



Pearson
Edexcel

Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 1 Religion & Ethics

1E Hinduism

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Introduction

This was the first 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.

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 used additional answer sheets this year, particularly for their **d** questions. In only a few cases did the additional answer sheets result in a 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.

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. In future examination series, this latter capacity would seem likely to be key to accessing the highest grades.

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? 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.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar are marked in 1d and 3d. 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

1a

The concept of suffering (in a Hindu context) was well enough known that there were many successful answers to this question. In particular, it was common for candidates to relate it to karma, but there was a wide range of answers given.

1b

The vast majority of candidates who knew what the Kali Yuga is were able to produce two developed answers; issues only really arose where candidates did not understand it and assumed it to be a form of yoga or somesuch.

1c

The concept of moksha was well known and had clearly been taught well. The challenge for the majority of candidates was in finding a source of wisdom and authority that they could use appropriately to get the fifth mark.

1d

This question presented a challenge to those candidates who were not clear on the meaning of Antaryami and who were therefore unable to present a convincing argument for – or who chose not to attempt the question at all. Centres might advise their candidates that, in such circumstances, they could still access half the marks available by presenting a solid counter-argument of other things that might be said to allow Hindus to be close to the Divine.

2a

A huge array of ways that the local Hindu community supports families was offered by candidates, the vast majority of which could be argued to be plausible and were therefore credited.

2b

This question proved to be unexpectedly challenging for some candidates. Some missed the mark by assuming it to be about gender identity and still others failed to recognise that positive discrimination is itself a form of discrimination

and lost sight of the fact that the question specifically called for reasons why Hindus are opposed to discrimination.

2c

The question called for Hindu *responses* to different types of family, rather than descriptions of the different types of family. It was the candidates who talked about approval, disapproval, acceptance etc. who tended to be the ones who got the best marks.

2d

For all that it was assumed, before the paper was sat, that this question would be fairly accessible, it was surprising to see how many candidates struggled to present a non-religious viewpoint on family planning/population control etc.

3a

There were many successful answers to this question, with the vast majority of candidates understanding the spiritual significance of the Ganges, or of places on its banks.

3b

This question was universally answered well. A number of candidates made a case for not needing to care about the environment and this was a legitimate interpretation of the question.

3c

Many candidates found it challenging to find, and use appropriately, a source of wisdom and authority to go with this question. A minority of candidates did not appear to recognise karma yoga as a thing and therefore wrote about karma or about yoga in generic terms.

3d

This question was answered well by many candidates, in that it allowed them to revisit ideas from past papers, just in a different context. The more challenging part for many was presenting an argument that was susceptible to meaningful appraisal, and this therefore limited the number of candidates accessing the better grades.

4a

The phrase 'origins of human life' is taken directly from the Specification. Nevertheless, a number of candidates took it to be about conception, rather than creation, and thereby limited the number of marks they were able to be awarded. Centres are encouraged to use the wording of the Specification with

students wherever possible, so that they have greatest chance of understanding the questions on the paper. Responses that were about the creation of the universe, rather than specifically about human life, were not credited.

4b

This question's wording was also lifted from the Specification. It was pleasing to see how many good answers there were to it. The most successful responses tended to list the non-religious argument and then give the reasons that Hindus would reject them – answers where the examiner could identify the non-religious argument, even though it was not explicitly stated, were still credited.

4c

Examiners reported a wide range of stories about the origins of the universe being used in candidates' responses. Responses about the creation of human life were not credited.

4d

There were some very strong responses to this question and it was pleasing to see how many of the responses used source of wisdom and authority to good effect – and particularly the wide range of sources of wisdom and authority.