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GCSE

**RELIGIOUS STUDIES A**

Paper 1 Sikhism

Report on the Examination

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8062

June 2018

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Version: 1.0

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## General comments

This was the first year of the examinations for the new specification.

The fifth question of each set of five parts accounted for 50% of the total mark. A small number of students found they ran out or were short of time and so their attempt at the final question was affected.

It was clear that students are confident to use a wide range of religious beliefs and teachings in their responses. The strongest responses routinely used and applied a wide range; weaker responses were able to use some teachings. References to religious beliefs and teachings were usually clearly relevant and specific, and often in the form of good quotations.

The examination questions required good understanding of key terms, as well as knowledge of diversity within the religion. It is helpful for students to learn key terms since not only do they then understand fully the questions but they can use them to assist them in their responses.

It was very pleasing to see such good subject knowledge demonstrated by many students throughout their paper.

The strongest responses demonstrated a more holistic understanding of the religion, as questions were answered from different elements of the specification effectively. This was especially true of the 12 mark essay questions, where the most successful answers were not limited to a narrow 'Yes/No' response, but made good use of wider analysis.

## Sikhism: Beliefs

### Question 01.1

Students found this to be a very straightforward start to the paper, with the vast majority making a correct choice.

### Question 01.2

Few students struggled with this. A small number of responses mistakenly put the Guru Granth Sahib, failing to spot 'human' in the question. There were some interesting spellings of the names of Gurus, but this did not prevent marks being awarded as long as it was obvious which Guru was meant. The most common response was 'Guru Nanak ... Guru Gobind Singh'.

### Question 01.3

This question focused on how Sikh beliefs influence Sikh thought, word, deed or attitude. This could be answered about a specific virtue, or about virtues in general. More common was an answer which showed how two different virtues affected daily life. Nearly four fifths of responses gained two or more marks.

### Question 01.4

Potential responses to this question covered a vast range, making it very straightforward for most responses to be awarded marks. Over four fifths of responses gained three or more marks.

Students also found it straightforward to provide references to sacred writings or other sources of Sikh belief and teaching, often providing relevant quotations rather than just referring to concepts or beliefs.

### **Question 01.5**

This 12 mark question was well-received and well-answered. Many responses were awarded six or more marks. They included many relevant teachings, particularly for the view in favour of the statement. They referred to the work of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh most commonly, and the concept and practice of the langar especially. Interestingly, few responses referred to Guru Amar Das and his stipulation of langar before discussions, and his setting up of Sikh mission schools and colleges some headed by women – both of which would have strengthened frequent arguments relating to the langar, and to gender equality. The most common alternate view was to say that teachings about God were more important – however these arguments tended to be much weaker. The strongest responses showed how equality underpinned much of Sikhism, that equality came from God in the first place, and that equality was more important as a practice than a teaching. Many students wrote at length, with flair and enthusiasm in their response. This essay was slightly better answered than 02.5.

## **Sikhism: Practices**

### **Question 02.1**

Students had no problems with this question.

### **Question 02.2**

This question had the highest number of students providing no response (4%), which perhaps reflected an issue with a key term. The vast majority of responses achieved one or full marks. The most common answers were about births/deaths of Gurus, particularly Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, but there was also a diversity to responses which meant that personal and community reasons were given as well as reasons specific to events directly celebrated.

### **Question 02.3**

Students appeared to find this a very straightforward question. It was usually answered by discussing how membership as a whole affected a person's life, or how an element of membership did. A very small number of responses discussed negative impacts as a part or the whole of their answer. Few responses actually put value judgements on the impact, rather saying what difference membership made and developing that idea. This did not affect marks awarded.

### **Question 02.4**

This was generally well-answered, with many responses gaining three or more marks. However some appeared to find it more challenging to provide a reference to sacred writing or another source of Sikh belief or teaching and this meant that just over a third of responses received full marks (compared to half of responses to question 01.4).

**Question 02.5**

Many students included points, content and quotations from their answer to 01.5 and applied this to first part of their response. This was often the better half of their answer as some appeared to be struggling for time. It was noticeable that answers were shorter for this essay. Many students were able to explain the types of sewa. The strongest responses were able to demonstrate how the langar could involve all types of sewa. They often made comparisons between those being served through the langar, and those served through other forms of sewa to show which was more important. Weaker responses tended to be limited to the importance of the langar and how it is sewa. This was a question which would have benefitted from the use of examples, eg Sewa International's work.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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