



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics

Option 1G – Sikhism

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June 2025

Publications Code 1RB0_1G_2506_ER

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Introduction

This area of study comprises a study in depth of Sikhism, 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 section 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

Questions included in Marriage and Family Section were answered well with sound knowledge especially on same sex relationships. 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 be taught the specification guidelines for the use of sources of wisdom. Candidates need to read the questions fully so that they understand what it is asking of them. This was apparent in question 2a and 2c as candidates did not use appropriate source of wisdom on 2c and answered 2a as the role of the man in marriage and not in the family, so procreation was used a lot which is not correct for the question.

Section 3

Candidates were well prepared for this with some good answers. However, 2b was a challenge as some candidates did not read the question correctly.

Section 4

Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially question b and c. 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 1.4 Sikh beliefs about life after death: the nature of karma, rebirth and mukti (liberation); how they are shown in the Guru Granth Sahib, including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 2, 11 and 78; divergent understandings of how and why karma, rebirth and mukti are important for Sikh life today

The question asked was: 'Outline three Sikh beliefs about rebirth'

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

Overall, this was well answered with candidates clearly identifying three Sikh beliefs about rebirth including achieving mukti, how karma reflects the type of rebirth etc.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.7. Sewa (service to others): the nature of sewa, including tan, man and dhan; the origins and purpose of sewa and its importance in the development of Sikhism, including Guru Granth Sahib 26; divergent understandings of the practice and importance of sewa in Sikh life today in reflecting the priority of service to others.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why sewa is important for Sikhs.'

This question was well answered with knowledge on selfless service making a Sikh humble and how the Guru Granth Sahib instructs Sikhs to do sewa.

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 1.8 Sangat: the nature and history of the sangat; divergent understandings of why the sangat is important for Sikhs, including Guru Granth Sahib 1316; the concept of Sat Sangat and divergent understandings of its significance for Sikhs; problems for Sikhs living without a sangat.

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why the sangat is important for Sikhs.'

Candidates had sound knowledge of the sangat and why it is important.eg allowing Sikhs to pray together, learn about Sikh history etc. The source of wisdom must be related to the sangat, however random quotes were used and were not credited. The main source of wisdom used was "The Sat Sangat, The True congregation.....' It is useful if centres use the guidance given on the specification for the source of wisdom and authority for each unit. In some cases, this is not done.

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.

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 not 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.

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.6. The oneness of humanity: how the equality of all humans is shown in the Guru Granth Sahib, including Guru Granth Sahib 349; how equality is shown in stories from the lives of the Gurus, including the example of Mai Bhago and the appointment of women as teachers; and how equality is shown in Sikh life today; how and why complete equality of men and women is important for Sikhs today

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: "Complete equality of men and women is shown in Sikhism today."

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 with the occasional 4. 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 equality is important, showing development of the idea of equality, with also analysing the other view of equality between men and women not being followed due to cultural and social issues.

Spag was varied with candidates achieving marks from 1 to 3. 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 2.7 Sikh teaching about the equality of men and women in the family: divergent Sikh beliefs, teachings and attitudes about the role of men and women in the family including Guru Granth Sahib 788.

The question asked to 'Outline three roles of Sikh men in the family.'

There were varied answers to this question. Candidates mixed up the role of the man in a marriage to a role of the man in the family. Procreation was one of the answers that was incorrect as it is not a role that is connected to the family. Typical answers should have been, do household chores, provide for the family, help educate his children etc.

Question 2 (b)

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

Bullet point 2. 2 Sikh teaching about the importance of sexual relationships: divergent Sikh teaching about sexual relationships; Sikh teaching on sexual relationships outside of marriage and same-sex sexual relationships, including Guru Granth Sahib 4 and discussion of the January 2005 edict of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht in Amritsar; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of sexual relationships outside marriage and same-sex sexual relationships and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh attitudes to same-sex relationships.'

This question was answered quite well showing a variety of responses including it is morally wrong to it is accepted as everyone is equal.

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 2.6 Sikh teachings about divorce: divergent Sikh teachings and attitudes towards divorce and remarriage, including reference to Rahit Maryada Chapter 11 and arguments used to support or reject divorce; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to divorce and remarriage, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh teachings on remarriage.' In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates gave 'a mixed bag' of answers. Those who knew what a Sikh teaching on remarriage gained good marks and used the appropriate source of wisdom stated in the specification (Rahit Maryada chapter 11, 'If a woman's husband has died, she may, if so wished, finding a match suitable to her, remarry.'). Most of the answers related to divorce and not remarriage.

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).

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

Bullet point 2.5: Sikh teaching on contraception: divergent Sikh teachings and attitudes about contraception and family planning, including reference to the concept of kaam and The Sikh Missionary Society Introduction to Sikhism, Section VII: Sikhism & Modern Problems Q124; different non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes to family planning and the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: "Contraception should be allowed".

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.

- refer to a 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 contraception. 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, however there was some improvement from last year. Candidates need to link their answer to the statement given. Candidates are capped at level 2 if they did not give a non-religious view.

