

Examiners' Report Summer 2007

GCE O Level

GCE O Level Religious Studies (Sikhism) (7561)

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O Level Religious Studies (Sikhism) (7561) Report

Introduction

This is the penultimate series for this specification. The structure of the examination did not differ from previous years.

Candidates responded thoughtfully to the questions and showed a strong spiritual awareness in the way they treated the issues under review. Greater understanding of questions was evident

Section A: Sikh Beliefs and Teaching

Question 1 was generally answered well in all its parts. The quotation in part (c) was understood and sensible views were expressed in response to it.

Question 2 showed candidates lacked awareness required of the events in part (a). Part (b) was answered well, although in many cases explanation of the teachings lacked sufficient clarity to earn the full three marks. In part (c), answers to the "what" part of this question usually talked about the family of God and earned some credit. However responses to the "why" part of this question were expressed in general terms rather than being related to specific events taking place in the world today, especially as Guru Nanak Devji's words appear to be particularly pertinent to the present world situation.

Question 3 was attempted by only a few candidates. Answers to part (a) and part (b) were generally poor. The best responses were to part (c).

Question 4 was another question which was answered by a minority of candidates. In part (b) very few responses mentioned the fortress in Amritsar. Answers to part (c) gained more marks, but the question did not require the story of the trouble, but a small minority understood the quotation and answered well.

Question 5 was also chosen only by a minority of candidates. Part (a) presented no problems, but answers to part (b) were limited. Very few of the examples suggested in the mark scheme were provided as responses. There were again some sensible part (c) discussions, although no candidates highlighted the points indicated in the mark scheme.

Question 6 was popular as anticipated and responses revealed a fairly extensive familiarity with the relevant material. In particular candidates gained marks in part (a) but the best candidates scored well in part (b) too. The discussions in part (c) generally took the view that Guru Gobind Singh Ji did not change the teachings of Guru Nanak Devji, pointing out that any perceived difference was generally a question of emphasis rather than disagreement.

Section B: Sikh Way of Life and Ethics

Question 7 was another popular question. Some accounts of the gurdwara concentrated mainly, and in some cases too much, on the way a Sikh child's name is chosen. The description and discussion of the naming of the child was really more appropriate in response to part (b). The significance of Karah Parshad was in general overlooked. Answers to part (c) were better and there were a number of useful discussions, showing understanding of the changed position of women in Sikh society.

In Question 8 responses to part (a) referred either to the flags or the games, both attractive and colourful aspects of this festival. Similarly, only the institution of the festival by Guru Gobind Singh was mentioned in answers to part (b). The vast majority of candidates ignored the meaning of the name "Hola Mohalla" and limited its benefits to physical health and self-defence. No candidates made the important comparison with the Hindu festival of Holi. Part (c) produced some reasonable discussions concerning the historical importance of festivals and candidates were able to gain a few marks in this part.

In Question 9, part (a), when discussing the ways, apart from worship, in which a gurdwara may be useful, no responses mentioned that it was "a forum for discussion of problems" nor that it provided lodgings for pilgrims. Often the important phrase "apart from worship" was not addressed. The responses to part (c) did not pick up the word "obligation". It was expected that candidates would discuss why public prayers, gurdwara attendance and eating together are necessary ie because they signify brotherhood and community.

Question 10, part (a) produced some very good answers, with high marks scored. Some candidates offered sympathy to idlers and beggars, whereas Sikh teaching roundly condemns such people and extols the work ethic.

The ways in which Sikhs may put leisure time to good use was mainly answered in part (b) by reference to meditation, a few candidates mentioned sports as well, but hardly any responses suggested cultural activities. In part (c), responses did not emphasise religious reasons as expected.

Question 11 was attempted by very few candidates.

In Question 12, part (a), some different rules from those in the Mark Scheme were suggested, including fighting only if the enemy was of equal strength. Reference to the looting and killing of the innocent was also popular - and valid. Many answers to part (b) were too general in their approach to gain high marks. More specifics were required in the response to gain higher marks here. Sensible stances, such as the observation that all worship the same god, were adopted in answers to part (c). Centres and candidates should remember that comments required development in order to achieve high marks. Very few candidates took the opposite point of view ie that diverse approaches may create friction.

General Comments

Centres and candidates should be aware that there were a number of instances where candidates did not read the question carefully enough.

For example in Question 4 candidates were asked about the “character” of Guru Hargobindji in light of the story of his escape from Gwalior. A number of candidates chose to tell the story, which was not required.

In Question 9 candidates were required to explain how gurdwaras could be useful in ways “apart from worship”. Consequently where aspects of worship appeared no marks could be awarded. In Question 10, part (c), the word “religious” was given in bold type to emphasise the importance of this word in responding to this question. This term was not always addressed in the responses. Non-religious reasons could not gain any marks.

As in 2006 there is improvement in candidate responses to the part (c) evaluation questions. There is a growing confidence apparent in candidate responses of recognising issues and airing opinions on various topics. Centres and candidates should remember that they do not necessarily need to take one side or another, both arguments can be cited, even if one finally comes down on one side or the other.

Statistics

Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	60	51	42	37	28

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