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Examiners' Report
Principal Examiner Feedback

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Pearson Edexcel GCSE
In Religious Studies A (1RB0)
Paper 1: Area of Study 1 – Religion and Ethics
Option 1G: Sikhism

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Introduction

This area of study comprises a study in depth of Sikhism, its beliefs and teachings on life, specifically within families and with regard to creation.

This approach encourages candidates to reflect upon the links between beliefs and teachings of Sikhism and the topics of families and creation which are an important part of life today.

There are four sections: Sikh Beliefs, Marriage and the Family, Living the Sikh life, Matters of Life and Death. The details of the assessment content are provided in the specification. Centres are to use this rather than other published resources when planning the course content.

Section 1, Sikh beliefs were well answered, with sound knowledge and key Sikh terms used throughout, especially AO1 questions. The AO2 questions were not answered so much in depth, although the knowledge was there. The candidates are beginning to start to critically analyse the statement using various techniques, although there needs to be more chains of reasoning and a justified conclusion for candidates to gain the higher levels. Candidates should compare and contrast the areas of ethics within Sikhism and non-religious views when asked. Candidates should also look at divergent views within Sikhism in the way beliefs and teachings are understood and expressed.

Section 2, Marriage, and Family were answered well with sound knowledge especially on marriage. Candidates needed to use more Sikh appropriate knowledge to gain the higher marks, although there was some improvement in Sikh information. Sources of wisdom must be used that are appropriate to the question and not just 'random quotes' that the candidate has learnt.

Section 3, Living the Sikh Life. Candidates were well prepared for this section due to the Advanced Information provided and sources of wisdom were good.

Section 4, Matters of life and Death. Some questions were difficult for the candidates to decipher especially a; therefore, they did not gain full marks. The question used language specifically from the specification. Candidates need to practice these types of questions for them to achieve higher marks.

Question 1 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh beliefs.

Bullet point 1.2 'Sikh teachings on God as creator' (Karta Purakh).

The question asked was:

'Outline three Sikh teachings about God as Karta Purakh'

Candidates are asked to 'outline' on (a) items. Therefore, lists can reach a maximum of one mark.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a list.

An example:

Outline 3 characteristics of God:

- **God is creator** (1 mark)
 - **God is creator**, judge, and lawgiver (1 mark for list or sentence)
 - **God is creator**, busy and distant. (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
 - Busy, distant and **God is creator**, (1 mark for the sentence identifying one correct piece of information)
 - Creator, judge, lawgiver (1 mark for list)
 - Creator, busy, distant (0 Marks) (all three elements need to be correct for 1 mark)
- Creator, judge, distant (0 marks)

Overall, this was not well answered with candidates writing about the Mool Mantar and not specifically linking it to God as Creator. The term Karta Purakh is in the specification and should be taught as another term for God as Creator. Those that did know what it meant achieved full marks.

Question 1 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.3. '...Sikh understandings of why uniting with God is important'.

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why uniting with God is important'.

This question was well answered, and candidates had sound knowledge of why uniting with God is important in a Sikh life, including 'to achieve liberation' and 'escape from the cycle of samsara'.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom as quotes or examples.

Question 1 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.4 '...the nature of rebirth.

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh beliefs about the nature of rebirth'.

Candidates had sound knowledge of rebirth. The source of wisdom used was 'whatever you plant you shall harvest' and '8.4 million reincarnations.'

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' of (c) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra information, a reference to a source of wisdom as quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

The reasons then should be supported with a 'reference to a source of wisdom', this must support the reason given and cannot be awarded twice. Therefore, if it is used as development, it does not gain a second mark for the source.

GENERIC advice for centres to what constitutes a source of wisdom

- The candidates do not have to reference a quote or quote it word for word.
- If the candidate gives the paraphrase and then puts (Guru Granth Sahib 15) in brackets the paraphrase can have the mark and the bracketed reference is ignored.
- If a candidate quotes Guru Nanak and it was Guru Gobind Singh or vice versa; and the quote is not accredited to them, it is not awarded.

Question 1 (d)

The focus of the marking changes from AO1 to AO2 on the (d) items. The candidates are being assessed on AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief. This constitutes 50% of the overall mark.

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion**. There must be some consideration of the arguments, that is appraising the arguments which will help to gain the higher grades. Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Still some candidates used formulas and writing frames which restricted the flow of the arguments restricting the candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors

Candidates were assessed on Section One: Sikh Beliefs.

