



Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 1 Religion & Ethics
1G Sikhism

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Summer 2024

Publications Code 1RA0_1C_2406_ER

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Introduction

This area comprises an in-depth study of Sikhism and its beliefs and teachings on life, specifically within families and with regard to creation.

This approach encourages candidates to reflect upon the links between beliefs and teachings of Sikhism and the topics of families and creation which are an important part of life today.

There are four sections: Sikh Beliefs, Marriage and the Family, Living the Sikh life, Matters of Life and Death. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

Section 1: Sikh beliefs were well answered, with sound knowledge and key Sikh terms used throughout, especially AO1 questions. The AO2 question is showing signs of analysis and with the new marking criteria the levels have increased slightly. The candidates are beginning to start to critically analyse the statement using various techniques, although there needs to be more chains of reasoning and a justified conclusion for candidates to gain the higher levels. Candidates should compare the areas of ethics within Sikhism and non-religious views when asked. Candidates should also look at divergent views within Sikhism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed.

Section 2: Marriage and Family were answered well with sound knowledge especially on marriage. Candidates needed to use more Sikh appropriate knowledge to gain the higher marks, although there was some improvement in Sikh information. Sources of wisdom must be used that are appropriate to the question and not just 'random quotes' that the candidate has learnt. Candidates need to read the questions fully so that they understand what it is asking of them.

Section 3: Living the Sikh Life. Candidates were well prepared for this with some good answers.

Section 4: Matters of life and Death. Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially question b. A clear understanding of all the key words in this section of the specification is needed. Candidates need to practice these types of questions for them to achieve higher marks.

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh beliefs.

Bullet point 1.5 'Sikh teachings on the elimination of haumai

The question asked was:

'Outline three ways how haumai can be removed'

Candidates are asked to 'outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list.

An example:

Outline 3 characteristics of God:

- God is creator (1 mark)
- God is creator, judge, and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
- God is creator, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Busy, distant and God is creator, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
- Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
- Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)

Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

Overall, this was well answered with candidates clearly identifying ways haumai can be removed.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.6: '...how equality is shown in the stories of the lives of the Gurus...and the appointment of women as teachers.

The question asked was:

'Explain two stories that show women as teachers during the lives of the Gurus'.

This question was poorly answered. Those that knew the specific stories gained some marks and explained how Mai Bhago taught Sikhs to be strong and courageous. Candidates need to read the question carefully in order that the answers they write are related to the question asked. Some candidates just

'made up' stories about women as teachers. Candidates need to be aware of the specific stories on the specification. They could have written about Mai Bhago, Mata Khivi or Mata Sundari, all prominent Sikh women that taught Sikhs how to live a gurmukh life.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two stories are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom as quotes or examples.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.1: '...why the Mool Mantar is significant.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why the Mool Mantar is important.

Candidates had sound knowledge of the Mool Mantar, and this specific question is always well answered with excellent source of wisdom.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' of (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom as quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom:

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (Guru Granth Sahib 15) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Guru Nanak and it was Guru Gobind Singh or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion. There must be some consideration of the arguments, that is appraising the arguments which will help to gain the higher grades. Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but fell short of analysing or evaluating them. Still some candidates used formulas and writing frames which restricted the flow of the arguments restricting the candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.4: 'Sikhs belief about life after death.'

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question, are candidates required to give a non-religious response. Candidates must respond to the question asked.

The question asked was:

"Sikhs should not fear death."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates overall achieved level 2 and level 3. There was an improvement in analysing the statement showing chains of reasoning and evaluation. Generic answers were given, and Sikh key words were limited. Those who achieved the higher level 2 or level 3 analysed why Sikhs should not fear death, showing development of the idea of reincarnation and uniting with God. Sources of wisdom were used well to explain the idea of reincarnation.

Spag was varied with candidates achieving marks from 1 to 3. If the candidate had written less than 25 words they did not achieve a spag mark. Those that gained 3 marks showed a high performance of spelling and punctuation with consistent accuracy.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point 2.2: 'Sikh teachings about sexual relationships.'

The question asked candidates to:

'Outline three Sikh teachings about sexual relationships.'

There were varied answers to this question. Candidates mixed up the teachings about marriage with teachings about sexual relationships, so did not gain marks. The answers that gained marks were the ones that candidates wrote that sex was a creative act, brings intimacy within marriage, and is only allowed within marriage.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point 2.3: 'Sikh responses to the different types of family...'

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh responses to the different types of family within society.'

