



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**GCSE (NEW)
RELIGIOUS STUDIES – UNIT 1:
CHRISTIANITY AND SIKHISM**

SUMMER 2019

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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UNIT 1: CHRISTIANITY AND SIKHISM

General Comments

The paper was accessible to candidates. There was clear differentiation of outcomes, where some candidates reached the higher bands and many other candidates provided partial or brief answers.

- Q.1** There were some examples of very good scripts showing thorough knowledge and understanding of religious belief and of candidates evaluating in a mature and intelligent way with the influence of religious belief on practice. However, answers especially in the extended writing parts of the question, were lacking in detail. Within the explain question, many candidates described rather than explained. Knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and concepts were generally superficial and this in turn had a detrimental effect on the standard of the evaluation answers. Furthermore, some candidates lost marks, not due to lack of knowledge, by merely not answering the set question. It was evident that the candidates were prepared for the SPaG element in question 1(d).
- Q.2** The questions which required extended writing were lacking in detail by many candidates. As a result, some of the candidates' answers were generally superficial and did not reach the higher bands. There were some blank spaces on some papers, especially on questions 'c' and 'd', which require more sophisticated skills in extended writing. Furthermore, there were some candidates who did not follow the rubric of the evaluation questions. There were some examples of very good scripts, demonstrating thorough knowledge and understanding of religious belief and content, through evaluation.
- Q.3** Candidates tackled the abortion and euthanasia questions better than the define and describe questions. It was clear they felt comfortable with the two topics in the explain and evaluations questions. There were many candidates who failed to attempt question 'b'. However, there were some examples of very good scripts showing thorough knowledge and understanding of issues surrounding life and death. Many candidates clearly understood the requirements of the Life and Death module, including Humanism or an Atheistic standpoint within their ethical evaluation answer. Although, there were some candidates writing an explain answer for a describe question, which affected their marks.
- Q.4** There were some blank spaces for questions which may indicate a lack of time at the end of the paper. Most candidates addressed questions 'a' – 'c' but did not attempt the evaluative question 'd'.

Comments on individual questions/sections

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices - Christianity

- Q.1 (a)** Most candidates were able to explain what 'Trinity' meant although some did not gain the full marks available because they referred briefly to the named parts of the Trinity but gave no reference to God. Other candidates referred to one part of the Trinity and added other Christian ideas that were not connected to the Trinity. Stronger candidates referred to the 3 main parts of the Trinity, that it was the 3 main parts of God. There were some candidates who did not know about the idea of the Trinity, referring to it as a Christian teaching or the belief in the afterlife.
- (b)** Most candidates understood the concept of messiah. Strong candidates provided detailed descriptions of key beliefs about the Messiah, including examples about the virgin birth, the idea of being the anointed one and the death and resurrection, and ridding the world of sins. However, some candidates failed to attempt the question entirely. Weak candidates failed to explain what the Messiah was, providing generic Christian statements.
- (c)** Candidates demonstrated thorough revision in this area. However, they failed to understand that this was an explain question rather than a describe question, and therefore, simply retold the creation story, instead of explaining the beliefs about the creation of the world and human beings. Strong candidates referred to the varieties of interpretations of the creation stories from Literalist to Liberals. Some referred to the importance of humans within the creation story, such as having a special relationship with God and explaining key ideas like dominion and stewardship. However, many candidates referred to the fall of humans in Genesis 3, which was not credited. They could be awarded for referring to the idea that they were expected not to eat from the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil but were not awarded for the temptation of the Devil and fall of Humanity as this is beyond the scope of the question.
- (d)** Candidates achieved outcomes within each band. Good answers provided clear reasons why they should work for a better world. They gave references to stewardship and dominion, highlighting the religious expectation to respect God's creation, referring to Genesis. Reference to reward in heaven and how doing good work links to the idea of 'love your neighbour' was common. Furthermore, they provided alternatives that could be seen as more important, for example prayer, Eucharist and following God's commands. Excellent candidates merged the two ideas together with analysis, highlighting that if you follow God's commands, you will work for a better place.

