



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2024

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Religious Studies (4RS1) Paper 2F

Edexcel and BTEC Qualifications

Edexcel and BTEC qualifications are awarded by Pearson, the UK's largest awarding body. We provide a wide range of qualifications including academic, vocational, occupational and specific programmes for employers. For further information visit our qualifications websites at www.edexcel.com or www.btec.co.uk. Alternatively, you can get in touch with us using the details on our contact us page at www.edexcel.com/contactus.

Pearson: helping people progress, everywhere

Pearson aspires to be the world's leading learning company. Our aim is to help everyone progress in their lives through education. We believe in every kind of learning, for all kinds of people, wherever they are in the world. We've been involved in education for over 150 years, and by working across 70 countries, in 100 languages, we have built an international reputation for our commitment to high standards and raising achievement through innovation in education. Find out more about how we can help you and your candidates at: www.pearson.com/uk

Summer 2024

Publications Code 4RS1_2F_2406_ER

All the material in this publication is copyright

© Pearson Education Ltd 2024

Principal Examiner's Report for Paper 4RS1_2F Sikhism

General Introduction

Once again this year there has been a small entry of candidates for what is now called 4RS1_2F, following the decision to split Paper 2 into its component religions.

Here are a few initial general observations about this year's Paper, some of which will be exemplified further, later in the Report.

- Candidates are required to answer all questions in the paper, and this seemed to be generally well understood.
- Candidates usually wrote appropriate amounts in their responses, within the spaces provided. A significant number of candidates, however, did use extra paper.
- On this Paper, the different question types have different demands. For example, a) questions test Assessment Objective 1 whereas the c) questions are much more directed towards testing AO2.
- The majority of this year's candidate cohort appeared well prepared for the examination in terms of their knowledge, understanding and willingness to engage with questions as written.
- There was little evidence of candidates being unable to complete the paper in the allocated time. Sometimes, when candidates did fail to finish the Paper, it may have been because they spent too much time on questions, such as a) questions, that did not need as much development.

Teachers and Centres may well find it helpful to look at the Principal Examiner's Report for each of the other religions, as there may be points made there about a specific question that will have more general application.

Comments on specific question types.

a) Questions

These questions are worth up to 4 marks, 2 each for two developed responses. The command word is always 'Outline', though it is important to look for the further indicator of what is being requested. This could therefore be 'Outline two ways', 'two features', 'two reasons', or a number of other similar terms. The key requirement for gaining full marks is development. In each case the response must be developed in a way that furthers the understanding of the response given, and which responds to the question.

b) Questions

These questions are worth up to 6 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with two Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Level 2, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses (for 4 marks) and, furthermore, to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic (for 5 or 6 marks).

c) Questions

These questions are worth up to 10 marks, and the marks are awarded in accordance with four Levels: Level 1 being worth up to 3 marks, and Level 2 from 4 to 6 marks, Level 3 allocates 7 or 8 marks, and Level 4 allocates 9 or 10 marks. The requirements for these levels can be found in the current Mark Scheme, and they do not change from one series to the next. In order to gain marks in the higher Levels 3 and 4, candidates must demonstrate the ability to develop their responses, demonstrate a deeper understanding of the topic, and also the ability to evaluate two points of view to arrive at a justified conclusion.

Currently the rubrics for c) questions allow candidates to refer to other religions. It is important for candidates to be aware that such references can only be rewarded when there is a clear attempt to explain why the experience of another religion might be significant for the religion being examined.

General issues per question type that may restrict candidates' marks.

On a) questions, the most usual weakness in candidate responses is the lack of development, where only one or more simple responses are given. Such responses cannot earn more than 2 marks in total. Another occasional weakness is when candidates give features, for example, when they are asked for reasons. It is important to pay attention to that changeable key word.

On b) questions, many candidates do develop their answers and achieve Level 2, 4 marks. However, there is then a tendency for these simply developed responses to be multiplied, rather than explained in greater depth, thereby candidates limiting themselves to 4 marks.

On c) questions, again many candidates do develop their responses. However, an answer that says that some believers would propose arguments a, b and c, but other believers would argue x, y and z – without any attempt to demonstrate a deeper understanding or to evaluate the different points of view – is unlikely to go beyond the top of Level 2.

Strengths and Weaknesses of approaches to specific questions.

Section 1 focuses on Origins and their impact on the community.

1a 'Outline two teachings of Guru Gobind Singh.'

Candidates were generally aware of the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh. In some cases the knowledge was quite specific, though some candidates relied on more general teachings. In respect of the Guru Granth Sahib, for example, better answers mentioned that he taught that it was the final and eternal guru, whilst more general answers indicated that he said everyone should respect the Guru Granth Sahib. Both approaches were credited.

