



GCSE

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

8062/17: Paper 1 Sikhism
Report on the Examination

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General comments

It is the case that key religious language proved a barrier to some students where it was specifically tested, or where the question relied on it (e.g. 1.3, 1.4). The key language of the Specification must be the starting point for student learning, as any question relies on it. In the case of 1.3 and 1.4, the key term/phrase was also explained – yet some students still misunderstood, or were unable to provide any answer showing understanding.

Evaluation questions were answered by many students in a more descriptive than evaluative way. This shows a need for centres to help students understand more clearly the difference between AO1 and AO2, and how they can avoid falling into the trap of just writing everything they know about a topic.

Question-based comments

1.1

91% of students chose the correct answer. As a question relying on key religious language, it is important students know the key terms found within the Specification.

1.2

Most students found this very straightforward, with 94% of students gaining one or full marks. Sikhism is a religion founded on equality, hence the scope for relevant answers was huge. Many students recited similar teachings of Guru Nanak and/or Guru Gobind Singh – ‘There is no Muslim, there is no Hindu’, ‘Without women, there are no others’, ‘All made from the same clay’, etc. It was not necessary to provide a full and accurate quotation; where an answer gave a generalised version of a teaching, then it was accepted as a teaching, eg ‘God made everyone equal’.

1.3

Many students found this question very difficult with only 37% of students gaining full marks. This was because they simply did not recognise/understand the concept of ‘the five stages of liberation’ (Five Khandas). Consequently, answers about the Five Ks, and the Five Vices were not given credit. Answers included ones which wrote about the five stages in general – so belief in these meant that Sikhs would work harder to achieve them, for example. They also included ones specific to the Khandas themselves, eg believing in the First Khand (righteous action) makes Sikhs do sewa. Both forms gained credit. There is the scope to use a lot of religious language in this question, and the best answers did so fluently.

1.4

30% of students gained full marks on this question, with 65% gaining three or more marks. A number of students did not recognise what the Sangat is, and so struggled to get the higher marks. Usually these students were able to work out from the question it was about the religious community, so could answer in a quite general fashion about the Sangat, referring to sewa (langar) and worship – both of which are part of the role of the Sangat to oversee/lead. They tended to describe the Sangat, rather than focus on its role. These students had benefitted from reading the whole question and then using their intelligence to come to a response gaining limited credit.

This question requires reference to a religious source of authority, belief or teaching. Many candidates were unable to provide this. The common ones which were used included 'Join the Sat Sangat', 'The Sat Sangat is the school of the soul', and 'The Sangat is where God's name is recited'.

1.5

The bulk of answers fell within the 6-10 mark band for this question. The question gave huge breadth to what students could write. Many students did fall into the trap of simply describing God, eg by going through the Mool Mantar, rather than evaluating whether this meant Sikhs could actually understand God. Evaluation in many answers was often just an add-on, and not genuine or detailed.

A number of students showed their philosophical side by arguing about the nature of God as being transcendent and beyond any humans, contrasted with the immanent nature of God. These were often very well-written answers, particularly when using Sikh language about God from the Mool Mantar alongside as evidence for either transcendence or immanence.

It was to their credit that they had used knowledge from other areas of their study in exploring this question (eg from Theme C – Existence of God and Revelation - of Paper 2A/B). This holistic grasp of Religious Studies is certainly a characteristic of the most able students. Having said that, the best students show a holistic grasp of the religion they have studied, and this question allowed them to demonstrate that as the best responses often used evidence from the Mool Mantar, the Guru Granth Sahib, and from practices to show both sides of the argument.

Practices

2.1

74% of candidates chose the correct answer. This was a key term which many did not recognise so had to guess at. It is important to cover all key terms from the Specification, and to use them in as many places as possible in teaching to reinforce and support retention.

2.2

This was a very straightforward question, as most students recognised what was meant by an Akhand Path, and there are many reasons to have one. 83% of candidates gained full marks. Students who failed to attain full marks often had not recognised the term, or answered in regard to the process of an Akhand Path (ie saying what it was, not why it happens).

2.3

83% of students gained at least two marks for this question. Students often focused on the solitude and lack of distractions when at home, plus the ease of 'what and when you want'. It was much less usual than expected to see responses which included a reference to the daily requirement to pray on awaking and before first light. Even though the answers tended to be more about practicalities than about duty, credit was still gained up to full marks.

2.4

24% of students gained full marks, with 74% gaining three or more. The biggest struggle students faced with the 2.4 question each year is usually to provide a relevant source of authority, belief or teaching.

Some students described general activities from an act of worship, gaining some credit; some described activities which are not religious, eg sending gifts to the family, or are not actually activities, eg pointing the feet away from the Guru Granth Sahib – these gained no credit.

2.5

This was slightly better answered than 1.5, with the most common marks being in the 7-10 band. This question was about what shows the most commitment. Many students did evaluate whether a name shows the most commitment, but then gave lots of information about alternative forms of commitment (AO1 skill), without evaluating that side of the argument (AO2 skill).

Many students struggled to give much to defend the statement, whereas the better answers showed how the name was a label for so much more (Khalsa, duties, role model etc), and hence it was crucially important in showing commitment.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.