Bullet point 1.7. 'the origins and purpose of sewa and its importance in the development of Sikhism.'

Please note that, neither in the bullet point, nor on the question, are candidates required to give a non-religious response. Candidates must respond to the question asked.

The question asked was

"Sewa is the best way a Sikh can become gurmukh"

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Sikh teachings
- reach a justified conclusion.

Candidates overall achieved level 2 and some candidates achieved level 3, they failed to deconstruct religious information and critically analyse the statement throughout. Generic answers were given, and Sikh key words were limited. Those who achieved the higher level 2 or at times level 3 analysed why Sewa is the best way to become gurmukh with good analysis linking it to the statement. This however was quite limited and logical chains of reasoning throughout would benefit the candidates to achieve higher levels. Some candidates just gave a list of the types of sewa and did not link it to the statement. This was the main reason why some candidate did not go higher than a level 1 or 2.

Question 2 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point 2.5 'Sikh teaching on contraception.'

The question asked to

'Outline three Sikh beliefs about contraception.'

There were some good answers with candidates identifying three Sikh beliefs about contraception, for example, personal choice, for planning a family and for the health of the mother. However, some failed to write that Sikhs do not have any specific teaching about the use of contraception and gave another view such as 'it is not allowed'. Sikhs have no objection to artificial methods of contraception.

Question 2 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.

Bullet point 2.8 'Sikh teachings about gender prejudice.'

The question asked was:

'Explain two Sikh teachings about gender prejudice.'

This question was very well answered, and most candidates could quote 'from women came great men' and the use of 'Singh and Kaur' to highlight the importance of Sikh teachings against gender prejudice.

Candidates are asked to 'Explain two' on (b) items. Therefore, two reasons are required, and both need to be developed for 4 marks. Development consists of a piece of extra

information, a reference to a source of wisdom, and quotes or examples. The development must be of the reason given and to the question asked.

Question 2 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family.
Bullet point 2.1 'The importance and purpose of marriage in Sikhism'

The question asked was:

'Explain two reasons why marriage is important for most Sikhs.'

In your answer you must refer to a source of wisdom and authority.

Candidates had clear knowledge on the importance of marriage for most Sikhs, clearly identifying that marriage is 'one light in two bodies' and linking this to the spiritual importance of marriage. Good sources of wisdom were used with most candidates achieving high marks.

Question 2 (d)

The question is '**Evaluate**' this statement **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion** – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Two: Marriage and the Family:

Bullet point 2.2: '...attitudes to sexual relationships, including the acceptance of sexual relationships outside marriage and homosexuality and Sikh responses to them.'

The question asked was:

"All Sikhs should accept same-sex relationships".

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In your response you should:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- reach a justified conclusion

Overall most candidates gave a two-sided answer with some good links to Sikh teachings especially on the other view, for example-'The Akal Takht spoke out against same sex marriage. 'The advice given by the highest Sikh temporal authority to every Sikh is saying that it (same-sex marriage) is unnatural and ungodly, and the Sikh religion cannot support it.' (Manjit Singh Kalkatta)'. These candidates who used their knowledge to evaluate the

statement achieved higher levels. There is still room for improvement for candidates to show logical chains of reasoning for and against the statement and to reach a justified conclusion. Candidates need to link their answer to the statement given.

Question 3 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.6 'Akhand path (continuous 48-hour reading of the Guru Granth Sahib).'

The question asked was:

'Outline three features of the akhand path.'

This question was answered well with sound knowledge of the features of the akhand path. The main feature written was it takes 48 hours to do.

Question 3 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.7 'Vaisakhi.'

The question asked was:

'Explain two ways Vaisakhi is celebrated by Sikhs.'

On the whole candidates knew how Sikhs celebrated Vaisakhi but some wrote generalised comments of the festival such as they 'eat a meal' and 'pray in the gurdwara,' without much connection to the festival itself. Those that wrote about how they celebrate Vaisakhi including good development gained full marks. For example, 'there is a procession of the Panj Piare developed by these 5 represent the five volunteers who were first initiated into the Khalsa at the festival.'

Question 3 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living the Sikh Life.

Bullet point 3.3 '....the nature and purposes of langar '

The question asked was:

'Explain two purposes of the langar for Sikhs.'

