



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 2 Religion, Peace & Conflict

2G Sikhism

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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, Crime and Punishment, Living the Sikh life, Peace and Conflict. 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 questions were not answered so much in depth (but it is improving through the guidance on the website), although the knowledge was there. 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, Crime and Punishment were answered well with sound knowledge especially on punishment, although Sikh knowledge on capital punishment could have been better. 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.

Section 3, Living the Sikh Life. Candidates were well prepared for this section

Section 4, Peace and Conflict. Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially 4c, therefore, they did not gain full marks. The question used language specifically from the specification. 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 1.6. 'How and why the complete equality of men and women are important in Sikh life today.'

The question asked was:

'Outline three reasons why equality of men and women is important for Sikhs today.'

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

This question was well answered with sound Sikh knowledge

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)

### Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.8. '...the nature and the history of the sangat'.

The question asked was:

'Explain two events in the history of the sangat.'

This question was poorly answered with few candidates achieving the full marks. When teaching the specification all areas of each point must be covered. There were many blank answers which showed that the candidates did not know anything on the history

of the sangat. The answers needed to show knowledge on Guru Nanak being the founder of the sangat, and how the sangat was used to establish an organised system.

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 as quotes, or examples.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.5 '...not manmukh (self-centred)

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways Sikhs avoid being manmukh'.

Candidates had sound knowledge of how Sikhs can avoid becoming manmukh. This question was very accessible. Good use of sources of wisdom was shown.

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 as 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 did not analyse or

evaluate them. Still some candidates used formulas and writing frames which restricted the flow of the arguments and 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 1.7. '...the practice and importance of sewa in Sikh life today in the priority of service to others.'

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

"The main aim in life is to serve others"

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, they failed to deconstruct religious information and critically analyse the statement throughout. There was sound knowledge of religion and belief but candidates are still failing to evaluate the statement with logical chains of reasoning to achieve the higher levels. Overall, the candidates are beginning to use phrases such as 'this is a strong argument' or 'this is a weak argument'. If they then explain why it is a strong argument and evaluate the statement, they can achieve higher levels. Candidates can appraise throughout their response to show they have fully understood the statement. Those who do this achieve the higher marks.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.2 '...beliefs about the cause of crime.'

The question asked candidates to

'Outline three Sikh beliefs about the cause of crime.'

There were some good answers with candidates identifying three Sikh beliefs about the cause of crime. Some candidates did not gain the full three marks as they wrote about how Sikhs respond to crime not the causes of crime. A full understanding of the question is needed.

### Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.4. '...why punishment is needed by society,'

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh beliefs about why punishment might be needed in society.'

The candidates generally wrote some good answers explaining the need for punishment as a deterrent, protection or reformation. Those candidates that wrote about retribution did not achieve marks as this is not a Sikh belief.

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: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.8 'Sikh attitudes towards the death penalty'

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh attitudes about the use of capital punishment'

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

Candidates produced varying answers to this question. Overall, it was poorly answered. No credit was given to Sikhs accepting the death penalty as this is not a Sikh belief. Also the source of wisdom '... when all other means have failed, it is but lawful to take the sword...' is not related to this question on the specification, so was not credited. Candidates must clearly use the correct sources of wisdom related to the specification to gain the 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 did not analyse or evaluate 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: Crime and Punishment. Bullet point 2.7 ‘the application of ethical theories, such as situation ethics, which may accept the use of torture for the greater good.’

The question asked was:

“Torture should never be used ”.

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- refer to relevant ethical arguments.
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall, most candidates gave a two-sided answer with some good links to Sikh teachings especially on accepting the view that torture should never be used. However, candidates must read the question carefully so they can access more marks, those that failed to write an ethical view did not go higher than a level 2. Using relevant religious knowledge is also important, some candidates wrote about the ‘use of the sword ‘which is not related to torture but war. 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 3.7‘...the origins and meaning of commemorations, including the martyrdom of Guru Arjan.’

The question asked was:

‘Outline three reasons why Sikhs remember the martyrdom of Guru Arjan’

This question was answered quite well with the main answers relating to remembering the Guru’s death as he gave his life for his belief, and he was the first Guru to die for his faith.

Question 3 (b)

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

Bullet point 3.2‘...the role and importance of the gurdwara.’

The question asked was:

‘Explain two roles of the gurdwara in the Sikh community.’

Well answered with sound knowledge on the roles of the gurdwara in the Sikh community, including being used for worship, the langar and teaching Punjabi etc.

#### Question 3 (c)

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

Bullet point 3.6 : ... the purpose of the akhand path ‘

The question asked was:

‘Explain two purposes of the akhand path for the Sikh community.’

This question was a mixed bag. The candidates who knew the purposes of the akhand path gave some good answers, however, most did not achieve the extra mark for the source of wisdom. The specification clearly highlights the use of the Rehit Maryada chapter 7 as its source, but candidates did not apply it in their answers. Those that used a different credible source that linked to the purpose of the akhand path did achieve marks.

#### 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 not 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 3.8: – ‘...the significance of initiation ceremonies for Sikh family ...divergent understanding of these ceremonies.’

The question asked was:

‘Initiation ceremonies are not necessary to show commitment to Sikhism.’

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In the response you must:

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

Some candidates did not understand what 'initiation' meant so failed to access the statement. Those that did achieved reasonable levels, although the use of different Sikh views was weak. Lack of Khalsa Sikh views compared to non-Khalsa Sikhs were not prevalent, therefore the higher levels were not achieved. There were very generic answers and no real analysis of the statement. Candidates need to practice answers stating why this is a strong argument relating it to the statement using religious knowledge and chains of reasoning.

#### Question 4 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.7 'Sikh attitudes to weapons of mass destruction '

The question asked was:

'Outline three Sikh beliefs about the use of weapons of mass destruction.'

Candidates gave good responses to Sikh beliefs about the use of weapons of mass destruction. Those that mentioned the use as a deterrent achieved marks. Those that wrote about it being used as a last resort were not credited as this is not a general Sikh belief.

#### Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.1 'Sikh teachings about the importance and nature of peace – '

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh teachings about the importance of peace.'

Candidates need to be clear on what the question is asking. Some candidates did not link the Sikh teachings to the importance of peace. The question is looking for answers such as, a Sikh teaching is that peace is a result of uniting with God, peace is important as it means Sikhs do not live in conflict.

#### Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.4 'Sikh teachings...of pacifism '

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh beliefs about pacifism.'

Those that answered the question achieved a mixed result of marks. A lot of candidates failed to give a relevant source of wisdom. They must use the specification to guide

them on the appropriate source of wisdom for each section. Those that achieved marks gave two different beliefs, one for pacifism and one belief that pacifism is the ideal but not always the best action using the quote from Guru Gobind Singh on if all other methods fail, it is useful to use the sword. This was credited as there are varying Sikh beliefs on pacifism. What was surprising was that very few candidates failed to mention that Guru Nanak taught pacifism.

#### 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 did not analyse or evaluate 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 now relating their answer to the statement given.

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.5: Sikh attitudes to the Just War theory'

The question asked was:

'A Just war is never possible.'

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- refer to relevant ethical arguments
- reach a justified conclusion

Very few candidates referred to relevant ethical views and, therefore, did not get higher than a level 2. There was little religious knowledge on the conditions of the Just war theory and little reference to Dharam Yudh. Candidates did not achieve higher than level 2 as they did not evaluate the statement well.

## 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.
- The (d) questions ask for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given are 'considered' or appraised for their 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.