:** Explain two benefits for Hindus of having different places of worship. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

The vast majority of candidates contrasted worship in the home with worship in a mandir, but there were some responses that ranged wider to other places of worship, such as pilgrimage sites. It tended to be these latter who found it easiest to find a source of wisdom and authority that they could use.

### **Question 2(d)**

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Practices

**Bullet point. 2.4** The nature and purpose of prayer in the temple and the home: the nature, features of use and purpose of the different forms of worship, including meditation, puja, havan, darshan, arti, bhajan, kirtan and japa with reference to

interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 6.44–47; divergent understandings of the benefits for Hindus of having different forms of worship

**The question asked was:** “Acts of worship only benefit the individual.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

The question was written expecting it to offer some degree of challenge to the candidates, and it is to the great credit of their teachers that there were as many good answers as there were. Lots were able to speak of the spiritual and communitarian benefits of acts of worship and there were some very good responses, including some nuanced ones that attempted to tread a middle way.

## 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). It would also seem to be a worthwhile exercise to make sure that you understand some of the technical terms in the Specification that are not subject specific for example, is the difference between ‘three beliefs about the nature of Brahman’ and ‘three beliefs about Brahman’?
- 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. If you don’t address the specific question asked, you will lose valuable time in the exam, writing an answer that can only access some of the marks.
- 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. You should not simply write your quotation(s) at the end of the answer; still less simply write them at the end of the answer.
- 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 yourself 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 a strong argument; tell the examiner why x is stronger than y. Is it supported by a more authoritative text for example? Make sure that when you are saying why the argument is weak/strong you don't just introduce another reason - make sure that it's appraisal still. The mark scheme talks about 'superficial appraisal' so try to go beyond the superficial. Answers where every paragraph ends either 'This is a strong argument because it is supported by scripture' or 'This is a weak argument because it is just an opinion' are always going to seem a little superficial.