Well answered with sound knowledge on the purposes of the langar. The main responses were 'to perform sewa' and 'equality'. The main source of wisdom used was 'and its supplies never run short.'

Question 3 (d)

The question is **'Evaluate'** this statement **considering the arguments for and against** and reach a **justified conclusion** – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels.

We are now marking using levels and award a best fit according to the level descriptors.

Candidates were assessed on Section Three: Living a Sikh Life

Bullet point 3.8: '...; the significance of Amrit sanskar (the initiation ceremony) for Sikh families.'

The question asked was:

"A Sikh needs to participate in the Amrit sanskar ceremony."

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you should:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- reach a justified conclusion

Some candidates gave a general explanation about the ceremony itself and did not link it to the statement. They also confused the Amrit sanskar ceremony with the naming ceremony and just mentioned taking Amrit. There was little reference to the impact the ceremony may have on a Sikh life or other views on why the ceremony is not so important. Those that did discuss this gained higher levels showing they had evaluative knowledge on the significance of the ceremony for Sikh families.

Question 4 (a)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.6 'Sikh responses to non-religious arguments against life after death '

The question asked was:

'Outline three Sikh responses to non-religious arguments against life after death.'

Candidates need to read the questions carefully and think about the responses they should write. The question was asking for three Sikh responses to non-religious arguments about life after death, not what non-religious people feel about life after death. For example, a Sikh may respond by saying that life after death gives them comfort, helps them to focus and that life after death is written in their holy scriptures. Some candidates wrote about teachings and not responses.

Question 4 (b)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.
Bullet point 4.2 'Sikh teachings about why human life is holy '

The question asked was:
'Explain two Sikh beliefs that show human life is holy.'

This section of the specification is related to the sanctity of life. Some candidates gave responses on why life is holy by stipulating that it is the highest life form given to them by God so they can escape the cycle of samsara. This was given credit. Although most candidates wrote about the divine spark within us all and that is why it is holy. Very few mentioned about the sanctity of life e.g., destroying life you are destroying God's light within you.

Question 4 (c)

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.
Bullet point 4.1 'Sikh teachings about the origins and value of the universe '

The question asked was:
'Explain two Sikh teachings about the value of the universe.'

Some candidates wrote about the value of humans and not the universe, this was not credited. Those that wrote about the value of the universe gave very simple statements and very few gave a relevant source of wisdom. This is an area of the specification that needs more depth for example, Sikhs believe the world is priceless because it was created by God and therefore is of value 'By His Command the world was formed.' (Guru Granth Sahib 1037). The quote being directly from the specification guidelines.

Question 4 (d)

The question is 'Evaluate' this statement considering the arguments for and against and reach a justified conclusion – there must be some consideration of the arguments (appraise the arguments to gain the higher grades). Many candidates gave excellent answers giving reasons for and against but not analysing or evaluating them. Formulas and writing frames restricted the flow of the arguments restricting candidates' progression to the higher levels. If the candidate wrote 'this is a strong argument' but did not back it up with evidence, then it was a weaker answer. The quality of the d question answers is improving with most candidates relating their answer to the statement given.

Candidates were assessed on Section Four: Matters of life and Death.

Bullet point 4.7 ‘: Sikh teachings about the nature and use of euthanasia, including reference to Lord Indarjit Singh’s speech in the House of Lords on 12 December 2014 in the Lords’ Debate on Assisted Dying; non-religious (including atheist and Humanist) arguments surrounding its use,’

The question asked was:

“Euthanasia is wrong.”

Evaluate this statement considering arguments for and against.

In response you should:

- refer to Sikh teachings.
- refer to a non-religious points of view
- reach a justified conclusion

Some good Sikh knowledge of euthanasia and evaluation of why it is wrong. Sikh teachings used were about God’s hukam, how it may affect the cycle of rebirth and achieving mukti etc. There is still a need to continue to write logical chains of reasoning for and against the statement. In this question a non-religious point of view should have been used to get higher than a level 2.

Summary

Based on their performance on this paper, candidates are offered the following advice:

- When answering the (a) questions use three full sentences.
- The source of wisdom offered to support answers in question (c) must be relevant to the question and support the reason given.
- The (d) questions ask for evaluation, after considering the evidence. The higher grades are achieved if the evidence/reasons given is 'considered' or appraised for its value as an argument as part of deciding the evaluation.
- On (d) questions, the bullet points indicate the viewpoints that can be awarded in the answer.
- Understand all key words on specification.