

Moderators' Report/ Principal Moderator Feedback

Summer 2014

Pearson Edexcel in GCSE Religious
Studies

Unit 6: Religion and a life based on a
study of Hinduism

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Unit 6 is a study of Hinduism and life. This unit allows an in depth study of Hinduism a religion which is fascinating for both Hindus and non-Hindus alike. Hinduism is the second largest minority religion in the UK (census 2011) and study of the faith is becoming increasingly important in today's multi-faith society. The course engages the interest of young people, it addresses many moral and spiritual issues affecting young people today.

The mean on this paper has risen slightly showing that even though students are now sitting a linear examination it has affected candidate achievement; in fact the use of the required skills in the subject amongst the candidates had improved.

Worryingly there are a number of candidates who appear to have been taught a formula for questions which involves giving a valid reason and then a phrase such as 'by this I mean' or 'Hindus care about this because' as an introduction for development and these candidates do not then give any form of development they simply repeat (often rewording) at the reason already given. This is not helpful and leads to incoherent answers rather than the marks which the candidate would want.

Q1

This question is based on Section One in the specification each of the sub-questions covers a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This question asked for a definition of dharma, the vast majority of candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it.

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion and then give a reason for why they thought a religious upbringing led to belief or did not lead to belief, however some candidates simply described a religious upbringing which did not answer the question set. Better candidates discussed why they felt a religious upbringing led /did not lead to belief and developed their answers with examples. As usual many candidates gave the example and then the reason and this was credited as a developed reason.

c) This question was generally well answered by candidates, the majority were able to explain how Hindus responded to evil and suffering. Weaker candidates simply explained the problem of evil and did not answer the question. Stronger candidates applied their knowledge to Hindu practice and easily gained marks.

Candidates who set answers out clearly were a pleasure to read whereas candidates who relied upon formulaic answer formats were often confused and sometimes incoherent.

d) This question did not require reference to any examples of religious experiences and could have been answered in a general way. Candidates who answered this question well gave reasons and were able to develop using several examples of religious experiences, illustrating how belief can

be engendered or otherwise. Low marks were received by candidates who failed to link their reasons to the examples they gave or who simply described a religious experience ignoring the question set.

Q2

This question is based on Section One in the specification each of the sub-questions covers a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This was a glossary definition question about karma, this question was very well answered by candidates who had clearly learnt the glossary definition in appendix 4 of the specification.

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion and then give a reason for why they felt a numinous experience led or did not lead to belief in God. Some candidates revealed their lack of knowledge by referring to other religious experiences such as miracle which did not answer the question set. Better candidates used a definition then discussed why they felt a numinous experience led or did not lead to belief in God and developed their answers with examples from religious texts.

c) This question was generally well answered by candidates, the majority were able to explain why unanswered prayers may lead to a rejection of faith. Some candidates lost marks as they simply gave Hindu responses to unanswered prayers, which did not answer the question, it is very important that candidates are taught to read the questions carefully in order to avoid such errors.

d) This question did not require explicit use of references from the Bhagavad Gita however candidates who did use them appropriately often received very high marks. Many candidates answered this question very well; they gave reasons and were able to develop using several examples of why the Bhagavad Gita might lead people to believe in God. Low marks were received by candidates who failed to link their reasons to the examples they gave or who gave reasons why God might not exist ignoring the question set.

Candidates who set answers out clearly were a pleasure to read whereas candidates who relied upon formulaic answer formats were often confused and sometimes incoherent.

Q3

This question is based on Section Two in the specification each sub-question addresses a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This question asked for a definition of ahimsa, the vast majority of candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Some candidates gave an example and this was not needed.

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion about whether Hindus should agree with abortion. Better candidates were able to refer to specifically Hindu religious teachings and scripture as part of their answer. Weaker responses came from candidates who tried to base their answers on their own opinion rather than what they thought Hindus should do.

