



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2025

Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies B
Paper 3: Area of Study 3 – Religion, Philosophy
and Social Justice
Option 3G – Sikhism

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June 2025

Publications Code 1RB0_3G_2506_ER

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Introduction

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 religious experiences. Candidates needed to use more Sikh appropriate knowledge to gain the higher marks, although there was some improvement in Sikh information. The question on the cosmological argument 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. Overall was well answered with good Sikh knowledge. However, there is still a lack of knowledge on any question related to Sikh history.

Section 4 - Equality. 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 1.7 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: 'Outline three examples of man as a form of sewa.'

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

Candidates did not answer this well. Most just gave a list of the different types of sewa. Those that knew examples of man sewa gained the 3 marks.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.5. Purpose of life: the nature and importance of being gurmukh (God-centred) not manmukh (self-centred) and the elimination of haumai (ego/pride), including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 125 and 226; what actions make a gurmukh Sikh; divergent understandings of why being gurmukh and eliminating haumai is important in Sikh life today

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Sikhs try to become gurmukh.'

The question asked for ways Sikhs try to become gurmukh. It was well answered with candidates showing various ways Sikhs try to become gurmukh, for example avoiding the five vices, living an honest life etc.

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 1.1 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

The question asked was: 'Explain two teachings from the Mool Mantar.'

This question was easily accessible with most candidates gaining full marks. Their knowledge of the Mool Mantar was excellent.

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 1.2 God as Creator: the nature and importance of God as Creator (Karta Purakh) for Sikhs; Sikh teachings on God as Creator, including Guru Granth Sahib 12 and 94.

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: "Karta Purakh is the most important belief about 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 few candidates achieved level 3, 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 Karta Purakh is the most important belief about God and compared it to other beliefs about God including Ik Onkar and that God is beyond human description. 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. The candidates are still failing to do this.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.7 Cosmological argument: the cosmological argument for the existence of God and its use in Sikhism as a philosophical argument for the existence of God; what the cosmological argument shows about the nature of God in Sikhism, including Guru Granth Sahib 1; divergent understandings of the strengths and challenges of the cosmological argument in Sikhism; Sikh responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the cosmological argument as evidence for the existence of God.

The question asked to 'Outline three ways the cosmological argument proves to Sikhs that God exists.'

Quite a few candidates wrote about creation and not cause so failed to gain any marks. The question asks ways the cosmological argument proves to Sikhs that God exists, and few candidates grasped this idea. Answers should have included God changes everything, so he exists, God is the first cause, it shows God is beyond time and space etc. Most candidates only wrote God is the first cause.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.6 Design argument: the design argument and its use in Sikhism as a philosophical argument for the existence of God and what it shows about the nature of God; divergent understandings of the nature and importance of the design argument for the existence of God in Sikhism, including reference to Guru Granth Sahib 463; Sikh responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments against the design argument as evidence for the existence of God.

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh responses to non-religious arguments against the existence of God.'

The answers were weak and lacked religious knowledge. Those candidates that understood the question managed to gain some marks. The question is related to philosophy of religion so the candidates' answers should reflect that. For example, God is self-existent so is not created by anyone, God must exist as creation is well ordered, God is the cause of the big bang.

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 2.4 Miracles as proof of the existence of God: the nature and importance of miracles in Sikhism, including why Guru Nanak did not work them on demand, with reference to Guru Granth Sahib 14; examples of miracles; reasons why they might lead to belief in the existence of God and Sikh responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) which maintain that miracles can be scientifically explained and provide no proof that God exists; divergent understandings of what miracles show about the nature of God for Sikhs

The question asked was: 'Explain two reasons why Guru Nanak did not work miracles on demand. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.'

On the whole candidates found this question difficult. The main reason candidates gave was that Guru Nanak did not work miracles on demand as he believed it could be used for the wrong reason. Very few used a relevant source of wisdom. It is important that when teaching the specification centres use the sources of wisdom suggested on the specification, in this case Guru Granth Sahib 14.

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: Philosophy of Religion.

