



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second
Religion
Option 2E – Hinduism

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Introduction

This was the second examination series since the introduction of the revised mark scheme for **d** type questions. Centres are advised that there are extensive resources to support teachers in preparing their candidates for **d** type questions on the Pearson Edexcel website.

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. Centres are reminded that the Source of Wisdom and Authority has to *do* something; contribute to the point being made, develop the point being made and not just be appended to the answer, or be dropped in without context.

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 – simply stating that an argument is strong (or weak), or supporting it with an additional reason, rather than an appraisal of the argument. 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. A significant number of candidates use additional answer sheets, particularly for their **d** questions. In only a few cases did the additional answer sheets result in the candidate accessing a higher level on the mark scheme. Candidates are advised that their time is probably best spent planning their answers and ensuring their coherence and consistency.

SPaG is assessed in half of the **d** questions. Whilst there are relatively few marks available for SPaG, there are candidates who will have been awarded a lower grade because of marks that were dropped here. Time spent reminding candidates of the importance of punctuation would be well spent, as would time on key spellings.

Overall, the most successful candidates tended to understand key terms from the specification - 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.

Question 1a

The majority of candidates answered this question well. Those who did not, tended to have confused triguna for Trimurti or Tridevi.

Question 1b

The question about samsara was consistently answered well. Because of the nature of the question a wide range of answer could be accepted, with answers often concentrating on karma and moksha. Few, if any, candidates were not able to find a way to develop their answers on this question.

Question 1c

This question allowed candidates to gain marks through discussion of varnas, ashramas and, sometimes, even of dharma more generally. Where marks were lost, it tended to be through candidates making bold, sweeping, statements that might better have been started with *some* Hindus – particularly in reference to some of the more controversial aspects of varnas. Few candidates were unable to find an appropriate Source of Wisdom and Authority, but some misattributed it and it is worth reminding candidates that, unless they are certain of the attribution of the source, it is safer to quote it unattributed.

Question 1d

This question lent itself to the for and against nature of **d** questions as almost all candidates had enough understanding of Saguna and Nirguna Brahman to be able to extol access the question. This, in turn, allowed them to demonstrate an understanding of religion and belief that was at least sound, and that saw them comfortably into Level 3 at least.

Question 2a

There were many successful answers to this question. Teachers may find it helpful to remind candidates that there is no scope for development to be credited in *a* questions. These can be short and punchy, which allows them to spend more time answering their *b*, *c* and *d* questions.

Question 2b

Very few candidates were familiar with the origins of Raksha Bandhan. The specification specifically refers to the origin and meaning of a range of festivals that are identified by name; it may be advisable for centres to ensure that they have covered the origin stories of them.

Question 2c

This question was answered well by the vast majority of candidates. In some cases, candidates produced answers that focused on the practice of meditation, rather than the purpose of it.

Question 2d

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. Pilgrimage in general, and also specific pilgrimages, were referred to by candidates in formulating their responses. There was a very wide range of counter-argument employed.

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 – rather than being appended to the answer (often in a discrete paragraph) saying "A source of wisdom and authority to support this is...".

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? 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.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar are marked in 1d. Re-read your answer, after you have written it. Does it have capital letters and full stops? Does it have commas? If an upper case letter is used in the question (for example, the Divine or Brahman), did you also use an upper case letter?