

Religious Studies Spec A

Answers and commentaries
GCSE (8062)

Paper 1: Sikhism

Marked answers from students from the June 2022 exams.

Supporting commentary is provided to help you understand how marks are awarded and how students can improve performance.

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Answers and commentaries

Please note that these responses have been reproduced exactly as they were written by the student.

4 mark question

Question 2.3

Explain two contrasting ways in which Sikhs perform sewa in the langar.

[4 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO1:3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs

First contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast– 2 marks

Second contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast– 2 marks

Contrast may mean opposing or may mean different views.

If similar ways are given, only **one** of them may be credited up to 2 marks max.

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Anything done in the langar is done as sewa / selfless service to others / because no reward is expected from those being served.
- A person can contribute financially to the meals cooked in the langar / this is dhan sewa / it shows a person is willing to use their wealth to give to others selflessly / they use their wealth to support the community.
- A person might contribute in practical terms / by shopping for ingredients / by cooking food / by serving food / by cleaning up after people have eaten / this is tan sewa (physical) / they are using their strength and stamina to support the community selflessly / many Sikhs will go to large gurdwaras, such as at Amritsar, to do voluntary work in the langar kitchens, feeding thousands / this form of sewa (tan) is available to almost every single person (Sikh or not).

- A person who is helping in the langar in any way will turn their mind to God whilst working / this means their efforts are dedicated to God / this is man sewa (mental) / they try to be Gurmukh whilst they are giving time and energy, or money to the langar and to sewa.
- The langar's purpose was to uphold the principle of equality and to begin the development of 'caring communities' / sewa is fundamentally caring for others through service to them without desire for reward / hence the langar is fundamentally – even as a concept – an expression of sewa, etc.

Student responses

Response A

One way is that they cook fresh meals for everyone to eat for free and they all eat on the floor so that nobody is higher than anyone else.

In contrast to this, they may offer money to those in need or other help.

The first point is a detailed explanation, however the second point is not clearly linked to the Langar so no marks are awarded.

2 marks

Response B

One way is through dhan, this is helping people through materials and wealth. In the langar, someone might perform this sewa by buying some food to put in it. Another way is through tan, physical sewa. An example of this in the langar could be someone spending time to cook or serve food for others.

Two detailed explanations. Within the question, the word 'contrasting' does not mean opposite but 'different' and so both points are valid.

4 marks

5 mark question

Question 2.4

Explain two reasons why Divali is an important festival in Sikhism.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Sikh belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

First reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Second reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Sikh belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Guru Amar Das told Sikhs to celebrate this festival / it is one of three which are seen as compulsory because of his order.
- It commemorates Guru Hargobind's saving of 52 political prisoners / in 1619 / having been released from imprisonment, he asked for their release / was told that any who could hold onto him could leave / so he had a cloak made with 52 tails / all 52 political prisoners left with him / hence called Bandi Chhorh Divas (freedom day, prisoner release day).
- It represents Sikh belief in justice / as Guru Hargobind brought justice for those political prisoners / many Sikhs are politically active on this day, especially to fight for political prisoners.
- It represents Sikh belief in sewa / Guru Hargobind gave great service to those political prisoners.
- It represents freedom / the freedom of Guru Hargobind and the political prisoners / but also reminding Sikhs today of their freedom / eg that they are free to express their religion.
- Divas lamps are lit as a tradition / the light representing freedom / also representing God's guidance to living / also representing human life as the lamp is lit, burns bright, then dies / to reflect that only God is eternal.

- It is a day to attend the gurdwara for worship / bringing the community together in religious terms / reinforcing Sikh beliefs and teachings as well as Sikh religious practice.
- It is a community festival / everyone in the Sikh community celebrates this day / as do increasing numbers of non-Sikhs in the UK celebrations / this is a joyful time for all.
- As more non-Sikhs join in the community celebrations / Sikhism – beliefs and practices – becomes more familiar and better understood to or by non-Sikhs / this helps social cohesion and harmony / as well as reducing prejudice and intolerance.
- There is much charitable giving associated with the festival / so that those less fortunate benefit from this celebration / an altruistic importance of the festival, etc.

