



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Religious Studies (4RS1) Paper 2C

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## **Principal Examiner's Report for Paper 4RS1\_2C Hinduism**

### **General Introduction**

Once again this year there has been a small entry of candidates for what is now called 4RS1\_2C Hinduism, following the decision to split Paper 2 into its component religions.

Here are a few initial general observations about this year's Paper, some of which will be exemplified further, later in the Report.

- Candidates are required to answer all questions in the paper, and this seemed to be generally well understood.
- Candidates usually wrote appropriate amounts in their responses, within the spaces provided. A significant number of candidates, however, did use extra paper.
- On this Paper, the different question types have different demands. For example, a) questions test Assessment Objective 1 whereas the c) questions are much more directed towards testing AO2.
- The majority of this year's candidate cohort appeared well prepared for the examination in terms of their knowledge, understanding and willingness to engage with questions as written.
- There was little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time. Sometimes, when candidates did fail to finish the Paper, it may have been because they spent too much time on questions, such as a) questions, that did not need as much development.

Teachers and Centres may well find it helpful to look at the Principal Examiner's Report for each of the other religions, as there may be points made there about a specific question that will have more general application.

### **Comments on specific question types**

#### **a) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 4 marks, 2 each for two developed responses. The command word is always 'Outline', though it is important to look for the further indicator of what is being requested. This could therefore be 'Outline two ways', 'two features', 'two reasons', or a number of other similar terms. The key requirement for gaining full marks is development. In each case the response must be developed in a way that furthers the understanding of the response given, and which responds to the question.

## **b) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 6 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with two Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Level 2, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses (for 4 marks) and, furthermore, to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic (for 5 or 6 marks).

## **c) Questions**

These questions are worth up to 10 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with four Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks, Level 3 allocates 7 or 8 marks, and Level 4 allocates 9 or 10 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Levels 3 and 4, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses, demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic, and also the ability to evaluate two points of view to arrive at a justified conclusion.

Currently the rubrics for c) questions allow candidates to refer to other religions. It is important for candidates to be aware that such references can only be rewarded when there is a clear attempt to explain why the experience of another religion might be significant for the religion being examined.

## **General issues per question type that may restrict candidates' marks**

On a) questions, the most usual weakness in candidate responses is the lack of development, where only one or more simple responses are given. Such responses cannot earn more than 2 marks in total. Another occasional weakness is when candidates give features, for example, when they are asked for reasons. It is important to pay attention to that changeable key word.

On b) questions, many candidates do develop their answers and achieve Level 2, 4 marks. However, there is then a tendency for these simply developed responses to be multiplied, rather than explained in greater depth, thereby candidates limiting themselves to 4 marks.

On c) questions, again many candidates do develop their responses. However, an answer that says that some believers would propose arguments a, b and c, but other believers would argue x, y and z – without any attempt to demonstrate a deeper understanding or to evaluate the different points of view – is unlikely to go beyond the top of Level 2.

**Strengths and Weaknesses of approaches to specific questions.**

**Section 1 focuses on Origins and their impact on the community.**

**1a 'Outline two roles performed by the pujari'**

This question was well understood by candidates, and well answered, with responses effectively developed. The responses focused on the role the pujari perform in the mandir, as well as their wider role within the Hindu community.

**1b 'Explain the influence of either Sri Ramakrishna or Mahatma Gandhi on the development of modern Hinduism'**

All the answers to this question were about Mahatma Gandhi. Occasionally the answers were more descriptive than explanatory, but there were many better answers that addressed the question of influence. This included his work for the rights of the Dalits, and his example of peaceful protest. Because of the strong association between Hinduism and India, it seemed appropriate to credit answers that spoke about the importance of his work for Indian independence.

