



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8062/17 Paper 1: Sikhism
Report on the Examination

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General comments

Students performed well over the paper this year. Students found the questions straightforward, with very few questions not being attempted.

A significant number of students wrote in an untidy style, making legibility difficult. A number of students omitted to use full stops or other basic punctuation and this affected SPaG marks.

Students recognised the key terms of the questions, making their responses relevant in the main. The teaching of key terms is crucial given without that knowledge even the simplest questions become very difficult. The best answers used the widest range of key terms quite freely, and sometimes went far beyond those found in the specification in their responses. Those at the weaker end of the scale had difficulty in recognising the key terms, and so struggled to provide any meaningful answer. Students need to learn systematically all the key terms from the specification.

Whilst the specification names only two Gurus, Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, and does not include study of the Ten Gurus, it is interesting to see that many centres do indeed go further than the first and last Guru. Each of the Gurus made contributions to the belief in and practice of equality, for example, and could be referenced in many answers. While it is not a requirement of the specification, students may be helped by having a wider knowledge of some of the other Gurus, as it could enrich their answers.

In the .4 (5-mark) questions, it is the case that students often do not name the source of authority for the teachings or concepts they relate. These questions require two points made and explained, with a fifth mark awarded for naming the actual source, eg Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak, etc. In Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib is a very common source of authority, and widely used as such by almost every student. Some students are also able to give teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh commonly, though at times mix up who said what. Whilst students do freely use religious teachings, some students fail to name the source, thus capping their response at 4 (from the 5 available).

Performance in 1.5 was slightly better than in 2.5, and students need to be sure they have left sufficient time for this last 12 mark question. It continues to be the case that students often use set formulae for their answers, eg Drearer, FARM, and so on. These help students to structure their responses and meet the requirements of the task. Students making the best responses evaluate freely and insightfully, throughout their work. In addition, students should be encouraged to go straight into making the points which will secure marks for them, rather than using an opening paragraph telling the examiner what they are about to do.

Question-based comments

1.1

Over 90%] of students chose the correct answer of sewa as a word meaning 'selfless service', in what was a straightforward start to the paper.

1.2

About two thirds of students gained full marks on this question. Many students seemed to be explaining karma; however, these answers were usually at the same time a creditable reason why belief in karma is important and so gained marks. Had this been a higher tariff question, that might not have been so often the case. Centres need to remind students to carefully read the questions, and help them to recognise the how and why questions as different.

1.3

Only approximately 20% of students gained full marks on this question which asked for ways in which belief in equality, shown in Guru Gobind Singh's life, influences Sikhs. Almost 35% more students gained three marks. The focus on influences was not maintained in some of the answers in which responses included too much description and narrative. In this question, many students wrote at length about what Guru Gobind Singh said or did regarding equality. Many students credited Guru Gobind Singh with quotes and actions which were actually by other Gurus, for example, Guru Nanak set up the langar, whereas Guru Gobind Singh is believed to have commanded that the kitchens of the langar be ever open. It was encouraging to see that many students did correctly attribute actions and sayings to Guru Gobind Singh.

It was noticeable that some students did not show how Guru Gobind Singh influences Sikhs **today**. This question is about impact and influence today, and must be answered as such to be able to gain full marks. It was not necessary to explain something set up or said by Guru Gobind Singh, a reference to the Khalsa leave no doubt who started it. Students achieving full marks referred to a correct action or statement from Guru Gobind Singh and explained in detail its influence today. Where students wrote just about the historical side, they gained part of the marks. Some students wrote about equality as a general idea, with no reference to Guru Gobind Singh (actual or implied); whilst they gained credit, they could not secure full marks.

1.4

Nearly 60% of students gained four or five marks. The majority recognised the term manmukh and could write about it, if only briefly. There were some quite excellent responses which went far beyond what was needed for full marks, often using two or more applicable teachings from the Guru Granth Sahib, and doing so with mastery. Some students referenced Gurus other than the two previously mentioned, especially in linking haumai to manmukh, quoting Guru Amar Das ('haumai is the filth which clings to a man'). Some students chose to write about the vices and haumai in their explanation of being manmukh, gaining credit.

The reason most students did not gain full marks was either that they did not explain one or both of their points, or that they did not name a source of authority. A small number of students wrote about gurmukh, confusing the two terms. and could not be credited.

1.5

The question asked for evaluation of the statement, 'Truthful living is the most important Sikh virtue.' Over half of the students gained a Level 3 or a Level 4 mark for this question and nearly 30% gained a Level 2 mark.

This was a straightforward question for students based on the specification in relation to 'the development of Sikh virtues'. However, there was significant evidence that many students did not understand what is meant by Sikh virtues and about 5% of students gained no marks for this question. It was common to see students guessing at what virtues might be, based on an understanding (even if partial) of truthful living. The specification lists eight (wisdom, truthful living, temperance, self-control, patience, courage, humility and contentment), though there are others. Students were credited for evaluating virtues listed as Sikh virtues, or approximations of these, and also for general virtues (since most religions and societies share similar ideas of what is and is not a virtue). So, for example, love, service, and honesty were also credited.

