



GCSE
Religious Studies A

8062/17 Paper 1 Sikhism

Report on the Examination

8062
June 2024

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Comments

Students performed well on the paper this year, with performance at least maintained from 2023.

Students recognised the key terms of most of the questions, making their responses relevant in the main. Those which caused students issues were the terms Sangat and Akhand Path which meant that their answers were at times significantly affected. The best answers use the widest range of key terms quite freely and go beyond those found in the specification in their responses. Where centres ensure students systematically learn all the key terms from the specification, their students have opportunities for greater success.

Some centres are training students to answer questions using being gurmukh, going to the gurdwara, and climbing the Khands. It is important that centres also show students how to have flexibility of thought to be able to apply these key Sikh ideas to answer a full range of questions.

In the .4 (5-mark) questions there is a requirement for two points made and explained, with a fifth mark awarded for naming the actual source, eg Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak, etc. In Sikhism, the Guru Granth Sahib is a very common source of authority, and widely used by almost every student. Some students also refer to different Gurus by name, and to the Adi Granth and Mool Mantar. Whilst many students do freely use religious teachings, some students fail to name the source, thus capping their response at 4 marks.

Performance in the essays was slightly better than in 2023 and it continues to be the case that students often use set formulae for their answers, e.g DREAMER, FARM, and so on. These help in the structuring of responses, and in making sure a student has met all the requirements of the task.

The best answers included a free and insightful evaluation, and was present throughout the response. The use of an opening paragraph telling the examiner what they are about to do is really just lost time; students should be encouraged to go straight into making the points which will secure marks for them.

1.1

This question, which was testing knowledge of the barriers to mukti, was found to be a straightforward question by most students.

1.2

A very wide range of responses were credited on this question. Students could gain credit by naming different forms of sewa, by giving different examples of sewa, and without having to keep to clearly stated religious examples. As a result most students gained full marks. A very small number of students did misread the question and provided reasons for sewa which could gain no marks.

1.3

The key requirement of this question is to demonstrate the potential influences of a belief in the equality of women with men– what it is that that belief makes a person say/do/think/further believe. Students

had lots to write about in answering this question and were able to give many ways in which the belief in equality of men and women acts as an influence. Almost 50% of students gained full marks on the question. Some students did only give the belief, often with valid teachings and good explanation, but did not then say how that affects Sikhs. These responses were capped at two marks from the four available. Some students gave general ideas about equality without reference to men/women; since these could usually be applied to the question, they were credited, but at the ‘simple explanation’ level. Some students suggested it made Sikhs gurmukh, or go to the gurdwara; however they did not say how the belief led to either, and the explanation did not answer the question.

1.4

This question was focused on the elimination of pride or ego (haumai), and most students did address the idea of elimination. The best answers either focused on why elimination was necessary, on what elimination led to, or how elimination could be achieved. They used teachings to support at least one of their two points well, naming the source of authority, as is required for the fifth mark. Most students could write something relevant about haumai, so that around three quarters of responses gained three or more marks. Where students just wrote about haumai, without exploring its elimination, they could not get full marks, and were credited at ‘simple explanation’ level. As with 1.3, some students diverged from the question; they often started by repeating the question (‘Sikhs have to eliminate haumai...’), but then went on to explain how important being gurmukh was, and the importance of the Khands. This meant that they did not actually answer the question set.

1.5

About a fifth of responses to this question concerning the roles of the Sangat gained Level 4 marks (10-12); just under 50% gained more than half the available marks for the question. It would appear that centres vary in their teaching of this element of the specification. Students varyingly understood the Sangat to be a committee, the whole community, those who attend the gurdwara, the sewadars, and individuals. The best responses showed how all roles were supportive of religious beliefs, contrasting their spiritual or non-spiritual nature. They used a rich range of teachings to support their arguments and wrote fluidly and coherently. They could explain in good detail the arguments they created and illustrate with examples. Many students did struggle with the question though, and for many reasons which include – not focusing on ‘religious beliefs’ so that the answer was just a comparison of different roles; writing as if the Sangat were a single individual, and so showing how any of their actions benefitted that person; contrasting ‘help others’ with ‘help oneself’; writing about joining the Sangat or not; writing about the benefits of being in the Sangat. As with 1.3 and 1.4, some students tried to shoe-horn the Khands and mukti into the question – both can be valid, as supporting spiritual beliefs helps others (and self) to traverse the Khands; however, few answers actually made this point, rather they quickly left the idea of the Sangat helping the community to focus entirely on an individual’s spiritual journey, for which credit was very limited.

2.1

The majority of students answered this question on a definition of the palki correctly, though fewer than 1.5.

2.2

This question, concerning reasons why Sikh families hold religious ceremonies for babies. Some students wrongly referenced the Khalsa initiation. Some answered in relation to what happened in a ceremony, rather than why it takes place. A small number gave clearly Christian baptism responses. None of these wrong answers gained any marks.

2.3

Whilst around two fifths gained full marks, it was disappointing to see that many students had no idea what an Akhand Path is. Some wrote about physical foot paths and spiritual paths, gaining no marks. Many students were able to pick up some marks – either for simple explanations, or for just one role – but not full marks.

2.4

Approximately 70% of responses gained three or more marks for this question. Most students could give two different ways in which Sikhs pray in the home, and many could give detailed explanations, so gained four marks. The use of teachings in answers was very common, though the naming of a source of authority less so, preventing many very good answers from gaining full marks. It was the case that a small number of students confused Islam with Sikhism in this response, mentioning bowing and prostration.

2.5

This question was essentially about whether the origins of a festival are more important than the actual celebration of it. Many students wrote about the origins of festivals, bringing in many events of the past, not all of which were Vaisakhi ones, for example stories of different Gurus which need to be remembered. They were still given credit for this unless they stated that they were writing about a different festival. This did happen in some responses where students compared and contrasted the importance of Divali and Vaisakhi, or gurburbs and Vaisakhi, leaving them with a one-sided response to the actual question. A small number interpreted ‘events of the past’ to be events in an individual’s past, and whilst this was not the intent of the question, they still gained some limited credit.

It was surprising to see that whilst the Khalsa’s origins are intertwined with the origins of Vaisakhi, it was not the case that every student wrote about the Khalsa. A number wrote only about the Harvest origins of Vaisakhi, and this often meant their answer was more limited. The best answers did explore the idea of ‘most important’ which was crucial to reach the top levels of marks. They gave good insight into the value of origins versus that of celebrations, and usually pointed out that without the origins, there is no festival. It was also common to see the case made for looking to the future rather than spending all the time on the past. Their responses were often eloquent and showed very good knowledge, understanding and evaluation.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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