Question 3 (a)

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

Bullet point 3.4 Nam Japna – meditating on the name of God: the nature and significance of Nam Japna; diverse ways in which the Nam Japna is used in the gurdwara and in Sikh daily life, including Guru Granth Sahib 1142

The question asked was: 'Outline three ways Nam Japna is used in daily life.'

This question was answered well with sound knowledge of the way Nam Japna is used in daily life, for example, when a Sikh goes to the gurdwara, during the day to help a Sikh focus on Waheguru etc.

Question 3 (b)

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

Bullet point 3.7 Gurburbs and commemorations: divergent understandings of the nature, history and purpose of gurburbs and commemorations; why they are important for Sikhs today. The origins and meaning of gurburbs, including Guru Nanak's birthday, Vaisakhi, including reference to the account of the events found in Gurbilas Patshahi 10. Divali: the origins and meaning of commemorations, including the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and Guru Tagh Bahadur Ji.

The question asked was: 'Explain two historical events celebrated in the Sikh festival of Divali.'

On the whole candidates knew one of the historical events associated with the festival, which was Guru Hargobind being released from prison. However, most candidates could not think of another historical event, they did mention the Hindu historical event related to Rama and Sita, but the question specifically asked in the Sikh festival. The mark scheme from the paper clearly gives three events which could have been mentioned.

Question 3 (c)

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

Bullet point 3.6 Akhand path (continuous 48-hour reading of the Guru Granth Sahib): the nature, history, role and purpose of the akhand path including reference Rahit Maryada Chapter 7; how and why Sikhs might take part in the akhand path: why the akhand path is important for the Sikh community and for individual Sikhs

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why an akhand path is important for the Sikh community.'

The answers were varied with some candidates achieving good marks by giving reasons why the akhand path is important for the Sikh community. If the source of wisdom related to the reason that it was credited, however very few candidates used the source of wisdom set out in the specification. The specification clearly gives appropriate areas where the source of wisdom is found but, in this question, it was not used, e.g. Rahit Maryada chapter 7. It would benefit the candidates if they were taught the source of wisdom mentioned in the specification.

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).

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living a Sikh Life

Bullet point 3.1: Features of the gurdwara: the nature, history and purpose of the design of the Gurdwara as the 'Door/Gate of the Guru', including Rahit Maryada Chapters 4–6; how and why objects of devotion are used within the gurdwara: Guru Granth Sahib, takht, chanani, chaur, the langar hall, four doors, and the Nishan Sahib; divergent understandings of the importance of these features in Sikh life today

The question asked was: 'The Guru Granth Sahib is the most important feature of the gurdwara.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall, this question was well answered with candidates giving two differing views of why the Guru Granth Sahib is an important feature analysing its importance, compared to other features found in the gurdwara. There were some good chains of reasoning and quite a few level 3's.

Question 4 (a)

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

Bullet point 4.7 Implications of the Sikh teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of euthanasia: Sikh teachings about the nature and use of euthanasia, including reference to Lord Indarjit Singh's speech in the House of Lords on 12 December 2014 in the Lords' Debate on Assisted Dying; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Sikh responses to them, including support for hospice care.

The question asked was: 'Outline three Sikh teachings about the use of euthanasia.'

Candidates wrote some good answers, clearly showing an understanding of Sikh beliefs about euthanasia, showing differing views. Those that are against euthanasia due to the belief that no one has the right to end life, only Waheguru, compared to other Sikhs permitting euthanasia if they are in a vegetative state.

Question 4 (b)

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

Bullet point 4.6 Sikh responses to non-religious arguments against life after death: why Sikhs reject arguments against belief in life after death (including as a source of comfort, lack of evidence, fraudulent accounts, social control), including Guru Granth Sahib 430.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Sikhs respond to non-religious arguments against life after death.'

Generally, well answered with clear knowledge of a Sikh response to non-religious arguments about life after death including the belief in samsara, the soul going through many life forms etc.

Question 4 (c)

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

Bullet point 4.1 Sikh teachings about the origins and value of the universe: scientific explanations for the origins of the universe and Sikh responses to them, including the compatibility of Sikh beliefs and science; divergent Sikh responses and teachings about the value of the universe in Sikhism, including Guru Granth Sahib 1037; responses to the possible view that the universe may be used as a commodity.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh responses to scientific explanations of the origins of the universe'

It was quite well answered with clear knowledge on Sikh responses to the scientific explanation of the universe, by stating that Sikhs teachings are not in conflict with theories such as the big bang theory, but it was Waheguru who caused it. One of the main sources of wisdom used was 'By His hukam air, water and fire came into being' (Guru Granth Sahib 1037).

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).

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

Bullet point 4.4 Implications of the Sikh teachings about the value and sanctity of life for the issue of abortion: the nature of abortion; different Sikh teachings about the nature and use of abortion, including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 74 and whether life begins at conception; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use, including the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: "Abortion should not be allowed."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

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

Some good Sikh knowledge on abortion 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 was shown. The candidates were capped at level 2 if they did not include a non-religious response.

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 evidence/reasons 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.