1b 'Explain the importance of the Rahit Maryada to some Sikhs.'

Candidates were also aware of the Rahit Maryada, and many were able to name specific instructions, and explain briefly why each of these might be important. The effect of such simply developed points was that some candidates limited themselves to 4 marks whilst others were able to explain something more about its overall importance, and thus demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding. This could be done, for example, by adding further that such instructions help Sikhs to live a better Sikh life, and thereby stand a better chance of achieving mukti.

1c Discuss the suggestion that 'The role played by the granthi is essential to the Sikh community'.

There were many good answers to this question, most of them focused on the role that the granthi plays, and why this is valued in the Sikh community. On the opposite side of the discussion it was often mentioned that many of the roles could be performed by other members of the Sikh community. Although this was a legitimate approach, it was one that had its limitations in terms of development. Some better answers pointed to the fact that granthis are not priests, in the sense understood by some other religions, and their role is not that of an intermediary, for example in respect of prayer. It needed such insights for the candidates to gain access to marks in the higher levels.

Section 2 focuses on Celebration and Pilgrimage

2a 'Outline two features of gurpurbs.'

Most of the candidates were very aware of gurpurbs and were able to identify various features. The only restriction on the marks for some candidates was the failure to develop the features described.

2b 'Explain why some Sikhs go on pilgrimage to Amritsar'

There was a distinction on this question between those who explained what Sikhs might do and see at Amritsar, and those that attempted to delve more deeply into the significance of the place. Some explained, for example, there are many historical sites, which can provide a deeper understanding of Sikhism. Fewer were able to take that a step further and explain the actual difference visiting a historical site can make. This could have mentioned the difference between reading about a place, and the lived experience. It could have developed the idea that the shared experience of pilgrimage gives believers a sense of the wider community to which they belong, and that this strengthens faith. Some candidates chose also to explain why pilgrimage is not essential for Sikhs, but it should be remembered that this b) question did not look for both sides of a discussion.

2c Discuss the suggestion that 'Sikhs do not need festivals to understand their faith'.

When candidates answer questions about festivals, there is always the risk that they will settle into a description of the festivals, what they celebrate and how they are celebrated. These responses do answer the question, but the higher Level marks call for a deeper discussion about the value of festivals as a general aspect of Sikhism. One example might be the role that festivals can play in celebrating the inherent joy in one's faith, and that this might help to encourage younger people to share in the practice of Sikhism, and in that way learn more about its teachings and values. Some candidates were able to approach the question in this way, but most restricted themselves to Level 2 responses.

Section 3 focuses on Worship and Practice.

3a 'Outline two ways gurdwaras are used by Sikhs today.'

This was a well answered question. Candidates were generally aware that gurdwaras, as well as being places of worship, are valued as community centres. There was specific focus on the langar, and how this is an expression of the importance of sewa in Sikhism.

3b 'Explain the importance of death rituals for Sikhs.'

There was some variation in the extent to which candidates were aware of death rituals. Often on b) questions there can be a narrative response, describing a ritual, and then developing that description with further description. There is only limited potential in this approach, because the question asks for explanation of why these rituals are important. There were a number of good answers that pointed out, for example, that Sikhs are usually cremated, without a permanent memorial, because this stresses the Sikh belief in reincarnation and mukti, and that that the soul has moved on.

3c Discuss the suggestion that 'Private devotions are the most important form of worship.'

The primary arguments in favour of this suggestion included the idea that private devotions can be performed at almost every time and place. This allows for the constant awareness of Waheguru, and the way that relationship can help Sikhs to live better lives. There was also mention of the role of private devotions in the raising of children within the Sikh faith, and the importance of good example in the home. By contrast, there was the argument about the importance for Sikhs of gathering for worship, and how that strengthens faith. At the same time it can be said to strengthen the sense of community, which is both unifying and encouraging. There were many good answers, and they were mostly well balanced. Again, it is important to stress that description of private and communal worship, in themselves, cannot fully answer the question.

Summary and Recommendations to Centres to improve candidate performance

- Candidates should be to develop their responses. On Paper 2 they always add value to their response if they further describe, illustrate or explain their answer.
- Candidates are reminded that any number of simply developed responses to b) questions can gain only a maximum of 4 marks, and that demonstration of depth of understanding is required to gain the higher marks.
- In b) and c) questions, some description can help to develop a response, such as description of pilgrimage sites or aspects of worship. However, to gain higher marks, this must be followed by an attempt to draw out their deeper meaning.
- Candidates should only spend time explaining the point of view of another religion if they are confident they can show how that helps to provide a better understanding of the religion being examined.