Bullet point 2.5. Sikh attitudes towards religious experiences: Sikh attitudes towards religious experiences and its use as a philosophical argument for the existence of God: the nature of a religious experience within Sikhism, including Guru Granth Sahib 1402; divergent understandings of the nature and importance of religious experiences in Sikhism; Sikh responses to non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments that religious experiences do not provide proof that God exists.

The question asked was: "Religious experiences are real."

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, although at times the answers were very general and lacked analysis. 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. The other view (in this case) should include a non-religious point of view, such as religious experiences are not real as they are subjective and cannot be tested scientifically. 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 3.8 Birth and naming rituals and ceremonies: the celebration and significance of Naam Karan and Hukamnama; the significance of Amrit Sanskar (the initiation ceremony) for Sikh families, including reference to the Rahit Maryada Chapters 11 and 13; divergent understandings of these ceremonies between khalsa and non-khalsa Sikhs; the significance of the names Singh and Kaur in the naming and Amrit ceremonies, and for Sikh identity today

The question asked was: 'Outline three reasons why Sikhs are given the names Singh and Kaur.'

The candidates gave some good answers and on the whole full marks on this question was achieved. A tip to help candidates achieve the full 3 marks is to write 3 sentences – for example:

- The names are given as instructed by Guru Gobind Singh.
- The names symbolise equality.
- The names mean lion and princess.

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 ways sewa is shown in the langar.'

Well answered with sound knowledge on differing ways sewa is used in the langar e.g. providing food, preparing food and serving food.

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 events in the history of the akhand path.'

This question was poorly answered with many candidates not knowing an event related to the history of the akhand path. Those that did gain marks wrote that Guru Gobind Singh started it but did not develop it or use any source of wisdom. Candidates need to look at the specification guidelines to prepare for the appropriate sources e.g. Rahit Maryada chapter 7.

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 3.4 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: "Nam Japna is the best way for a Sikh to focus on God." 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 mainly candidates suggesting Nam Japna is the best way to focus on God due to being taught that "Those who have the treasures of the Lord's name deep within their hearts- the Lord resolves their affairs. Compared to there are many

prayers that can help a Sikh focus on God, giving examples. 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 4.3 Sikh attitudes towards religious freedom: different Sikh teachings and responses to the nature and importance of religious freedom, including Guru Gobind Singh, Dasam Granth 51; the divergent responses of Sikhs to a multi-faith society; the benefits and challenges for Sikhs living in a multi-faith society; Sikh responses to non-religious arguments (including atheist and Humanist) against aspects of religious freedom.

The question asked was: 'Outline three reasons why religious freedom is important for Sikhs.'

This was well answered with good knowledge of the importance of religious freedom for Sikhs.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Equality.

Bullet point 4.5 Sikh attitudes towards racial harmony: Sikh teachings about racial harmony; different reasons and ways Sikhs have worked for racial harmony, including teachings on racial harmony, including Guru Granth Sahib 345, and those that may reflect situation ethics; the benefits for Sikhs of living in a multi-ethnic society.

The question asked was: 'Explain two ways Sikhs work to promote racial harmony.'

To gain marks in this question candidates needed to understand the question. Ways Sikhs work to promote racial harmony. In general, this question was well answered.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Equality.

Bullet point 4.4 Sikh attitudes to prejudice and discrimination: Sikh teachings and responses to the nature of prejudice and discrimination, and the problems they cause, including links to situation ethics; Sikh teachings on why prejudice and discrimination against religions is wrong, including Guru Arjan, Asa 385

The question asked was: 'Explain two Sikh teachings about why discrimination is wrong. In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority

Those that answered the question wrote about **why** discrimination is wrong using relevant sources of wisdom. For example, discrimination promotes hatred, injustices etc, and gave examples to highlight this.

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 Equality.

Bullet point 4.2 Sikh attitudes towards equality: Sikh teachings and responses to the causes of inequality and problems caused by inequality in the world with reference to examples; Sikh teachings and practices that reflect equality, including Guru Granth Sahib 349; possible Sikh solutions to inequality and why Sikhs may support them

The question asked was: "Inequality will always exist."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you must:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Some good Sikh knowledge of the importance of equality in Sikhism and that inequality can be stopped due to the Sikh belief that all people are equal in Waheguru's eyes. 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 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.
- Use the source of wisdom guide in the specification.