Those candidates who tried to split their opinion between should and should not accept frequently became confused and this should not be encouraged as a method of answering b questions.

c) The vast majority of answers to this question about why people do not believe in life after death were very good and candidates were able to answer either by giving a number of reasons, including development using examples such as lack of evidence. Lower achieving candidates included fewer reasons or tried to explain why Hindus might not believe in life after death. Better answers were concise and clear rather than rambling and vague.

d) This question caused very few problems, candidates clearly had good knowledge of the argument surrounding euthanasia, maybe as it is regularly in the news at present. Pleasingly they were able to refer to issues such as quality of life, sanctity of life, lesser of two evils and slippery slope ideas. The best answers were given by candidates who responded either by giving a number of reasons linked to a Hinduism or by developing 2 or 3 reasons with examples from teachings / scriptures.

Q4

This question is based on Section Two in the specification each sub-question covers a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This question asked for a definition of nirvana the vast majority of candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Candidates who do well learn the glossary definitions within the specification (appendix 4)

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion about Hindus should agree with euthanasia. Better candidates were able to refer to specifically Hindu teachings and examples as part of their answer. Weaker responses came from candidates who tried to base their answers on their own opinion rather than what they thought Hindus should do.

Those candidates who tried to split their opinion between should and should not accept frequently became confused and this should not be encouraged as a method of answering b questions.

A very few candidates indicated that euthanasia was legal and this could not be credited.

c) The vast majority of candidates knew the legal position and achieved high marks in this question.

All bullet points in the specification must be covered in the life of the specification, including ones which could be considered secular in nature, centres should not assume that any bullet point will not be examined.

Candidates were able to answer this question either by giving a number of reasons, or by including development of why this part of the law exists e.g. 24 week limit developed by an explanation of the baby can be medically helped to survive after this date would be level 2.

Lower achieving candidates included fewer reasons or tried to give reasons which were incorrect such as in the case of rape or religious reasons. Better answers were concise and clear rather than rambling and vague.

d) This question tested whether candidates had good knowledge about whether life after death affected the way a person lived their life - these beliefs could be religious or non-religious e.g. an atheist might not believe in life after death and therefore live life doing what they want is an effect and this confused some candidates who have learnt a formula on d to do Hindu ideas in di and non-Hindu in dii this caused some very good candidates to miss out on possible marks.

The best answers were given by candidates who responded either by giving a number of reasons linked to a specific religion or by developing 2 or 3 reasons with examples from religious teachings / scriptures. Poorer responses came from students who failed to refer to Hinduism in their answer.

Q5

This question is based on Section Three in the specification, each of the sub-questions covers a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This question asked for a definition of the havan, most candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Some candidates gave an example of its use and this was rewarded as a partially correct answer if there was not a definition given.

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion about whether Hindus should accept sex outside marriage, most were able to give two reasons and develop them. Some candidates gave two opposing opinions and as long as they showed that both opinions were their point of view they could be credited. Less able students were not able to think of more than one reason and as such were limited in the marks they could be awarded.

c) This question was well answered by the majority of candidates. It required candidates to discuss the varied views Hindus might have about homosexuality, this question required candidates to give reasons why Hindus might accept and why they might not accept homosexuality some candidates limited their marks to Level 3 but failing to include a mixture of both views.

Answers that did not achieve full marks were those that included incorrect reasons candidates should be encouraged to use religious teachings and scriptures to develop their reasons rather than rely upon what they pick up from other sources.

d) Most candidates were able to give reasons backing their view about religious attitudes to divorce in di) and reasons for an alternative view in dii) More able candidates used examples and quotations from religious teachings to support their opinion.

Poorer responses used secular arguments for and against divorce rather than religious ones.

Q6

This question is based on Section Three in the specification, each of the sub-questions covers a different bullet point within the specification.

a) This question asked for a definition of contraception, most candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Some candidates explained Hindu attitudes to contraception which was irrelevant in an a) sub-question. Candidates should understand that an a question will ask for a definition or examples not opinions.

b) This was answered well and most candidates were able to state their own opinion about whether Hindus should accept homosexuality and most linked their reasons to modern understanding of homosexuality, legal changes in the status of homosexual marriage or scriptural teachings about homosexuality.