This question was poorly answered. Candidates described the different types of family but did not connect it to how Sikhs respond to the different types of family. A thorough understanding of the question is needed for the candidates to achieve good marks. Those that wrote how Sikhs respond to extended families or nuclear families achieved the appropriate marks.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom, and quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point 2.8: 'Sikh teachings on gender prejudice and discrimination.'

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh beliefs about gender prejudice and discrimination.'

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates had clear knowledge of Sikh beliefs about gender prejudice and discrimination using good sources of wisdom to achieve the full marks.

Question 2 (d)

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but fell short of analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family:

Bullet point 2.1: The importance and purpose of marriage.'

The question asked was:

"Marriage is not important in society today".

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- refer to non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall, most candidates gave a two-sided answer with some good links to Sikh teachings especially on a Sikh view of marriage with mention of the Lavan. These candidates who used their knowledge to evaluate the statement achieved higher levels. There is still room for improvement for candidates to show logical chains of reasoning for and against the statement and to reach a justified conclusion. Candidates need to link their answer to the statement given.

Question 3 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.8: 'the celebration and significance of the Naam Karan ceremony.'

The question asked was:

'Outline three features of the Naam Karan ceremony.'

This question was answered well with sound knowledge of the features of the ceremony. The main feature written was the choosing of the child's name from the Guru Granth Sahib.

Question 3 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.3: 'Langar as an expression of sewa.'

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways langar demonstrates sewa.'

On the whole candidates knew two Sikh ways langar demonstrates sewa. It was surprising that candidates did not use the three elements of sewa e.g. Dhan, tan and man. They mainly pointed out how langar demonstrates selflessly serving others without reward. They could have simply written 'langar demonstrates sewa by the act of tan, such as preparing the meal', or 'langar demonstrates the act of material service, by providing food to the langar.'

Question 3 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.5: '...the different types of prayers '

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why Sikhs may use different prayers.'

The answers were varied with some candidates achieving good marks by explaining the different Sikh prayers and how they are used, for example the morning prayer, so they can focus on different aspects of their faith. The sources of wisdom given on the specification are clear and should be used. In this case they were not. Some candidates did use the Nam Japna source of wisdom and therefore achieved good marks. Some candidates wrote generic answers such as – use prayers to ask for help- these were not credited unless it was specifically related to Sikhism.

Question 3 (d)

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but fell short of analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living a Sikh Life

Bullet point 3.2: '...; the nature and importance of visiting Sikh historical gurdwaras.'

The question asked was:

'It is important for Sikhs to visit historical gurdwara.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- reach a justified conclusion

Some candidates gave a general explanation about why it is important to visit historical gurdwaras. There were some good points on the importance of the Harmandir Sahib but other historical gurdwaras were not mentioned. There was a lack of arguments against the statement and these were not developed to show chains of reasoning or sound evaluations.

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.4: '... different Sikh teachings about the nature and use of abortion.'

The question asked was:

'Outline three Sikh teachings about abortion.'

Candidates wrote some good answers, clearly showing an understanding of Sikh beliefs about abortion, showing differing views. Those that are against abortion due to the divine spark within all compared to other Sikhs permitting abortion because of rape, or the mother's health suffering.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.3: '...the origins of human life including evolution'

The question asked was:

Explain two Sikh responses to evolution.'

Generally well answered, with clear knowledge of Sikhs agreeing with evolution through God's will (hukam).

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.2: 'Sikh teachings about the sanctity of life '

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh teachings about the sanctity of life.'

Well answered with clear knowledge on Sikh beliefs on why life is holy and sacred. One of the main sources of wisdom used was 'God's light is within all'. The question was from the 4.2 section of the specification which requires only knowledge of why life is sacred. Some candidates wrote about euthanasia or abortion which was not what the question was asking.

Question 4 (d)

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but fell short of analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels. If the candidate wrote 'this is a strong argument' but did not back it up with evidence, then it was a weaker answer. The quality of the d question answers is improving with most candidates relating their answer to the statement given.

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.8: '...divergent Sikh responses to animal rights, including animal experimentation...'

The question asked was:

'Animal experimentation is not acceptable.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- refer to different Sikh points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Some good Sikh knowledge on animal experimentation with some excellent sources of wisdom and Sikh beliefs. The question was easily accessible to all candidates and some good top level 2's and 3's were shown.

Summary

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

- When answering the (a) questions use three full sentences.
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in question (c) must be relevant to the question and support the reason given. Use the specification guidelines for the sources of wisdom.
- The (d) questions ask for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the reason/evidence given is 'considered' or appraised for its value as an argument as part of deciding the evaluation.
- On (d) questions, the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer.
- Understand all key words on specification.