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Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2019

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies (1RB0)

Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and  
Conflict

Option 2E - Hinduism

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## Introduction

This was the second examination series for the revised GCSE 9 - 1 Level 1 and 2 qualification in Religious Studies. It is clear that many centres have learned considerably from the preceding series and have begun to school their candidates in the technique required for success in this examination. The Principal Examiner's report for the 1RB0\_1E contains information and examples that may be of use to candidates preparing for 1RB0\_2E.

**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 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.

**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.

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. In future examination series, this latter capacity would seem likely to be key to accessing the highest grades.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q01a**

The single biggest obstacle, for those candidates who did not gain full marks, was that some did not understand what was required in response to the keyword 'nature'.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q01b**

Nirguna and saguna are both key concepts and securely knowing the difference between the two is a solid foundation for all candidates, often proving useful in a number of questions.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q01c**

Where this question proved challenging, it tended to be because candidates drifted away from the core idea of 'the importance' of Vishnu. Many candidates were however able to access most of the marks on this question, even if providing an appropriate source of wisdom and authority proved more of a challenge for some.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q01d**

This question presented the opportunity for candidates to show their knowledge and understanding of karma. Because it is such a widely known concept, some candidates found it hard to move beyond a fairly superficial understanding.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q02a**

This question tended to be well answered by all candidates, except those who focused their answers on punishment over crime.

#### **1RB0\_2E\_Q02b**

B questions can be developed by the use of sources of wisdom and authority and, whilst this is not often the case, this particular question presented many examples. The importance of candidates having a secure 'bank' of sources of wisdom and authority to draw on cannot be overstated.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q02c**

This question also lent itself to responses based on karma, with the majority of candidates able to access at least some of the available marks.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q02d**

Whilst this question was often well-answered, there were many instances of candidates offering more generic answers on the rights and wrongs of punishment. It bears saying that candidates are disadvantaged when they fail to read the question carefully, or fail to address the specifics of the question closely enough.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q03a**

Whilst almost all candidates were able to describe three Hindu festivals, somewhat fewer were able, correctly, to name three and it was these who accessed all of the available marks. In some cases, candidates identified religious rituals and confused these with festivals.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q03b**

A wide range of responses was accepted for this question, from created physical representations of the divine to representations of the divine occurring in nature.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q03c**

Most candidates were able to access some of the marks available for this question, but those who were not tended not to have addressed the question as it was written and gave descriptions of the work of at least one Hindu charity, rather than addressing the teachings that motivate that work.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q03d**

The very best responses to this question were those that were able to reference relevant teachings, particularly those from Hindu scripture, as these afforded the best opportunities to demonstrate the kind of appraisal that we are looking for in Level 3 and 4 responses; it is difficult to appraise parts of the argument that have no real religious foundation.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q04a**

This question was frequently well answered, with the biggest challenge for some candidates being to identify three beliefs about peace without digressing into other associated areas.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q04b**

Almost all candidates were very well versed in Just War theory and weak responses were few and far between. Just occasionally, candidates were disadvantaged by the fact that they could think of many reasons why Hindus might regard a Just War as possible and therefore put all of those reasons down on paper without giving any thought for the need for development in these questions. It is important to remember that only two reasons/ways etc. can be credited.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q04c**

As with the preceding question, candidates were invariably very well prepared for this part of the paper and had little difficulty in accessing most of the marks available. For some, the greatest challenge was incorporating a source of wisdom and authority into the answer without it appearing as an afterthought, rather than a development of one of the teachings they had already identified in their answer.

### **1RB0\_2E\_Q04d**

General answers about Hindus and peace abounded here, with few candidates focusing specifically on the idea of peace making. Fortunately for many, the ideas underpinning both are so similar that most candidates were still able to access marks from this question – I would, however, reiterate to candidates the importance of reading the question carefully and being sure to read into the question to properly understand what the examiner is looking for. To that end, regular reference back to the specification in the classroom may also be of advantage to candidates in preparing for the examination.

## **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.
- 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? 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.