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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RB0)
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1E: 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 Pearson qualification 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: Hindu Beliefs.

Bullet point. 1.8 Hindu cosmology: the nature of the Hindu cosmology as shown in Hindu scriptures, including Rig Veda 10:129; the nature and importance of the cycle of four ages (yugas), including descriptions of the Kali Yuga in the Mahabharata many worlds and their diverse inhabitants; the nature and divergent understandings of the importance of the concepts of prakriti (matter/nature), triguna (three qualities) and maya (illusion).

The question asked was: Outline three beliefs about the gunas.

Many candidates answered this question successfully but, for some, there was confusion between gunas and yugas that resulted in them not accessing the marks.

Question 1(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Hindu Beliefs.

Bullet point. 1.6 The purpose of human life for Hindus: the nature and significance of the four aims of life (Purusharthas) dharma, artha, kama and moksha; the nature and significance of sanatana dharma (eternal law), including Bhagavad Gita 3.35; the nature and significance of varnashrama dharma (duties according to materialistic situation in life).

The question asked was: Explain two reasons why varnashrama dharma may be important for Hindus.

Accessing at least some of the marks for the question was possible for all of the candidates who understood what varnashrama dharma is. What some candidates found challenging was to produce two developed reasons why it may be important.

Question 1(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Hindu Beliefs.

Bullet point. 1.2 The nature and importance of understanding Brahman as Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman: how Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman are shown in Hindu scripture, for example Nirguna – Taittiriya Upanishad 2.7.1–2 and Saguna – Rig Veda 1.154.1–2; the nature and importance of Vaikuntha (spiritual worlds); divergent ways in which belief in each may be expressed in the life of Hindus today.

The question asked was: Explain two Hindu beliefs about Nirguna Brahman.

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

A small number of candidates confused Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. The distinction between the two is central to questions that specifically ask about the two but can often prove useful in other questions on this part of the specification too.

Question 1(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Hindu Beliefs.

Bullet point. 1.5 The nature of the individual and life within Hinduism: the nature and importance of the atman (eternal self), karma, the cycle of samsara, moksha; divergent Hindu understandings of the nature of the individual and life, including interpretations of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4; why beliefs about the atman, karma, samsara and moksha are important for Hindus today.

The question asked was: “To attain moksha, a person cannot rely on their instincts.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Many candidates found it relatively easy to discuss the impact of following one’s instincts on attaining moksha but a good many found it more challenging to articulate the ways in which believers choose not to follow their instincts, e.g. the role of sacred texts or gurus in shaping the believer’s life.

Question 2(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point. 2.3 Hindu teachings about the purpose and importance of the family procreation, security and education of children, with reference to Bhagavad Gita 1.37–43; divergent Hindu responses to different types of family within 21st century (nuclear, single parent, same-sex parents, extended and blended families).

The question asked was: Outline three purposes of the family for Hindus.

Those candidates who were not successful in answering this question had, typically, not identified the word purpose in the phrasing of the question and tended to describe families.

Question 2(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point. 2.5 Hindu teaching about family planning and regulation of births: divergent Hindu attitudes about contraception and family planning, including reference to the householder stage, including interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 3.37–43; different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to family planning and the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Hindu responses to them.

The question asked was: Explain two Hindu responses to non-religious attitudes towards family planning.

The best responses identified a non-religious approach to family planning and then articulated a response to it. Positive marking benefitted many candidates where we were able to identify an approach to family planning that might be considered non-religious without being identified as such.

Question 2(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point. 2.7 Hindu teachings about the equality of men and women in the family: Hindu teachings and attitudes about the role of men and women in the family, including reference to Manusmriti 3:55–60; divergent Hindu attitudes about the equality of men and women in the family.

The question asked was: Explain two Hindu beliefs about the equality of men and women in the family. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This question focused very specifically on the part of the specification that deals with equality of men and women in the family and not their equality generally and, where candidates did not gain marks on this question, it was usually because they had not identified this.

Question 2(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point. 2.1 The importance and purpose of marriage for Hindus: Hindu teaching about the importance and purpose of marriage in Hindu life, including Rig Veda 10. 85:36–47; divergent Hindu, non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to the importance of marriage in society, including a lack of importance, cohabitation and Hindu responses to them.

