



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RB0)
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and
Conflict
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 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: 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 concept of prakriti (matter/nature), triguna (three qualities) and maya (illusion).

The question asked was: Outline three Hindu beliefs about the cycle of the ages (yugas).

The majority of the candidates answered the question well, with some showing some very secure knowledge. In a very few cases there were candidates who confused yugas with ashramas, perhaps reflecting that they were not familiar with the wording used by the specification.

Question 1(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Hindu beliefs.

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: Explain two teachings about Bhagavan.

This question proved challenging at all kinds of levels; largely because there are so many, sometimes mutually contradictory, ways of understanding the word Bhagavan.

Examiners started with the specification understanding of it and then credited other responses where it was clear that the candidates were demonstrating a contrary understanding and had not just misunderstood.

Question 1(c)

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: Explain two Hindu teachings about the cycle of samsara. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority

There were very few candidates who were not able to score the majority of the marks on this question and it seemed that samsara was a widely known concept.

Question 1(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Hindu beliefs.

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: "Hindus focus mainly on male deities."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

To aid candidates in shaping their responses, we try to make the wording of the questions blunt to create a clear contrast between the for and against answers. Although the wording is blunt, it is perfectly acceptable for the candidate to take a more nuanced view in crafting their response and this was seen in some of the better responses to this question.

Question 2(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.6 Hindu teachings about forgiveness: Hindu teachings and responses about the nature of forgiveness; how offenders are forgiven by the community and why this is needed; Hindu teachings and responses to the nature and use of restorative justice and why is it important for criminals, including Mahabharata 3:29.

The question asked to Outline three Hindu teachings about forgiveness.

Forgiveness was a readily understood concept and the vast majority of candidates were able to identify at least two of the three teachings required.

Question 2(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.4 Hindu attitudes towards punishment: the nature of punishment; teachings about why punishment is important for Hindus, including reference to Manusmriti 7:13– 28 and the nature and meaning of danda and prayascitta; Hindu teachings about why punishment can be regarded as justice, why punishment might be needed in society.

The question asked to Explain two reasons why Hindus may regard punishment as justice.

This question proved challenging to many candidates. The wording is taken directly from the specification and it may be that some candidates were unable to access the question because they were not familiar with this way of phrasing the question.

Question 2(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.2: Hindu attitudes towards crime: Hindu teachings and responses to the nature, causes and problem of crime; Hindu teachings about crime, including interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 14.16–18; what action is taken by Hindu individuals and Hindu groups to end crime, for example the work of BAPS charities.

The question asked to Explain two Hindu responses to the causes of crime.
In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority

There were many successful responses to this question, but comparatively few who were able to use one of their sources of wisdom and authority to gain the fifth mark. Where candidates did less well, it was typically because they did not address the word causes in the question. Again, the wording is taken from the specification.

Question 2(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.3 Hindu teachings about good, evil and suffering: Hindu teachings about the nature of good actions and how they are rewarded and the nature of evil actions and how they are punished, including Bhagavata Purana 4; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) about why people suffer, including believing in religion, and Hindu responses to them; divergent Hindu teachings about why people suffer.

The question asked to “When people suffer, it is a result of their own actions.”

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.

There were many successful responses to this question, perhaps reflecting the extent to which the concept of karma has entered the popular consciousness and thereby making the question accessible to almost all candidates.

Question 3(a)

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: Outline three ways Hindus show they care for the environment.

Where candidates struggled with this question, it was almost always because they looked at reasons why Hindus show care for the environment, rather than ways they show care for the environment.

Question 3(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life.

Bullet point 3.4 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: Explain two ways japa may be practised

For those candidates who know what japa is, this question presented little challenge – other than finding a way to develop their responses. A significant number of candidates were unfamiliar with the term. Of those candidates, some recognised that it had a connection with worship and, with a more generic answer, were still able to access some of the marks available.

Question 3(c)

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 Hindus may worship in different places. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

The majority of candidates used worship at home vs worship in a mandir to shape their responses, but there were some interesting answers that looked also at worshipping at other holy places, such as rivers etc.

Question 3(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Hindu Life.

Bullet point 3.8 Hindu charity work: the nature and purpose of charity for Hindus; Hindu teachings about charity; the work of one named Hindu charity working to promote wellbeing, social inclusion and women's rights, what it does and why, including interpretations of Bhagavad Gita 3:10–12.

The question asked was: "Hindus have a duty to promote social inclusion."
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Many candidates found this question to be the most challenging on the paper; either because they were unsure of the meaning of social inclusion, or because they were unable to go beyond a broad ethical argument, as opposed to a specifically Hindu argument.

Question 4(a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.5: Hindu attitudes to the Just War theory: Hindu teachings and responses about the nature, history and importance of the Just War theory; the conditions of a just war; divergent Hindu opinions about whether a just war is possible, including Bhagavad Gita 2:31–38, including the application of ethical theories such as situation ethics.

The question asked was: Outline three Hindu teachings about a Just War

Just War theory was well-known by the candidates. What proved more challenging was limiting themselves to elements of Just War theory that could properly be considered to be Hindu teachings about Just War, as opposed to general ethical teachings.

Question 4(b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.3: Hindu attitudes to conflict: Hindu teachings and responses to the problems conflict causes within society; Hindu responses to the problems conflict causes, including Rig Veda 10.191; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes about the role of religion in the causes of conflict and Hindu responses to them.

The question asked was: Explain two ways Hindus respond to the problems caused by conflict

Many candidates were successful in attempting this question. Where there were issues, it tended to be because the candidate wrote about conflict, as opposed to the problems caused by conflict.

Question 4(c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.7 Hindu attitudes to weapons of mass destruction (WMD): Hindu teachings and responses to the problems and benefits of WMD; Hindu attitudes towards the use of such weapons, including Bhagavad Gita 13.26–33; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) and the application of ethical theories, such as utilitarianism which supports the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and Hindu responses to them.

The question asked was: Explain two reasons why Hindus would oppose the use of weapons of mass destruction. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority

Most candidates were able to attempt this question, and the vast majority were able to find a suitable source of wisdom and authority, typically about peacemaking or non-violence, with which to develop their answer.

Question 4(d)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.2: The role of Hindus in peacemaking: Hindu teachings about peacemaking; the importance of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation for Hindus in peacemaking; the work of Hindus working for peace today, what they do and why they try to work for peace, including teachings on ahimsa in Artharva Veda 10.191:4 and the work of Mahatma Gandhi.

The question asked was: “A Hindu should always work for peace.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Hindu teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

There was a range of approach to this question. Some defaulted to a passive understanding of peacemaking (being peaceful) that did not fully address the matter, whereas the better responses understood it to be a positive action. It proved challenging for some to devise an effective counterargument and so, for some, this weakened the overall structure of their response.

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.