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Examiners' Report  
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2022

**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE  
Religious Studies**

Advanced

PAPER 4: Study of Religion

Option 4F: Sikhism

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## **Introduction**

This paper enabled candidates to respond to their in-depth study of Sikhism. They were able to explain the beliefs, values and teachings, sources of wisdom and authority, and the practices that shape and express religious identity within Sikhism. The responses showed that candidates were able to write extremely well. Answers included concise knowledge and understanding (AO1) of Sikhism, demonstrating the key ideas from the specification. Most candidates were able to assess and analyse (AO2) the concepts that were examined in this paper, some candidates showed an outstanding level of scholarship. Most candidates managed their time well and answered all questions in detail. Where candidates did not perform so well, their responses were less detailed and the AO2 questions contained more AO1 information than AO2.

### **Q1 Explore the key features of nam japna. (8)**

The majority of responses to this question scored well. The answers indicated that candidates had a thorough knowledge and understanding of beliefs about and the practice of nam japna. This was a wide question which meant it provided differentiation between candidates who had a narrow range of knowledge and understanding and those that had a wide range of knowledge and understanding. Most candidates began with an explanation of nam japna developed by a discussion of its purpose in Sikh life. Better candidates made accurate use of specialist terminology such as meditation, Waheguru, contemplation, and unity as part of their explanation of key religious beliefs.

Weaker responses tended to describe the practice of nam japna in general and gave a narrow range of knowledge and understanding rather than delivering the breadth or depth of knowledge and understanding required by the question. Sadly, a few candidates focused on the word nam and did not address the question.

### **Q2 Assess the importance of the sangat today. (12)**

Most candidates were able to access this question and recognised the importance of the sangat for Sikhs today. Some candidates answered with reference to the local sangat, the global sangat, and even the virtual sangat. This gave them the ability to compare and contrast the importance of each type of sangat easily raising answers to higher levels. Some candidates made the link to Sikh practice and to teachings that require community and those that do not, and then linked this idea to fundamental Sikh teachings on seva and worship. Better candidates discussed the concept of toxic sangat and that although sangat should be positive it is not always (especially for minority groups). Most candidates presented an item of knowledge and understanding (AO1) before analysing it (AO2), and continued to do so throughout the response. Some candidates began with a paragraph of content and description, illustrating AO1 and then used the rest of the response to assess and provide counter arguments. Both approaches are legitimate, but the best answers were those that integrated their AO2 material throughout their AO1 right from the start of their essay, thus achieving the focus on AO2 required. Weaker candidates clearly focused on writing description about the sangat (AO1) and did not assess its importance which meant their answers lacked AO2.

**Q3 (a) Clarify the ideas illustrated in this passage about sat as a way of understanding the Sikh concept of Waheguru. (10)**

Candidates responded well to this question; they were clearly knowledgeable about Sat, a name for Waheguru and most candidates used the content to the passage to support their answer. Some candidates used the passage effectively and even if they did not know that sat meant Truth /True they were able to work it out. There were secure and detailed responses that considered the importance of the different terms for describing Waheguru and assessed the use of the term 'Anami' and why it might be preferred by Guru Nanak. Weak responses did not know what Sat meant and were unable to work it out from the passage or gave limited information, mostly copying chunks.

**Q3 (b) Analyse the Mool Mantar as a way to understand the nature of God. (20)**

There were some strong responses to this question. Many candidates began with an explanation of what the Mool Mantar was and then what it teaches about God; there was a lot of AO1 information. The best responses showed significant understanding of how there are different ideas within the Mool Mantar, highlighting that possibly one description might be insufficient or maybe the Mool Mantar might not be able to fully encompass the nature of God showing good evaluative and appraisal skills. Candidates with weaker knowledge and understanding usually ran out of information so their answer was very brief showing a narrow range of knowledge and unable to achieve more than Level 1.

**Q4 Evaluate the role of women within Sikhism. (30)**

This question was a wonderful discriminator of candidates' religious studies skills. Candidates were able to show their depth of understanding the role of Sikhism in any way they chose. Many candidates discussed the history of the role of women within Sikhism and supported this argument with evidence showing that women have been involved as authority figures in Sikhism throughout history. They may have contrasted this with the number of women in roles of authority versus men. Other answers looked at the role of women in Sikhism today. They raised issues about religion in theory versus religion in practice and the impact of culture referring to Nikky Kaur Singh as evidence showing connections between the full range of elements in the questions. Candidates accurately used specialist language and terminology; terms such as gender, patriarchy, tradition, discrimination, and egalitarianism were all used accurately. The strongest responses considered the strengths and weaknesses of arguments about the role of women and made judgements referring to evidence and examples throughout the entire answer.

Weaker responses simply described the history of women in early Sikhism with an overemphasis on knowledge and examples and little use of AO2 skills.

## **Summary**

Based on the performance on this paper students should:

- Apply material specifically to the question asked.
- Write concisely and use evidence to support arguments
- Learn and use specialist language and terminology
- Ensure that answers requiring AO2 limit the amount of AO1 material given.
- Remember that contrasting arguments to an idea is an effective way to show AO2 skills
- Be familiar with the requirements of the specification
- Practice answering exam questions in the time given