Student responses

Response A

Diwali marks the founding of the Khalsa, a devout group of Sikhs. Becoming an Amritdhari Sikh means you are more likely to reach mukti and be reunited with God “the transcendent Lord” (Guru Granth Sahib). Therefore, Diwali is a very important festival. Furthermore, it marks the martyrdom of one of the Gurus who fought for their faith – reinforcing the Sikh belief of equality, and again, marking the festival as important.

First point describes Vaisakhi so is incorrect. As the source of authority is part of the first point, it cannot be awarded a mark. The second point is confused, so a mark is awarded for the commemoration of martyrdom.

1 mark

Response B

One reason why Diwali is important is because it celebrates freedom. This is because Guru Hargobind was released from prison along with 52 innocent Hindu princes. This helps Sikhs remember the life of the Gurus and they can learn from it.

Another reason why it is important is because it helps Sikhs appreciate the difficulties the Gurus went through. In the Guru Granth Sahib it says “look upon the life of the Gurus”. This suggests that Sikhs are then learning from the Gurus and they can then implement these attributes in their life to become better Sikhs.

Two detailed explanations, plus source of authority.
The reference is a valid paraphrase of Guru Granth Sahib teaching about Gurus being role models.

5 marks

12 mark question

Question 2.5

'For Sikhs, it is important to go through the Amrit Sanskar ceremony (initiation into the Khalsa).'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Sikh teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[SPaG 3 marks]

Mark scheme

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10-12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7-9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4-6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1-3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- Guru Gobind Singh set the Khalsa up / so it is very traditional in Sikhism / and has held status and prestige throughout Sikh history.
- It reflects the point a person has reached in their spiritual journey / as there are greater commitments to be made / and more rules to follow / with greater scrutiny for disobeying rules, etc. / hence it is a serious step but an obvious one in a Sikh's spiritual development / 'He does not recognise anyone else except One Lord, not even the bestowal of charities, performance of merciful acts, austerities and restraint on pilgrim-stations; the perfect light of the Lord illuminates his heart, then consider him as the immaculate Khalsa' – Guru Gobind Singh.
- Being part of the Khalsa requires going through this ceremony / it shows a person's commitment to the next Khand should make this commitment / they might be unable to make the step without the commitment / 'Waheguru ji ka Khalsa – The Khalsa belongs to God' / 'Those humble people become pure – they become Khalsa' (GGS).
- The Khalsa act as a strong support network (Sat Sangat) for any Sikh / which helps a person to be more Gurmukh / and to attain mukti / so a Sikh should commit via the Amrit Sanskar / and then use this network more fully.
- Being part of the Khalsa means more involvement in the Sat Sangat / so closer to God / through more spiritual practice / and being with those of like-mind (gurmukh), etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- Not all are ready to make the commitment / eg sahajdhari Sikhs meaning 'slow adopters' / as becoming amritdhari (one who has taken amrit, or one for whom being beyond death has been bestowed) is a big commitment / they might not be sure of their faith / or strong enough in their beliefs yet / so they should not be pressured to undertake the ceremony until fully ready.
- A Sikh could go through this ceremony and then not make any changes to their lives / so the ceremony is rendered meaningless / a ritual only / Guru Nanak spoke against following rituals blindly / eg by rejecting Sacred Thread as a child / or his response to those splashing water for ancestors to drink.
- There is no requirement in Sikhism to become amritdhari / or to go through the ceremony / so to say 'it is important' may be too strong / not being amritdhari does not stop them from pursuing a more spiritual path / not all Sikh gurus were in the Khalsa / as it did not exist / but it can be implied that the ceremony is not required.
- Not all Sikhs want to be amritdhari / forcing someone to go through the ceremony against their will or with uncertainty can only lead to them failing to live properly as amritdhari / which would bring the status into disrepute, etc.

Student responses

Response A

For some Sikhs this may be very important because by being a part of the Khalsa you are closer towards becoming God-centred which in Sikhism is very important. This can allow them to reunite with God and stop the cycle of birth meaning liberation.

For some Sikhs they may disagree with this statement, because there are other ways of becoming united with God and so stuff such as seva and the six virtues are things that could lead you to being liberated which is why they could disagree with this statement. Guru Nanak had once said that a person who does seva will with no doubt reunite with God.

