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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2023

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RA0)
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second
Religion
Option 2E - Hinduism

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Introduction

GCSE (9-1) Religious Studies

Religious Studies A – Faith and Practice in the 21st Century

Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Study of Second Religion

Option 2E – Hinduism

This paper contributes to 25% of the overall award. The paper includes two questions, each covers a section of the specification. Candidates are expected to answer both questions. There is no element of choice on the paper. The details of the assessment content is provided in the specification. Centres are expected to use the Edexcel specification rather than other published resources when planning and teaching the course content. The examination is set from the specification .

(a) questions require the candidate to give three pieces of information, and the most common command word is 'Outline'. Candidates need to put their three pieces of information into a sentence or phrase.

(b) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate - not a completely new idea.

(c) questions require **two** developed ideas to get full marks. A development is something that adds to the reader's understanding of the initial point made by the candidate - not a completely new idea. In addition, either of the two ideas presented, if it is developed by reference to a Source of Wisdom and Authority (SOWA), can be awarded an additional mark.

There is no one single formula for answering a **(d)** question. Two answers can get the same mark and look completely different. That said, there are some key things that we are looking for. Let's start with the basics.

There should be an argument for, an argument against and a conclusion. The arguments for and against should demonstrate religious understanding - not just knowledge.

Ideas within the arguments should be organised into logical chains of reasoning (x happens, this is because of y, which means z).

Lastly, if you've presented an argument, is it a good one? Why is it a good one? Here, the biggest pitfall is candidates who say "this is a strong argument because..." and then give another reason that could just as easily have gone into their argument. This is a strong reason because it is taught in the Vedas/Upanishads/Bhagavad Gita is a good start (if it actually is!), but then why does the Rig Veda matter? Is the Bhagavad Gita more, or less, authoritative than the Rig Veda? If Gandhi taught it, why does that matter? Does it matter more or less than it being taught in Manusmriti, for example.

Question 1a

For the candidates who recognised the word Vaikuntha *and* identified the word important, it was relatively straightforward to provide three pieces of relevant information. Those who failed to get full marks typically gave beliefs about Vaikuntha that did not relate to its importance.

Question 1b

The vast majority of candidates answered this question well. Some candidates focused on individual divinities and not murtis, resulting in answers that were not credited.

Question 1c

The most challenging part of the response, for many candidates, was providing a Source of Wisdom and Authority in a manner that worked as an effective development for the question. It's important that SOWAs are related to the point being made in the response, and not 'bolted on' as it were.

Question 1d

The overwhelming majority of responses to this question sat within Level 2. Candidates clearly understood the underlying issues and all that was needed was to consider the relative strength of these arguments. For example, some candidates chose to use "Ahimsa is the highest duty" as a counter argument; they might usefully have looked at how authoritative that teaching is, whether it is more or less authoritative than the purusharthas.

Question 2a

Few candidates were unable to outline three forms of yoga; those who lost marks tended to do so because they simply listed three types of yoga, rather than putting each of the three types into its own sentence or phrase.

Question 2b

The number of candidates who left this question blank was significant. Candidates are reminded that the festivals about which questions can be asked are listed on the specification.

Question 2c

The range of answers to this questions was as wide as the range of places that might be considered sacred by Hindus. A common error was to focus on why places are considered sacred, as opposed to why they should be cared for.

Question 2d

The contrast between worship in the home and mandir was a natural one and it was, the route that many took. Whilst it wasn't impossible to access the higher levels via this route, those who were most successful tended to have considered other places of worship too – and this made it easier for them to access the higher levels as they were able to appraise the relative strength of the sources of wisdom and authority that they used.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

Write concise answers to (a) questions

Ensure that (a) answers are written in short sentences or phrases

Make sure that developments in (b) questions are clearly linked, or related, to the main idea they present

Avoid repeating the same development in (b) and (c) questions

Use sources of wisdom and authority to develop (c) answers, not as a 'bolt-on' at the end

Carefully consider what exactly it is that makes the arguments in their (d) questions strong or weak; eg how authoritative is the source they cite?