Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Religious Studies (5RS13)

Unit 13: Hinduism

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Unit 13 Hinduism

Question 1(a) was mostly answered correctly. In 1(b) many candidates were able to give two detailed reasons for why they thought Shakti is or is not important. A small minority of candidates used three or four reasons to illustrate their answer; unfortunately only two reasons could be credited. Part (c) asked candidates to explain why some avatars are important to Hindus. This answer was attempted by candidates of all abilities and was answered well by most candidates. The part (d) question required candidates to evaluate a statement about whether 'nothing happens without a cause'. Most candidates gave their own opinion and gave reasons for it in (d) (i). Many candidates were then able to give a counter argument in (d) (ii).

For question 2(a) most candidates correctly defined on. Most answers were correct; there were a few incorrect answers and a few partially correct answers. In 2(b) although many candidates were able to give two basic reasons for whether they thought Atman was really part of Brahman. Some candidates used three or four reasons to illustrate their answer; unfortunately only two reasons could be credited. Part (c) was very well answered by nearly all candidates, who were able to explain how and why Krishna is important for many Hindus. However many candidates wrote far more than was required and then a small number appeared to run out of time later on in the paper. The part (d) question required candidates to evaluate a statement about whether 'Hinduism should be called sanatan dharma'. Most candidates were able to state their own opinion and give reasons for it in (i). A large number of candidates were also able to construct counter arguments.

As a glossary definition question, question 3(a) was very well answered by candidates; the majority of candidates who attempted it were awarded full marks. Question 3(b) asked whether candidates thought Hindus should read the Upanishads. The question was attempted by candidates of all abilities. Although many candidates were able to give two basic reasons for whether they thought Hindus should or should not read shruti texts, it was only higher level answers that managed to give developed reasons. Some candidates used three or four reasons to illustrate their answer, unfortunately only two reasons could be credited. Candidates need to be prepared to expand on the simple reasons they give in part (b) questions as this is the only way to achieve full marks on this type of question. Part (c) was well answered by many candidates and many candidates gained full marks by stating four brief reasons as to why brahmins are important for many Hindus. A minority of candidates gave reasons for why they thought the brahmins are not important to Hindus, their answers read rather like an evaluative question rather than a knowledge based question, these reasons could not be credited as this did not answer the question. In part (d) the question required candidates to evaluate a statement about whether all Hindus need a guru. Most candidates stated their own opinion and give reasons for it in (d)(i) and a large number of candidates were also able to construct counter arguments in (d) (ii).

In question 4(a) this glossary definition was answered fully correctly by many candidates. Question 4(b) was well answered by most candidates; who gave two detailed reasons for why they thought all Hindus should follow their Varnashramadharma. Part (c) was well answered by many candidates and many candidates gained full marks by stating four brief reasons as to why smiriti writings are important for many Hindus. Some candidates wrote far more than the question required and gave up to eight brief reasons or four developed reasons. This impacted negatively for a small number of candidates on their section four answers where they appeared to run out of time. Once again, a minority of candidates gave reasons for why smiriti writings were not important for many Hindus, their answers read rather like an evaluative question rather than a knowledge based question, these reason could not be credited as this did not answer the question. Most candidates responded well to the layout of the part (d) question and stated their own opinion on whether the Bhagavad Gita was the most important book. They were then usually able to give an alternative opinion (dii).

In question 5(a) this glossary definition was known by a large number of candidates; most candidates were awarded full marks. Part (b) was generally answered well and many candidates were able to give developed reasons as to why they thought all mandirs should look the same. Part (c) was answered well by most candidates. Many candidates gave four detailed answers, even though they only needed to give four brief reasons, to explain why Divali is important. Again most candidates responded well to the layout of the (d) question and were able to state their own opinion and gave reasons for it in (i) and then gave an alternative opinion in (ii). Question 6(a) was generally answered well and most candidates gained full marks. Part (b) was well answered and many candidates were able to give two reasons as to whether they thought it was important for Hindus to go on pilgrimage to the Varanasi. The more able candidates were able to develop their reasons and gain the higher marks. Part (c) was well answered by the majority of candidates, who were able to explain in detail why the Ganges is important for many Hindus. This part (d) was well answered by the majority of candidates, and they were able to state their own opinion and gave reasons for it (i) and then gave an alternative opinion in (ii).