**1c Discuss the suggestion that 'Rama and Krishna provide the best guide to living the Hindu life'.**

This question allowed candidates to explain the character and actions of Rama and Krishna, as avatars of Vishnu, and the ways in which they provide models of Hindu life. Candidates appeared to have a good understanding of both Rama and Krishna, and were aware of the different, if often complementary, characteristics that they exemplify. Some of the less developed responses neglected a balanced discussion about the corresponding value of other sources of wisdom about Hindu life, both personal and textual. However, most candidates were able to offer this balance, and also to arrive at justified conclusions.

**Section 2 focuses on Celebration and Pilgrimage**

**2a 'Outline two practices associated with pilgrimage to Varanasi.'**

This question asks about practices associated with visits to Varanasi, not specifically why Varanasi is important. Most candidates fully understood that, and that to gain marks specific practices needed to be highlighted. It was only then possible to gain the development mark by explaining their significance or importance.

### **2b 'Explain how Diwali may be celebrated by Hindus.'**

Diwali is a well understood festival in Hinduism, and its practices and symbolism were well understood by candidates. Various practices were well described, and this was developed with explanations of the symbolism. It was not always understood that this question also calls for an explanation of the significance and influence of beliefs and values, for an answer to be comprehensive, as it says in the Levels mark scheme, though the best answers did try to explain in more depth the relationship between practice and belief.

### **2c Discuss the suggestion that 'Navaratri is the most important Hindu festival.'**

Such questions, which suggest that a specific festival, or place or form of worship, for example, might be considered the most important, are to be seen as a vehicle for discussion. It is always entirely justifiable for candidates to say that all practices are important in their own way. A legitimate way to answer this question, which was favoured by most candidates, was to explain why Navaratri is important, and then to point to other festivals that might legitimately make the same claim. Some then concluded that one particular festival might stress aspects of Hindu belief they consider more significant, and others would conclude that Hindus draw value from them all.

## **Section 3 focuses on Worship and Practice**

### **3a 'Outline two internal features of a Hindu temple.'**

Candidates were fully aware of the features of temples and the only, occasional, error on such questions would be to misread internal for external and vice versa. So the key advice here is always to read the question carefully.

### **3b 'Explain the importance of visual imagery in Hindu worship'**

This proved to be one of the more demanding questions on this Paper. Whilst most candidates were able to give examples of visual imagery, and simply develop their meaning and importance, not all candidates were able to take the next step and explain why visual imagery generally plays such an important role in Hindu worship. Consequently, some candidates restricted their mark on this question to the top of Level 2. However, some candidates were able, for example, to explain that the traditional understanding of Brahman, as lacking form, may have led to the development of visual imagery to provide insight into the nature of the divine. There were some very good answers.

### **3c Discuss the suggestion that 'Temples are essential for Hindu communities'.**

By contrast, this proved to be a more straightforward question. Most candidates were able to explain how temples are used, and why they play an important role in Hindu life, not least as a gathering place for the Hindu community and as a place of celebration of important festivals and rituals. Equally many were able to point, for example, to the importance of personal worship in Hinduism. There is one caveat, which highlights the word 'essential' in the question. Of course it is possible for more than one thing to be essential, and so it is not a strong answer to say that temples are not essential because, perhaps, pilgrimages are. Such answers would still have to go on to highlight what quality is lacking in one but present in the other. There were some answers that did not quite understand this.

### **Summary and Recommendations to Centres to improve candidate performance**

- Candidates should be encouraged to develop their responses. On Paper 2 they will always add value to their response if they further describe, illustrate or explain their answer.
- Candidates are reminded that any number of simply developed responses to b) questions can gain only a maximum of 4 marks, and that a demonstration of depth of understanding is required to gain the higher marks.
- In b) and c) questions, some description can help to develop a response, such as description of pilgrimage sites or aspects of worship. However, to gain higher marks, answers must be followed by an attempt to draw out their deeper meaning.
- Candidates should only spend time explaining the point of view of another religion if they are confident they can show how that helps to provide a better understanding of the religion being examined.