Many candidates simply wrote generic arguments about how to work for a better place, not whether it is the most important thing within Christianity. Some confused Sikh ideas with Christian belief, including ideas such as reincarnation, Gurmukh and Mukti.

Many candidates not only included relevant Christian argument but also digressed into Humanist, Atheist, and world religion (Sikhism) perspectives. Therefore, some candidates wasted time on non-credit worthy arguments. Some candidates did not attempt the question, missing out on the SPaG marks available.

SPaG

This question, 1(d), is the paper where spelling, punctuation and grammar are specifically assessed yet a concerning number of candidates made no attempt to answer this question. Candidates who attempted the question clearly understood that they would be awarded more marks for SPaG. There were clear self-corrections for accuracy of SPaG, enabling the candidate to achieve full marks. However, there were some common errors:

- Capital letters (specifically to start sentences) and full stops should be a minimum expectation for the vast majority.
- Examiners are bound to pick up on mis-spellings of key subject words such as religion / religious, believe/belief /believer, Christian / Christianity, knowing the difference between prey and pray (a very common error).
- Overly-long sentences that lose meaning.
- Candidates should be encouraged to give 1(d) a quick check before moving on.

A good SPaG score can rescue a mediocre answer.

We all need to be sure that we know how the new Specification works and where it is different from the previous ones.

PART A – Core Beliefs, Teachings and Practices – Sikhism

- Q.2 (a)** Most candidates were able to explain what ‘langar’ means. However, some candidates were confused with the concept itself. Many referred to the Langar as a place of worship or clothes that Sikhs wear. Some candidates simply acquired one mark by stating the Langar is a kitchen, with no further elaboration. Good candidates were able to refer to the meal served in the gurdwara, that illustrates equality. Some referred to the Langar as the kitchen within the gurdwara where langar is made and served, illustrating equality.
- (b)** Most candidates answered this question. However, there were a few who did not attempt the question or failed to understand what the word sewa means. Stronger candidates referred to the idea that Sewa is an act of service, making people more spiritual – or God centred (Gurmukh), and how the practice of sewa treats everyone equally. Excellent candidates referred to the 3 different types of Sewa, following Guru Nanak’s teachings, the service it provides to the community, the importance of the Langar.
- (c)** A few candidates did not attempt this question. Weak candidates gave generic statements or confused the definition of Kaur and Singh. Many candidates briefly stated that it linked to equality, without development. Stronger candidates linked the names to the Khalsa, how they are connected to the Panth (Sikh community), and how the names are given in Amrit Samskar or the naming ceremony. Some elaborated on the idea of expectations now they have taken on the name: to adhere to the 5k’s and the vows and to be a Gurmukh. Some referred to the origin of the names during the first Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh. Others expressed the meaning behind the name itself, the role it implies, and breaking down the barriers of inequality.
- (d)** There were large amounts of candidates who did not even attempt the question.

Weak candidates simply gave mere descriptions of the Guru Granth Sahib (GGS). Some stated what the GGS is and then wrote an argument about the Christian Bible instead. Other candidates provided generic statements about Sikhism. Many candidates who attempted the question gave developed arguments about Atheists and Christian views, which were not credited. Good candidates highlighted why the GGS could be seen as being worshipped, that it is seen as the 11th Guru and it is a guide to the Sikh community. Good candidates referred to the way in which it is treated and how that could be deemed as worship. They gave alternative viewpoints: that Waheguru must be worshipped not the GGS, highlighting the importance of the GGS and how it is treated like a human Guru, but not that it should be worshipped.

