

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2015

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
in Religious Studies (5RS14)

Unit 14: Sikhism

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Unit 14 Sikhism

Candidates are advised to carefully study the Glossary to learn key terms. This is especially important as the unit continues to attract an increasing percentage of non-Sikh candidates. Candidates can improve their answers to part (b) questions by focusing on only two reasons for their point of view. They should explain each of these reasons fully so that the depth of their reasoning or evidence is made clear. Evidence could include a quotation or example. At the same time candidates continue to excel at part (c) questions demonstrating secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. They should ensure that they include their reasons in the first part of d) before explaining why someone would disagree in the second part of d).

Section 1

Candidates generally showed a good understanding of the Glossary definitions in questions 1a and 2a. However, they demonstrated a less secure understanding of the term Eternal in question 1b. The quality of answers to question 1c and question 2c provided evidence of wide ranging knowledge in relation to caste and sewa. There was evidence of careful reflection in relation to question 1d which was about the relationship of self and society. Answers to question 2d elicited excellent responses; in particular, they brought in a range of religious studies material – comparative, theological, philosophical, testimonial - in relation to rebirth.

Section 2

Many candidates answered this section to a high standard but again too many candidates had not mastered the Glossary, for example, question 4a – Kartarpur. While question 4b) about the ten Gurus was answered well with many candidates able to draw on their non-Sikh faith traditions to explain their stance toward Sikh beliefs, which were explained clearly, there was confusion in question 3b) about the early life of Guru Nanak. Many candidates do not appear to have studied the discreet bullet point in relation to this. While candidates demonstrated secure knowledge about the Guru Granth Sahib in question 3c, they were less secure about the visit to Hardwar in question 4c. Both questions 3d and 4d were attempted to a high standard with most candidates able to clarify and consider arguments about the origins of Sikhism in question 3d and what it means to be a Sikh in question 4d.

Section 3

Understanding of the Glossary was secure in this section. Answers to question 5b concerning the amrit ceremony demonstrated a clear understanding of the ceremony and its meaning and purpose. However, fewer candidates showed as much precise knowledge of morning and evening devotions in question 6b. Candidates demonstrated a secure grasp of the issues in relation to worship in the gurdwara in question 5c and the importance of Amritsar in question 6c. Detailed knowledge and understanding were shown in relation to the celebration of melas in question 7d although some candidates ignored the Glossary definition in

favour of popular usage. Candidates revealed pleasing knowledge of kirtan in question 8d.

Section 4

Candidates were often vague about the definition of kurahit in question 8a. However, answers to question 7b about the importance of death rituals and question 8b about the rahit maryada demonstrated evidence of careful application and reflection. Candidates were less secure about the legal position of the 5Ks under British law and many did not appear to have studied the bullet point in relation to poverty in the UK; too many focused on international aid. While answers about the difficulty of living the Sikh life in the UK in relation to question 8d were balanced, many candidates displayed a weak understanding of symbolism in relation to the Nishan Sahib and Sikhism more generally in question 7d.