Most candidates knew the glossary definition for what a samskar is, question 7(a). This question generally gained full marks. Part (b) was well answered, many candidates gave two developed reasons for why they thought a mandir is important for a community. Part (c) asked candidates to explain why bramacharya is important for Hindus. A few candidates muddled this ashrama with one of the other life stages. Therefore these candidates were unable to answer this question well; this emphasises the importance of learning the glossary terms. A small number of candidates left this question blank especially those that had written more than was required in earlier sections of the paper. The part (d) question needed candidates to evaluate a statement about whether "All Hindus should work for social and community cohesion." Most candidates were able to state

their own opinion and give reasons for it in (i). A large number of candidates were also able to construct counter arguments.

In question 8, most candidates who answered part (a) gained full marks. However, once again some candidates clearly guessed the answer and gained zero marks for an incorrect answer of one that defined a different key word. In part (b) most candidates were able to state their own opinion as to whether they thought Hindus should help relieve suffering. Many candidates described the work of Hindu charity organisations and explained why they thought it was important to relieve poverty. Many candidates had strong opinions on this and this enabled them to develop their reason. This part (c) question was generally very well answered by candidates. Most candidates were able to give four brief explanations as to why the naming ceremony is important. The part (d) question asked candidates to evaluate a statement about whether "the grihastha ashrama is the only ashrama that matters." A few candidates discussed a different ashrama, which once again stresses the importance of learning the key terms in the glossary. Most candidates were able to state their own opinion and give reasons for it in (i). A large number of candidates were also able to construct counter arguments.

Summary
Candidates generally seemed very well prepared by schools and produced some very interesting and insightful answers to the questions posed. This indicated that they had not only studied the topics but importantly they had linked them to their own life and the world that they live in.

Some general points can be made on how best to answer the various question types:

• Part (a) questions ask for either a definition or examples and learning the glossary definitions is one way to achieve full marks on this question.

• Part (b) questions only need one opinion (the candidate's) backed by developed two reasons. To gain full marks candidates should give two developed reasons, rather than simple reasons. One way of approaching this is for candidates to give their reason, write two separate reasons for it, each in a distinct paragraph and to develop each of the reasons with an example or a quote.

• Part (c) questions are 'Explain why…' or 'Explain how…' questions, and are testing AO1. Candidates can gain the higher mark within the level by writing coherently and therefore meeting the Quality of Written Communication descriptor.

• Part (d) questions are divided into two parts: (d)(i) asks the candidates to give their own opinion backed by reasons and (d)(ii) requires an alternative opinion backed by reasons; one of the reasons used in the whole of (d) must refer to Hinduism otherwise the candidate cannot go beyond 3 marks for the whole of (d).

• There is a choice of two questions per section, each as four sub-questions. Candidates can either attempt the sub-questions in the top questions (odd numbers) or the sub-questions in the bottom question (even numbered). Candidates who choose questions form a mixture of the top and bottom questions will not be able to access full marks for the question.

• The number of lines given is more than adequate for candidates to achieve maximum marks. Any candidate who needs extra space can use that space allocated to other questions as long as they clearly indicate on their paper that this is what they have done.

• Candidates should be encouraged to spend about twenty minutes per question leaving ten minutes to check through work at the end of the paper. Teachers who would like to learn more about the specification and this year's examination in particular should attend one of the online Edexcel training events which can be booked through the Edexcel website. Specific queries can be answered through Ask the Expert which is also found on the Edexcel website.