PART B – Religious Responses to Philosophical Themes

- Q.3 (a)** Many candidates failed to attempt the question itself. Weak candidates provided examples about where the soul would go after a person died, without actually defining soul. Good candidates referred to the soul as a spiritual aspect of themselves, their personality, or a spark of God/Waheguru. Then they would provide an example of how it would reach the afterlife.
- (b)** Many candidates failed to attempt this question. Some weak candidates associated the idea of global citizenship as travelling around the world and referring to helping others or social justices. Other candidates wrote about why global citizenship is important, (writing an explain question instead of a describe) failing to actually answer the question about how they support global citizenship. Strong candidates referred to equal rights, how churches and gurdwaras help the local community, supporting their specific needs. Some provided examples of the Langar where everyone, even the poor, are allowed to have free meals. Many who attempted the question referred to helping the environment, reducing pollution, sustainable development and promoting recycling projects.
- (c)** Most candidates attempted this question. Weaker candidates provided generic reasons for not having abortions, with no religious content. Other weaker candidates would briefly state whether the religion disagreed or agreed with the statement without any elaboration as to why. Stronger candidates provided key technical language (Quality of Life and Sanctity of Life) illustrating the versatility within religion. Furthermore, they would refer to scripture to back up the Christian or Sikh viewpoint.
- (d)** Many candidates attempted this question more than the other 'd' questions. It was clear that candidates understood what was required in this question. Most candidates provided an explanation of religious and non-religious beliefs. Strong candidates provided clear balanced arguments, including religious beliefs, teachings, examples and key ideas like Sanctity of Life and Quality of Life. However, many candidates provided under-developed and generic responses, lacking in religious knowledge and beliefs. Some weaker candidates provided a very brief argument or just provided a description of Euthanasia.
- Q.4 (a)** Many candidates did not attempt the question. Weak candidates attempted the question but provided incorrect details about pacifism.

For example, some believed pacifism is a way to get to heaven or the origins of good and evil. Also, some misunderstood the word pacifism and described the idea about to how to pacify. Good candidates provided a clear definition about pacifism, including clear examples to support the idea.

- (b) Most candidates attempted this question. Weaker candidates defined forgiveness and did not provide an example, within the religion. Some candidates provided a generic example of forgiveness in action. Many candidates referred to God as the example of forgiveness, but only provided a brief example. Stronger candidates provided a clear example, using advanced technical language. For example, Jesus dying on the cross, sanctifying those who have sinned.
- (c) Most candidates attempted this question. Stronger Candidates referred to key scripture 'God is the spark within us', 'thou shalt not kill', 'an eye for an eye' that influenced ideas on this subject and included advanced religious vocabulary (Karma, Gurmukh, Sanctity of life and reform) to develop the point. Weaker candidates provided very generic answers without providing specific religious attitudes.
- (d) Many candidates failed to attempt this question, maybe due to it being the last question of the paper. Weak candidates either provided generic statements or misinterpreted the word 'reform', believing it to mean reincarnation. Good candidates provided a balanced argument between ideas of retribution, including reference to Capital Punishment and 'an eye for an eye' and juxtaposed this with the reforming nature, shown through Jesus' love, compassion and forgiveness. Many referred to Sikh views of the need to change and be reformed to gain good karma, to enable them to be a Gurmukh (God centred). Very few candidates reached Band 4 due to their lack of argument, sources of wisdom, ethical understanding and religious language.

Summary of key points

Q.1

- Understand the difference between describe and explain questions.
- Be aware that Christianity is the only religion credited in this section.
- Focus specifically on what the question is asking.
- Be aware of the banding requirements.
- Take more time over the 1d question due to SPaG.

Q.2

- Revise key words.
- Focus specifically on what the question is asking.
- Make sure that within the 2d question, candidates only refer to the religion of focus (Sikhism). Do not refer to other religions not stated or Humanism or Atheism.
- Try to add more evaluative terminology within the 'd' question, making the answers flow like an argument instead of a describe question.

Q.3

- Focus specifically on what the question is asking.
- Understand the different requirements of a 'Describe' and 'Explain' question.
- Cover all of the specification.

Q.4

- Learn all aspect of the specification.
- Avoid generic points.
- Focus specifically on what the question is asking.
- Try to attempt all of the 'Evaluation' ('d') questions first, to enable candidates to reach the higher marks.



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