This is a Level 2 response

Two points of view with development.

The first, is pertinent to the question whereas the second point implies why there is no need to undertake Amrit Sanskar (because you can unite with God via a different route). The final sentence is creditworthy as a teaching of Guru Nanak.

5 marks + 2 SPaG

Response B

Some Sikhs may agree with this statement because they believe it will bring them closer to God. By becoming a member of the Khalsa, this highlights these Sikhs that are trying to become gurmukh, and move away from the barriers. Overall, all Sikhs should go through the Amrit Sanskar ceremony in order to get closer to God.

However, some Sikhs may disagree with this statement as they believe that you can still be liberated from the cycle of rebirth without joining the Khalsa. One way Sikhs can be liberated from the cycle is through sewa. This allows Sikhs to focus on God whilst promoting equality. Therefore, Sikhs don't have to go through an Amrit Sanskar ceremony.

In contrast, some Sikhs may agree with this statement because of the 5K's. When joining the Khalsa, Sikhs are expected to wear the 5 K's. This is because the 5K's promote equality within the religion. Therefore, in order to further promote equality, Sikhs should have an Amrit Sanskar ceremony.

On the other hand, some Sikhs may disagree with the statement due to the extra responsibilities Khalsa Sikhs may take on. Some rules include: taking the last name Kaur or Singh, no drinking alcohol or no eating meat. By joining the Khalsa, some Sikhs may feel that their free will is being taken away.

Overall, it is not important to undergo an Amrit Sanskar ceremony.

In conclusion, I disagree with this statement as I believe that it can be stressful trying to obey all of the new rules Khalsa Sikhs must follow.

This is a Level 3 response

This answer shows a reasoned consideration of different points of view. The points are not detailed or developed and there is an overall lack of evaluation, hence not L4.

8 marks + 3 SPaG

Response C

Some Sikhs may agree with this statement as the initiation into the Khalsa is a key belief of Guru Gobind Singh who set up the Khalsa to act as a brotherhood. Furthermore anyone can become an amritdhari Sikh – male or female – as women are equal to men and just as important as suggested in the Guru Granth Sahib that “without women there would be no-one” giving women a purpose to join the Khalsa and fight for equality amongst men.

Sikhs find the Amrit Sanskar important as they receive the 5K's: “kesh”, “kirpan”, “kachera”, “kangha” and “kara”. The 5 K's reminds them about the principles of their faith and commitment to God, for example, “kacheri” acts as a defense against an evil (barrier to mukti): ‘Lust’. This acts as a barrier as it reminds Sikhs of chastity.

For Sikhs, the Amrit Sanskar would be a step closer to receiving Mukti as once initiated the Rehat Maryada states “your name is now Singh (or Kaur)” providing equality and a brotherhood for all as Guru Gobind Singh intended when he set up the Khalsa. Becoming an amritdhari Sikh encourages a big push in the commitment of God as you are becoming gurmukh which can be difficult in modern day society but eased and reassured when joining the Khalsa.

However some Sikhs may not choose to go through the ceremony as they are not ready for the commitment and strict rules they have to follow which comes along with it. For example, the Rehat Maryada prohibits Sikhs from ‘eating [halal] meat’ (meat in general), ‘drinking alcohol’, ‘cutting your hair’ and also you have to follow a strict set of prayers everyday starting with ‘nam japna’. Therefore some sahadhari Sikhs may not want to give up meat or alcohol yet so choose to stay sahadhari Sikhs instead of committing. Especially children would not be ready to become amritdhari Sikhs as Sikh boys for example could face bullying for their uncut hair by other children.

Also Sikhs may suggest that the Amrit Sanskar is not as important as you can pray nam japna whenever no matter if your amritdhari sikh or not and many sahadhari Sikhs still choose to wear the ‘kara’ to show the strength and union of their faith.

To conclude I believe that it is important for Sikhs to go through the Amrit Sanskar ceremony as they can create the models from the panj payare who perform the ceremony and once amritdhari, is a way of achieving ‘jivan mukti’ as mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib.

This is a Level 4 response

A fluent and coherent account. Well-argued from both sides with a good focus on the statement and clear evaluation.

12 marks + 3 SPaG

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