



# Examiners' Report

## Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE  
In Religious Studies B  
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and  
Conflict  
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**

As centres may discover when it comes their turn to mark this papers as a mock examination later in the year, this question proved challenging to mark. Many candidates gave answers that were more about Brahman in a general sense than Antaryami. We credited any such answers that could be attributed to Antaryami.

### **Question 1b**

Few candidates were unable to give two developed beliefs about Ahimsa.

### **Question 1c**

This was another question where familiarity with the language of the Specification was advantageous to some, in that they addressed the nature of life, rather than the purpose of life, and were therefore able to access the full range of marks. Not all candidates were able to provide a suitable Source of Wisdom and Authority to go with their answer.

### **Question 1d**

There was a range of interesting answers to this question, many of which recognised the characteristics of the Kali Yuga. A very few candidates did not appear to have much of a grasp of it however, and these struggled to make it through the levels of the mark scheme.

### **Question 2a**

It was disappointing to see so many candidates not really understand what capital punishment is (as was evidenced by the number of responses that referred to it in a rehabilitative sense). It has been years since key words were tested in the examination, but it may be that there is still a place for teaching and testing them in the classroom.

### **Question 2b**

Some 70% of candidates were able to give two developed purposes of punishment, and virtually none were unable to provide two purposes, even if they found it a challenge to develop them.

### **Question 2c**

The concept of restorative justice was well-known (sometimes very obviously from familiarity with it in a school context) and so there were many answers that scored at least four marks. More challenging, however, was to provide an appropriate SoWA to go with their answer.

### **Question 2d**

This was an example of a question that was not read sufficiently carefully by some candidates. Although there were some excellent responses to the question, there were

some who answered a question about tackling crime, rather than tackling the *causes* of crime.

### **Question 3a**

More than 85% of candidates were able to give three ways that Hindus celebrate Diwali. Those who didn't tended to be people who simply gave three pieces of information about Diwali, rather than focusing on what people do at Diwali.

### **Question 3b**

It was pleasing to see how many candidates had clearly been taught about japa as a practice, and many candidates were able to give reasonable reasons why a Hindu might perform it.

### **Question 3c**

This was an accessible question, where more than 90% of candidates were credited with either 4 or 5 marks. Some of those who did not get the fifth mark did so because they did not integrate the SoWA into their answer – it is important that it contribute to the development of one of their reasons, and not just be appended to the answer.

### **Question 3d**

This too was an accessible question, where the counterargument was often an opportunity to revisit other worship-based **d** questions that they had come across in past paper practice. Some of these answers could, with only slight amendments have crept into Level 4 and I would urge centres to review the d question training materials on the website to ensure that their candidates are scoring as highly as possible.

### **Question 4a**

Pacifism is a well-known concept, and so many candidates were able to give at least two beliefs about it. Whilst we always mark positively, there are always going to be limits on that and, in this case, it did not seem reasonable to allow the fairly common response, 'Gandhi was a pacifist' as a belief about pacifism.

### **Question 4b**

The question on the importance of forgiveness was answered well by the majority of candidates.

### **Question 4c**

Every candidate who sat the exam and wrote a response was able to access at least some of the marks available for this question. Three quarters of them were able to get full marks because they had at least one SoWA that they could deploy to secure the fifth mark – and often they used two.

### **Question 4d**

There were some excellent discussions of the morality of war, with many candidates able to use examples from the Bhagavad Gita to support their answers. In a few cases they

neglected to make reference to relevant ethical arguments and so were unable to progress beyond Level 2. Some centres have drilled their candidates to look for the additional bullet points and highlight them; this practice may be of use to other centres.

## 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 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?