Some students had a limited understanding of truthful living, for example equating it to not telling lies. Some students equated it with the Fifth Khand of Truth. In both cases, this often limited what they could say to agree with the statement. The best responses showed it as being a threefold practice of Nam Japna, Kirat Karni and Vand Chakna (including daswandh), and as such, they had a huge scope for one point of view, which also triggered much for the second point of view. Since many students were not sure what virtue was, there was a range of alternative points of view which could not gain any credit. Students offered equality, mukti, sewa, worship and more as

virtues more important than truthful living. These are not virtues, though the virtues make the practice of any of these more consistent and more gurmukh. Such responses did not provide a valid second point of view and could not reach marks at Level 3 or 4.

It is important that students include significant reference to scripture and teachings, in order to maximise their marks. Some centres now teach Christian theological concepts, philosophical arguments and arguments of logic eg utilitarianism or the Strawman fallacy to students to strengthen their evaluation work. Sometimes students misunderstand or misuse these in their answers and thus they gain no marks

Practices

2.1

Over 95% of students, in a question requiring the name of the Sikh community kitchen, chose the correct answer.

2.2

Slightly less than half the responses here gained full marks for this question, asking for ways in which a Sikh can fulfil the duty of Name Japna. Nearly a quarter more gained one mark only. For most students not achieving the two marks here, this was a reflection of a failure to understand what Nam Japna is or entails.

2.3

This was a straightforward question for many and over 80% of students gained 3 or 4 marks. The questions asked for two contrasting ways in which Divali is celebrated by Sikhs and there were a lot of general and cultural points made in answers by many students. It was not always obvious that they were writing about Divali, but given the increasing commercialisation of the festival, and the fact that in non-Sikh countries, practices for other festivals have influenced it, credit was still given, up to the maximum mark. Some students wrote about the Hindu celebration of Diwali. The best quality responses knew and explained the link to Guru Hargobind, for example, explaining that the lighting of diva lamps, or use of light, was to recreate his homecoming after his prison stay. They used teachings as well to support their points.

2.4

Approximately half the students gained full marks or four out of five marks for this question. For most students this was a straightforward question requiring explanation of two features of the gurdwara. Those students who wrote about the langar found it easy to provide a teaching and name the source of that teaching, as the Guru Granth Sahib has much about the langar. For other parts of the gurdwara, teachings seemed more difficult to give, and required a slightly different way of explaining the feature. For example, the divan hall, or prayer hall hosts the Sangat for worship, which is in keeping with the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib that Sikhs 'Join the Sat Sangat'. There was clear knowledge on most students' parts of the physical features of the building. Most commonly described were the palki / takht, the prayer hall, and the langar. Examiners did also credit 'non-features' such as 'no chairs in the prayer hall'.

Where students failed to get many or any marks, it was usually because they did not focus on the gurdwara, but rather described key people, or explained activities therein. The question was about the physical building, though allowed Guru Granth Sahib as an option, because that is required for a place to be classed as a gurdwara. It was not about the act of worship per se.

2.5

The mark ranges for this essay question were slightly lower than for 1.5. Slightly less than half the students gained marks within Levels 3 and 4. This perhaps reflected the fact that this was the last question on the paper but also that for a number of students, gurburbs was not a familiar term, and they knew little about Sikh festivals in general. The statement, 'For Sikhs, the most important

celebration is the gurburb for Guru Nanak's birthday', actually allowed for discussion of any celebration, and some students spotted that so wrote about naming ceremonies, the Amrit Sanskar and marriage. This might have been a reflection of the idea of birthday in the statement, rather than the recognition of a gurburb itself or a gurburb as a festival, since these responses rarely mentioned festivals, but rather focused on rites of passage. Given that rites of passage are indeed celebrations, credit was given, including up to full marks.

Some students wrote very well in their responses, showing they had been prepared well for the exam. Their work was eloquent, insightful, authoritative and very pleasing to read, these students tended to gain full or nearly full marks. Many students were able to argue several points of view, often with the 'disagree' side being stronger. They often had only a limited amount to say about Guru Nanak (founded the religion, set up the langar), but had plenty to say about Guru Gobind Singh and the first Vaisakhi. A lot of students also wrote about Divali and Guru Hargobind, again allowing for narrative. They showed good knowledge of the origins of a number of Sikh festivals, but particularly of these two. Hence the second point of view was much lengthier, though often this meant that actual evaluation was less good. A small number of students did give more detail to the importance of Guru Nanak, and often gave wide-ranging reasons for his importance and thus that of his gurburbs, with good use of scripture and of anecdotes from his life.

It was interesting to see that many students argued that since Sikhism teaches equality, it would be wrong to choose any celebration above any other. Those students who made this argument but then drew out that festivals are tied to people (who must all be equal according to the Guru Granth Sahib), making the point that no Guru is more important than another, gained the most credit.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.