



GCSE

Religious Studies

8062/17 Sikhism

Report on the examination

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General comments

Centres have prepared their students well for this year's exams. Many students showed good knowledge and understanding of Sikhism.

Key terms is always an issue for some students. This year, the idea of 'God's relationship with creation' challenged many. For that part of the Specification, it is not enough to just explore 'creation' – Sikhism does not have the same ideas that are held by the Western religions, and especially Christianity, so answers from those traditions presented as Sikh will not gain good marks. Similarly, few responses were specific about the activities for Guru Nanak's birthday – this part of the Specification requires the study of the named festivals.

For the 12-mark questions students needed to explain in detail the arguments they made – for example, making a point, then explaining and applying it, followed by further explanation and exemplification. Evaluation of points is also required, saying why an argument or point of view is stronger or weaker. It is often easier to evaluate the strength of a point of view, which includes all its different parts, than to evaluate each individual argument.

Centres are reminded that students are not required to use quotes in every answer and when used they must be relevant to the question. For example, 'the gurmukh finds perfection,' and 'the selfish manmukh shall repent in the hereafter' were commonly seen (often in answer to the same question). Whilst these are accurate quotations, they were often not relevant, nor made relevant, to the question set.

As a reminder, in the 5-mark questions, naming the source of authority for the teachings or concepts is required to gain the fifth mark. The Guru Granth Sahib is a very common source of authority and widely used by almost every student. Better students also refer to different Gurus by name, and to the Adi Granth and Mool Mantar. Whilst many students do freely use religious teachings, some students fail to name the source, thus capping their response at 4 marks.

As with previous recent years, poor handwriting remains an issue. Many students still write in a very untidy style, making legibility difficult. The use of full stops and sentencing is often missing which is essential for gaining the full SPaG marks available.

Question specific comments

Beliefs and Teachings

Question 1

This question was straightforward, and most students selected the correct option.

Question 2

Most students were able to give two valid response and gain full marks for this question. A small number gave examples of sewa, rather than stating why sewa is important, and so did not gain marks.

Question 3

The question asked students to explore how belief in the relationship of God to the creation influences Sikhs. Many students focused entirely on the belief, and did not go into the influences and these answers were able to gain credit as 'simple explanations. Some students wrote about qualities of God, giving answers more suitable for a question about the nature of the (Christian) God; these answers were not always relevant. Some students wrote entirely about equality, often without showing how that linked to the relationship of God to the creation and so gaining no credit. Where the link between equality and God's creation was made, credit was given. Some students gave 'go to the gurdwara' as the influence but then did not show any clear detail to link this to the idea of relationship between God and creation. Centres are encouraged to remind students to link their points clearly back to the statement, so that they can gain maximum marks.

Question 4

Given the close link between the teachings of the Gurus and the Sikh holy book, Guru Granth Sahib, credit was given to references to the gurus. Hence stories from the Janamsakhi (stories of the lives of the Gurus) were credited. Just over half of the students were able to give strong responses gaining full/most marks for this question. Teachings about gender equality, the equality of all humans, equality of those with/without wealth, and the equality of all religious believers were very commonly and effectively used. Some students used non-relevant teachings such as 'the gurmukh finds perfection,' and 'the selfish manmukh shall repent in the hereafter.' Both of these refer to the personal quest for spiritual growth, and not to equality and so did not gain the source of authority mark.

Question 5

Students found this an accessible statement to explore. It was most common to see one point of view being based around the amount of support and guidance a Sikh can call upon (Guru Granth Sahib, examples of the Gurus, Sangat, Khalsa etc), with the other based around the distractions of the modern world, and often the non-Sikh UK context. A number of students built their essay around why it is or is not difficult to achieve mukti, without evaluating their arguments. This meant they did not reach Level 4 marks for the question.

Practices

Question 1

This question was answered correctly by most students.

Question 2

More than half of the students were able to give two ways in which the gurdwara is designed for worship. Any named feature was credited, for example, langar, diwan hall, so long as relevance to worship could be inferred. Where students did not gain marks, it was usually because they had offered only one feature, or had written about activities, for example, 'pray.'

Question 3

Around 80% of students gained at least two marks. Students were credited for activities which are generally met at any festival, as well as those specific to Guru Nanak. Most gave general activities, showing that many students did not know the specifics of the gurburb. Some students tried to explain why these activities, or the day itself were done or why they were important, which was not relevant to answering the question. However, they had usually started with an activity and so were able to gain some marks. Some students wrote very vague ideas, such as 'go to the gurdwara' without then explaining what was done there in a way relevant to Guru Nanak's birthday. Often this way of answering was followed by a non-relevant quote, and a reference to achieving mukti. This gained low marks, as the bulk of the answer was not relevant.

Question 4

This question sought reasons why Nam Japna is important, which many students found straightforward, so that just more than half gained four or five marks. The most common reason for not gaining full marks was because students tried to describe various forms of Nam Japna. Students gave many reasons, and used quotations effectively. Examiners did see quite a few references to 'faith without action is dead,' which is not a Sikh teaching (in those words) and some students gave quotations which did not link to any part of their answer.

Question 5

This question was accessible to students across the ability range. Most students knew something about the Khalsa and joining it. There was a common assumption that a Sikh begins to show greater devotion from the ceremony onwards and thus becomes gurmukh from the ceremony onwards. However, the ceremony is a confirmation of their devotion, and the enhanced dedication thereafter.

It was not unusual to see an answer which could not clearly explain why the Khalsa is important; many asserted the importance being in the receiving of the name Kaur or Singh. Similarly, in an alternative view giving birth ceremonies as more important, some students attested to it being important for the parents to move up the Khands.

There were very many different options to contrast the Amrit Sanskar with, because the only criteria were to be an activity undertaken in the gurdwara. Students often only contrasted one or two other activities with the Amrit Sanskar, but as a whole many others were also seen. Some students gave many activities, but wrote little about each which meant they did not meet the criteria for higher marks.

Many students wrote about the importance of the langar, or of worship, as well as other different ceremonies. Most students looked at any activity from a completely personal viewpoint. Many of the best answers saw that these activities benefit individuals, the Sangat,

and the community, and used that as part of their evaluation. Some students who chose to contrast the Khalsa ceremony with activities outside the gurdwara, for example, sewa did not gain credit as the question had clearly stated 'in the gurdwara.'

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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