



General Certificate of Secondary Education

Religious Studies (4051/4052)
Full and Short Course
Specification A

Unit 14 Sikhism (405014)

Report on the Examination
2010 examination - June series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Unit 14 Sikhism

General comments

This was the first year of the specification and candidates seemed well prepared for the examination. The standard of responses was good. Candidates responded confidently to all aspects of the paper, and no questions presented any real problems. More able candidates made excellent use of technical language and reference to Sikh religious teachings, beliefs and practices throughout. Candidates also demonstrated skill in selecting from a range of areas across the specification to respond to evaluation questions.

Part B differentiated clearly between candidates. Question B5 was marginally more popular than Question B6. In both structured essays a range of ability was seen, with the most able candidates writing detailed and fluent responses to all parts of the question.

Question A1 *Personal Lifestyle*

Most candidates achieved full marks in part (a) using a range of approaches. Some defined the three terms; others chose to explain the symbolism of the Kara, Kesh and Kirpan. A small number confused the Kesh with the Kanga.

Candidates responded well to part (b). Good understanding of the relationship between the 5Ks and Khalsa membership was used in the best responses to justify the candidates' opinions.

Most candidates gave precise and clear explanations of kirat karna in part (c). Some confused the term with vand chhakna.

Candidates were clearly familiar with the term sewa in part (d) and were able to provide detailed responses that clearly demonstrated understanding of the importance of sewa both to the Sikh community and to individuals. Good examples such as service in the langar were used to illustrate the points made.

Candidates responded well to part (e) and most easily achieved the full 3 marks. There were examples of overlong answers that would have been appropriate for a 6-mark evaluation question. Candidates made very good use of technical language in their reasoning, for example, justifying their opinion with reference to sewa and vand chhakna and also to achieving gurmurkh and overcoming manmukh.

Question A2 *Family Life*

The details of the Sikh naming ceremony were mostly well known and described in part (a). A small number of candidates described Amrit Sanskar and received no marks.

Candidates responded well to the statement in part (b) and were able to offer reasoned arguments contrasting the relative importance of family and religion. A full range of ability was seen, with the simplest arguments centring on the importance of family members in caring for each other. More complex and detailed arguments relating to the difficulties of pursuing spiritual ideals such as overcoming attachment to the material world were made in the best responses.

Question A3 Beliefs and Sources of Authority

A full range of responses were seen to part (a). The best responses demonstrated a good understanding of what the mool mantra teaches Sikhs about God, including explanation of some of the attributes of God made in the prayer. Weaker responses tended to list what the mool mantra says rather than explain what it reveals about the nature of God.

Part (b) was completed well by all candidates.

Candidates again responded well to part (c) and were able to support their arguments with good reference to a number of different elements from their course. The significance of the Guru Granth Sahib and its centrality in worship and ceremonies were referred to in support of the statement. Contrasting arguments made good reference to alternative sources of authority, in particular the contributions of the Gurus in providing role models for Sikh life.

Question A4 Festivals and the Gurus

Candidates provided good descriptions of celebration of gurburbs in part (a), but tended to focus on general description rather than developing the detail or explaining the significance of these celebrations. A small number gave an account of Vaisakhi and achieved few marks as a result.

In part (b) candidates gave many different examples of the social and religious achievements of Guru Gobind Singh. Most scored full marks.

Candidates were able to respond well to part (c) and provided well reasoned responses across the ability range. Good reference was made to the distinctive contribution of Guru Nanak to the Sikh faith to support sound arguments in favour of the statement. Alternative views focussed on the contributions of other Gurus as well as on the significance and importance of the Guru Granth Sahib. All candidates were able to offer some clear reasoning, and the most able provided full and coherent responses, developing clear arguments that were well supported by references to several aspects of their course.

Question B5 Practice and Organisation

In part (a) candidates had a good knowledge of the diverse responsibilities of the granthi within the Sikh community. Better responses included some explanation of the importance of the role within the community for both worship and pastoral support.

Candidates responded well to part (b) and were able to offer reasoned evaluative comment with good reference to their studies. The best responses considered the specific contribution of granthis, the khalsa and rajis, and contrasted this with the importance of individual devotion and commitment to the Sikh faith.

Part (c) was less well answered than part (a). Candidates tended to describe key features of the gurdwara, but often made limited reference to how this related to worship. Others described the worship, but made little reference to the actual design of the gurdwara.

In part (d) candidates showed good awareness of the origin and importance of langar and utilised this well to evaluate its significance as an aspect of Sikh worship. Weaker responses simply evaluated public and private worship.

Question B6 *Justice, Equality and the Right to Life*

Candidates who chose B6 provided detailed and thoughtful responses to part (a) with some excellent reference to Sikh teaching. Reference was also made to Sikh practices and how they encourage equality between men and women, for example, how both can lead worship and join the khalsa.

For the most part candidates' responses to part (b) tended to lack focus, with many referring to religious prejudice as synonymous with racism. Few picked up on the focus of the question, 'the worst form of prejudice', and consequently tended to give responses that were more about why prejudice is wrong rather than evaluation of the issue presented in the question.

Responses to part (c) were less well focussed than those to part (a) and tended to be more generalised. Those who referred to specific teachings were able to provide clear and detailed explanations of Sikh views on abortion.

Candidates responded well to part (d). Some focussed on the issue of abortion, whilst others took a broader approach and were able to evaluate relative positions on the taking of life with reference to abortion, euthanasia and, in some cases, conflict such as war. Candidates were free to choose their own focus in the response, and some excellent evaluations were seen.