



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel GCSE

In Religious Studies B

Paper 3: Religion, Philosophy & Social
Justice

3G 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, Philosophy of Religion, Living the Sikh life, Equality. 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, Philosophy of Religion were answered reasonably well with sound knowledge especially on revelation. Candidates needed to use more Sikh appropriate knowledge to gain the higher marks, although there was some improvement in Sikh information. The question on enlightenment lacked knowledge.

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. On the whole this was answered well with good Sikh knowledge.

Section 4, Equality. Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially 4b; 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 1.8: ‘... problems that Sikhs may have living without a sangat.’

The question asked was:

‘Outline three problems Sikhs may face if they do not have a sangat.’

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

Candidates answered this well and most achieved full marks. They clearly knew the problems a Sikh may have living without a sangat, for example, difficult to serve the community in the langar, praying as a community etc.

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 1.4: ‘...divergent understandings of how and why karma is important in Sikh life...’

The question asked was:

‘Explain two reasons why Sikhs may think karma is important.’

The question asked for reasons why Sikhs think karma is important, and on the whole it was well answered with candidates suggesting that if they have good karma their next life will be a better one. An alternative view was if they have bad karma then they may be reborn as an animal and hence cannot unite with God.

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 or 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.’

The question asked was:

‘Explain two Sikh teachings about the oneness of humanity’.

On the whole this question was poorly answered with candidates using the reference of ‘ik Onkar’ one creator God. This is not related to the oneness of humanity and therefore was not credited. When the candidates referenced the teachings of all humans being equal and all having the ‘divine spark’ within, they were given credit.

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 or appraising of the arguments if a candidate is 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 1.5: ‘...the elimination of haumai (ego/pride),’

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:

“Removing ego is difficult to achieve.”

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 some candidates achieved level 3 however they failed to deconstruct religious information and critically analyse the statement throughout. Generic answers were given, and Sikh key words were limited. Those who achieved the higher level 2 or at times level 3 analysed how removing ego is difficult to achieve explaining that we all have human fragilities. The other argument was if Sikhs follow the religious path by meditating on God’s name, selfless service etc ego can be

removed. This, however, was quite limited and logical chains of reasoning throughout would help the candidates to achieve 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.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.1: '...the revelation of Guru Nanak during the river experience...'

The question asked to:

'Outline three features of Guru Nanak's River Experience.'

There were some good features given, including that Guru Nanak disappeared for 3 days, he met with God, and as he came out of the River he quoted the 'Mool Mantar'.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.3: 'Sikh teachings about enlightenment:'

The question asked was:

'Explain two beliefs about enlightenment.'

The answers were weak and lacked religious knowledge. Those candidates that understood what enlightenment was gave answers such as enlightenment can be achieved through prayer, or the ultimate way to gain enlightenment is union with God.

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: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.8: ‘...how a Sikh upbringing provides a basis for belief in God.’

The question asked was:

‘Explain two ways a Sikh upbringing may lead to belief in God.’

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

On the whole candidates gave good ways that a Sikh upbringing can lead to a belief in God, such as teaching them the Nam Japna, or attending worship in the gurdwara. However, a lot of the answers lacked a relevant source of wisdom. It is important that when teaching the specification centres use the sources of wisdom suggested on the specification.

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 and 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: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.2: ‘Visions/mystical experiences that prove the existence of God.’

The question asked was:

“Visions prove that God exists”

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.

This statement was answered quite well with candidates showing differing views. To help the candidates gain higher levels it is important that they evaluate the statement

throughout, showing why it may be a strong argument; including religious knowledge and chains of reasoning. They should also, in this case, include a non-religious point of view. Candidates need to take care in answering these, as sometimes they write an ethical view which is not what the question asks.

Question 3 (a)

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

Bullet point 3.2: ‘...ways the gurdwara is used by the Sikh community.’

The question asked was:

‘Outline three ways the gurdwara is used by the Sikh community.’

The candidates gave some good answers and on the whole full marks on this question were achieved. A tip to help candidates achieve the full 3 marks is to write 3 sentences - in this case

A way the gurdwara is used in the community is for teaching Punjabi to the Children.

A way the gurdwara is used in the community is for langar

A way the gurdwara is used by the community is for social events.

Question 3 (b)

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

Bullet point 3.5: ‘Prayer... when prayer may take place and why.’

The question asked was:

‘Explain two occasions when Sikh prayer may take place.’

This question was well answered with sound knowledge on the occasions when Sikhs pray, including in the morning, or during funerals, weddings, naming ceremonies etc..

Question 3 (c)

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

Bullet point 3.1: '...how and why objects of devotion are used within the gurdwara; Guru Granth Sahib... '

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways the Guru Granth Sahib is treated in the gurdwara.'

This question was answered well with good knowledge on how the Guru Granth Sahib is treated. However, there was a lack of relevant sources of wisdom. Candidates need to look at the specification guidelines to prepare the appropriate sources e.g. Rehit Maryada chapter 4-6.

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 did not analyse or evaluate them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments and, therefore, restricted 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 3.7: 'Divali, the origins and meaning of commemoration..'

The question asked was:

"Divali is not as important as other Sikh festivals."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall, this was well answered with candidates mainly suggesting that Vaisakhi is the most important Sikh festival as it is where the Khalsa was born. Compared to Divali not just being a Sikh festival but a Hindu one. Sound religious knowledge was shown, and candidates are beginning to evaluate the statement given

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Equality.

Bullet point 4.7: ‘...the different ways Sikhs work for social justice ‘

The question asked was:

‘Outline three ways Sikhs work for social justice.’

Those candidates that understood the question (social justice) achieved good marks. Social justice is related to wealth and poverty and the answers should be linked to that.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Equality.

Bullet point 4.8: ‘Sikh responses to the causes of poverty. ‘

The question asked was:

‘Explain two Sikh responses to the causes of poverty.’

To gain marks in this question candidates needed to understand the question. How do Sikhs respond to the causes of poverty? For example, helping those that are poor, showing concern for the excessive interest rates, helping the poor in the langar etc. The question did not ask the causes of poverty, so the candidates that gave those answers did not receive credit.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Equality.

Bullet point 4.1: ‘... why Sikhs may support human rights ‘

The question asked was:

‘Explain two reasons many Sikhs support human rights.

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

Those that answered the question achieved mainly the 4/5 marks. A lot of candidates failed to give a source of wisdom. They must use the specification to guide them on the appropriate source of wisdom for each section. For example, Guru Granth Sahib 300. ‘The Lord is kind to and compassionate to all beings and creatures. His Protecting Hand is over all’

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 not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments and therefore restricted 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: Equality.

Bullet point 4.6: 'Sikh teachings and attitudes to racial discrimination.'

The question asked was:

“Racial discrimination will always exist.”

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.

Some good Sikh knowledge of the importance of trying to eliminate racial discrimination, compared to how difficult it is to eradicate due to human ignorance. Some candidates wrote about religious discrimination which was not part of the statement so therefore was not credited. A thorough understanding of what the statement is asking is needed to gain higher levels.

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.
- Use the source of wisdom guide in the specification.