

Examiners' Report  
June 2019

GCE Religious Studies 9RS0 4F

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## Introduction

Some candidates displayed an excellent detailed knowledge and understanding of specific Sikh teachings and practices and were able to look at other points of view objectively. At the same time, there were candidates who appeared to have only limited knowledge and understanding of the specification and did not directly address the specific topic in the question.

Centres and candidates are reminded to check the meanings of the five command words used in the A level papers found in Appendix 1 of the A level specification. The weightings of AO1 are 40% and AO2 has 60%.

## **Question 1**

This question asked candidates to explore Sikh teachings about religious freedom and pluralism. Most candidates were able to correctly identify teachings about these topics, mainly drawn from Guru Nanak. The top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately and accurately, and sustain this throughout. Answers that reached the top level showed a depth and range of understanding.

Some candidates seemed to have spent a lot of time on this question as it covered an area of the specification with which they were familiar. This is an 8 mark question and as such candidates should consider the amount of time spent on each question.

## **Question 2**

This question asked candidates to assess the importance of sants in contemporary Sikh life. This question was answered in different ways including a focus on the historical sant movement prior to the life of Guru Nanak, while others utilised the concept of a sant or holy person/saint in today's society. Both approaches are equally valid and enabled candidates to access the higher levels if they were linked to the importance in contemporary Sikh life. There is no need to look at both sides of the argument but most candidates did. The answers which were awarded the higher levels critically deconstructed the information they used leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, which in turn led to reasoned judgements of the question.

Some candidates drifted slightly in the answers as they drifted into over explanation without an attempt to assess. Candidates should always ensure that they assess rather than just explain.

## **Question 3**

### Question 3(a)

This question utilised an extract from the anthology, asking candidates to clarify Sikh beliefs about the nature of God illustrated in this passage.

Candidates were able to correctly discuss various aspects of beliefs about the nature of God, utilising the source as a springboard. Candidates who only regurgitated the source were not able to achieve well, but these responses were few and far between. The top level answers were able to utilise a wide range of knowledge, specialist language and terminology appropriately, accurately and sustained throughout. In this way, they were able to use aspects of the source to develop into a wider discussion of the nature of God.

### Question 3(b)

This question asked candidates to analyse the ways in which Sikhs may seek unity with the divine. Candidates engaged well with the question and were able to show understanding of a variety of ways that Sikhs may seek unity with the divine. Candidates were able to use specific examples to show the significance of these ways. Sometimes this was done in exploring and recognising the lack of significance for certain Sikhs. There is a need to look at both sides of the argument in an evaluate question. The answers which were awarded the higher levels critically deconstructed the information they used leading to coherent and logical chains of reasoning, which in turn led to reasoned judgements of the question. This was all supported by the comprehensive appraisal of evidence. This involves a weighing of the value and success of the evidence being used.

In some responses candidates explained the various ways; in Q03(b) candidates should always be aware of the need to analyse.

## **Question 4**

This question was worth 30 marks and asked candidates to evaluate the impact of secularisation and non-Sikh culture on beliefs, values and practices in the Sikh diaspora. This also included the added requirement to include links to Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Ethics, or New Testament Studies.

It should be noted that references to other religions do not count as a synoptic link as it is impossible to study two religions. Where a candidate referenced aspects of Christianity care was taken to ensure that this linked to the New Testament Studies part of the course rather than Christianity as a World Religion.

This question elicited interesting responses. Many candidates were able to provide good examples of how the values and practices of the Sikh diaspora have been affected both negatively and positively through their exposure to secularisation and non-Sikh culture. Links were generally made to Ethics (which is potentially unsurprising when the issue of gender is considered) and while this opened up the possibility of a Level 5 mark, this did not guarantee such. The rest of the answer needed to be of a level standard; while candidates were generally able to use information well, they were slightly let down by the conclusion which may not be a full and logical drawing together of justified ideas.

## Paper Summary

Following on from this report, it is possible to suggest a number of simple ways in which candidates can be helped to improve their performance:

- Be prepared to make links to other components (papers) they have studied for Q04. Indicating in their answer that they are doing this is helpful.
- Read questions carefully to ensure they are answering the question set.
- Allocate sufficient time for all sections. There is no requirement to begin at Q01 and work through the paper. Some candidates very obviously began with Section C. Whatever works best for the candidate is permissible.
- Ensure that the source is referred to but not regurgitated in Q03(a).
- Consider how they are appraising the evidence and arguments they are making in Q03(b) and Q04.



## Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