Candidates who tried to do two different opinions often gave confused responses and candidates should be encouraged to give two reasons for the same opinion as it makes a more coherent response.

c) Most candidates were able to identify some reasons why family life is important for Hindus. Lower achieving candidates wrote non-religious reasons or rambled generally. Better candidates were able to develop their reasons why Hindus think family life is important with examples of religious life and quotes from the scriptures.

d) There were some excellent answers to this question which clearly held great interest to the candidates. Answers were mostly based on religious and sociological ideas surrounding sex before marriage. The best answers to this question discussed issues such as ashrama, security and the purpose of marriage. Some candidates could not get more than 3 marks out of 6 as they did not refer to Hinduism.

Poorer answers launched into opinions about why anyone should tell anyone else what they should and should not do and as these did not provide specific information about sex before marriage they were not credited.

Q7

This question is based on Section Four in the specification, each of the sub-questions covers a different bullet point within the specification.

It was noticeable that many of questions 7 and 8 were not complete; candidates should be advised to spend about 20 minutes on each question.

a) This question asked for a definition of racial harmony, most candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Some candidates explained a definition for religious harmony and gained no marks.

b) Better candidates were able to answer this question about problems living in a multi-ethnic society using both the information they had been taught and their personal experience. Lower scoring responses, as in previous years, confused multi-ethnic with multi-faith and gained no marks. There were lots of answers disagreeing that it caused problems giving positive reasons which were thoughtful and pleasing to read.

c) Most candidates were able to describe a number of benefits that arise from living in a multi-faith society, some were able to develop these reasons using specific examples or referring to scripture. Lower achieving candidates confused multi-faith with multi-ethnic and as such their marks were reduced. Some candidates gained no marks as they explained problems rather than benefits, candidates should be encouraged to read question carefully and not regurgitate pre-learnt responses.

d) Most candidates were able to respond to the quote about the treatment of men and women in the UK but some failed to give Hindu reasons so limiting their overall score on the whole of d to a possible 3 out of 6. It was also important to note that this was about how they are treated not what should happen so many students lost marks because they did not answer the question but gave religious reasons supporting equality (or not supporting equality). Some candidates were able to give their own opinion and reasons for it but were unable to explain why others might disagree with their opinion. It is important that candidates are encouraged to fully discuss both their own reasons and those that other people might hold.

Q8

This question is based on Section Four in the specification, each sub-question is aimed at a different bullet point within the specification.

It was noticeable that many of questions 7 and 8 were not complete; candidates should be advised to spend about 20 minutes on each question.

a) This question asked for a definition of racism, most candidates knew the glossary definition or close to it. Some candidates gave examples as these were given partially correct if there was not also a definition. If the candidate had already gained marks for the definition (partial or full) no additional marks were awarded for the example.

b) Most candidates were able to state their own opinion as to whether women should have different religious rights to men in Hinduism. Many were able to use examples from scripture to develop their reasons. Candidates who did less well referred to rights in society rather than religion and these could not be credited.

Candidates who tried to do two opposing opinions often gave confused responses and candidates should be encouraged to give two reasons for the same opinion as it makes a more coherent response.

c) This question was well answered by candidates who had been clearly taught about Hinduism and its support for racial harmony. It was not well answered by candidates who referred to general /secular reasons or who discussed religious harmony.

Candidates who set answers out clearly were a pleasure to read whereas candidates who relied upon formulaic answer formats were often confused and sometimes incoherent. In particular candidates who have been taught set formats and phrases such as 'by this I mean' or 'Hindus care about this because' merely repeated information they had already given or confused their reason often nullifying a reason already provided.

d) Some candidates left this question blank as they had clearly run out of time. Most candidates were able to respond to the quote and give reasons referring to specific Government legal actions. Better responses referred to religious teachings as being better than Government action but some candidates failed to refer to Hinduism so limiting their overall score on the whole of d to a possible 3 out of 6.