The question asked was: “Marriage is the most important part of Hindu life.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

The role of marriage in Hinduism was well understood by the vast majority of candidates. The better responses drilled into which other aspects of life might be considered important, and specifically why they might be more/less important. It is worth mentioning that the phrasing of the d questions is deliberately blunt, in order to aid candidates. It is perfectly acceptable for the candidate to take a more nuanced view and say to what extent they agree/disagree with the statement.

Question 3(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life

Bullet point. 3.5 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 Brhadaranyaka Upanishad 1.3.28.

The question asked was: Outline three ways Holi is celebrated

Few candidates were unable to identify at least two features of Holi, with the vast majority identifying the three features required.

Question 3(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life

Bullet point. 3.3 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 reasons why shrines are important for Hindus.

This question was answered with some success by almost all candidates – but reflecting a variety of understanding of the word shrine.

Question 3(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life

Bullet point. 3.2 Focuses of worship and representations of the divine: the nature, purpose and importance of different ways of worshipping, including worshipping one god (personal or non-personal) or many deities, gurus and holy places (land, hills, rivers and sacred plants and animals); the scriptural basis for the different focuses of worship and representations of the divine in worship, including interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 6.20–31

The question asked was: Explain two reasons why Hindus may regard some rivers as important. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

This question proved to be more challenging for some candidates than expected. In a very few cases there were responses that failed to take account of the fact that this is a Religious Studies paper and where the response might have been more at home in a Geography paper.

Question 3(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life

Bullet point. 3.7 Hindu environmental projects: divergent understandings of the nature, purpose and significance of environmental care for Hindus; the importance of care for rivers and sacred places for Hindus; how Hindus care for the environment, examples of what they do and why, including reference to cow protection, including interpretations of Rig Veda 10.87.16–19.

The question asked was: “All Hindus have a duty to care for sacred places.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates took a variety of approach to the counter argument in this questions, with some choosing to focus on non-sacred places and others focusing on other actions (such as caring for people in need).

Question 4(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point. 4.5 Hindu teachings about life after death: Hindu teachings and beliefs that support the existence of a life after death, including Bhagavad Gita 4.23–30; divergent Hindu responses to arguments for life after death (remembered lives, paranormal, logic, reward, comfort and meeting loved ones who have passed on); the significance of belief in life after death for Hindus.

The question asked was: Outline three Hindu teachings that support the existence of life after death.

This question was frequently well answered, but in some cases candidates gave reasons why a person might believe in life after death, rather than teachings that support the existence of life after death.

Question 4(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point. 4.3 Hindu responses to scientific and non-religious explanations about the origins and value of human life, such as evolution and survival of the fittest; the significance of the responses to scientific and non-religious explanations, such as evolution and survival of the fittest, for Hindus today, including interpretations of Rig Veda 10.129.

The question asked was: Explain two ways Hindus may respond to the theory of evolution.

There was a pleasingly wide range of response to this question, with candidates articulating reasons for and against, and referencing a wide range of texts in their responses.

Question 4(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point. 4.2 Hindu teachings about the sanctity of life: why human life might be regarded as holy; how life is shown as special in the scriptures, including interpretations of Katha Upanishad 1.3.3; the importance of sanctity of life for Hindus today.

The question asked was: Explain two Hindu teachings about the sanctity of life.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

For all those candidates who understood the term 'sanctity of life' this question was relatively straightforward, except when it led to some degree of repetition. The mark scheme specifies elements that cannot be credited if they are repeated (such as repeated development).

Question 4(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of Life and Death

Bullet point. 4.7 Implications of the Hindu teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of euthanasia: the nature of euthanasia; Hindu teachings about euthanasia, including interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 7.25–30; divergent Hindu, non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use; the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Hindu responses to them, including support for hospice care.

The question asked was: "Euthanasia is wrong."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

This question proved to be quite accessible to the majority of candidates. Surprisingly few mentioned elements of euthanasia that are particular to Hinduism and it tended to be only the better responses that were able to bring prayopavesa into their responses. Some candidates neglected to refer to non-religious points of view and so limited their response to 6 marks.

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.