



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 2: Area of Study 2 – Religion, Peace and
Conflict
Option 2G – Sikhism

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Introduction

There are four sections assessed in this paper:

- 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 Sikh beliefs about good actions, although Sikh knowledge on forgiveness 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 apart from 3b, the candidates could only think of one event associated with the history of the langar.

Section 4 - Peace and Conflict. Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially 4c as they did not know fully the concept of saint/ soldier in Sikhism. 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 1.4 - Sikh beliefs about life after death: the nature of karma, rebirth and mukti (liberation)

The question asked was: 'Outline three beliefs about mukti.'

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.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.3- The nature of human life: the purpose and significance of life as an opportunity to unite with God; Sikh understandings of why uniting with God is important; how uniting with God will affect their lives, including Guru Granth Sahib 12

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Sikhs may try to achieve union with God.'

This question was well answered, with sound Sikh knowledge.

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 1.6 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

The question asked was: 'Explain two teachings found in the Guru Granth Sahib about the equality of all humans.'

Candidates had sound knowledge of teachings in the Guru Granth Sahib on equality. Good use of sources of wisdom was shown. 'Divine spark' and 'all being made of the same clay,' were common sources of wisdom used.

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 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.

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 1.1. the nature of God: how the characteristics of God are shown in the Mool Mantar, Guru Granth Sahib 1, and why the characteristics are important and why the Mool Mantar is significant for Sikhs

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 Mool Mantar is the best way for Sikhs to understand the characteristics of God"

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 still candidates are 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 evaluating 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 2.1 Sikh attitudes towards justice: the nature of justice and why justice is important for Sikhs, including Guru Granth Sahib 274; Sikh responses to why justice is important for the victim; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) about why justice is important regardless of religion and belief and Sikh responses to these attitudes.

The question asked to: 'Outline three reasons Sikhs may believe that justice is important for victims.'

Some candidates answered this question incorrectly. Mainly due to not reading the question properly. The question related to victims not the criminal, which was the error made by candidates.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.3. Sikh teachings about good, evil and suffering: Sikh teachings about the nature of good actions, how they are rewarded, and teachings about the nature of evil actions; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) about why people suffer, including believing in religion and Sikh responses to them, including Guru Granth Sahib 767; divergent Sikh teachings about why people suffer, including reference to human responsibility in Guru Granth Sahib 1062.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh beliefs about good actions.'

The candidates generally wrote some good answers and achieved full marks on this question.

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 2.4 Sikh attitudes towards punishment: divergent Sikh teachings and attitudes to the nature and use of punishment, including reference to the Rahit Maryada Section 6 Chapter 8 Article XXV and links to situation ethics; Sikh teachings on why punishment can be regarded as justice and why punishment might be needed in society.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh teachings about the use of 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.

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: Crime and Punishment.

Bullet point 2.6 Sikh teachings about forgiveness: Sikh teachings and responses about the nature and importance of forgiveness; how offenders are forgiven by the community and why this is needed, including Guru Granth Sahib 1378; Sikh responses to the nature and use of restorative justice, and why it is important for criminals.

The question asked was: "Sikhs should always forgive criminals ".
Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall, most candidates gave a two-sided answer with some good links to Sikh teachings especially on accepting the why criminals should be forgiven. Using relevant religious knowledge is also important, and this was lacking. 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 3.4 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 teachings about Nam Japna'

This question was answered quite well with the main answers relating to teachings about Nam Japna, but some candidates described what it is which was not credited.

Question 3 (b)

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

Bullet point 3.3 Langar: the history of langar including Guru Granth Sahib 967; the nature and purposes of langar; the significance of langar for Sikhs today, especially as an expression of sewa.

The question asked was: 'Explain two historical events that are associated with the langar.'

Only one historical event was mentioned, which was Guru Nanak starting the langar. Most of the candidates wrote about what the langar is and did not answer the question correctly. In the mark scheme three events are stated.

Question 3 (c)

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

Bullet point 3.5: Prayer, including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 305: the nature, role and purpose of prayer in the home; the different types of prayer; when prayer might take place and why; the importance of having different prayers.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Sikhs pray.'

This question was quite well answered. The candidates who knew how Sikhs pray generally wrote about praying at home or the gurdwara, but they needed to be more specific to gain

the marks. Not many candidates wrote about using the gutka or anything like this. If they just wrote in the gurdwara it is not a way but where, however if they developed it with, by listening to the words from the Guru Granth Sahib, that was credited. Candidates need to be careful how they answer these questions so they can achieve full 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).

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living a Sikh Life

Bullet point 3.2: The gurdwara: the role and importance of the gurdwara within the Sikh community including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 1391; activities that take place within the gurdwara and why; the nature and importance of visiting Sikh historical gurdwaras: the Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar (the Golden Temple); divergent understandings of the importance of making such visits, including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 4

The question asked was: 'Visiting the Harmandir Sahib is necessary once in a lifetime.' Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- reach a justified conclusion

Some candidates did not develop the importance of the Harmandir Sahib. 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. Alternative views need to be relevant and relate to the statement.

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.2 The role of Sikhs in peacemaking: Sikh teachings about peacemaking; the importance for Sikhs of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation in peacemaking; how Sikhs work for peace today, the divergent approaches in what they do and why they try to work for peace, including Guru Granth Sahib 599 and links to situation ethics.

The question asked was: 'Outline three ways Sikhs are working for peace today.'

Candidates gave good responses to ways Sikhs are working for peace today, for example praying for peace, attending peaceful protests, involved in charity work etc.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.3 Sikh attitudes to conflict: Sikh teachings and responses to the nature and causes of conflict; Sikh responses to the problems conflict causes within society, including

Zafarnama 22 and links to situation ethics; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes about the role of religion in the causes of conflict and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh beliefs about conflict'

Candidates need to be clear on what the question is asking. Some candidates did not link the Sikh teachings to conflict. The question is looking for answers such as, a Sikh believes that conflict should be the last resort, as Guru Gobind Singh taught it is only when all matters fail that Sikhs may take up arms.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.6 Sikh attitudes to Holy War: Sikh teachings about war and peace as shown in the Guru Granth Sahib; Sikh teachings about war with specific reference to the concept of the saint-soldier, including Bhai Nand's Tankah Nama, and teachings about not killing and when fighting is a person's duty; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) attitudes towards Holy War and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh beliefs about the saint-soldier.'

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 only one belief, i.e. that Sikhs are required to be a saint – soldier, as they will pray for peace but fight for justice. Very few used the miri-piri concept.

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: Peace and Conflict.

Bullet point 4.7 Sikh attitudes to weapons of mass destruction (WMD): Sikh teaching and responses to the problems and benefits of WMD; Sikh attitudes towards the use of such weapons, including the possible damage to the earth and its importance in Guru Granth Sahib 146; non-religious attitudes (including atheist and Humanist) and the application of ethical theories (such as utilitarianism) which support the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and Sikh responses to them.

The question asked was: 'No country should have weapons of mass destruction.'

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. Therefore, did not get higher than a level 2. There was little religious knowledge on why Sikhs should not use weapons of

mass destruction. Some 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 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.