



GCSE RELIGIOUS STUDIES A 8062/17

Paper 1 Sikhism

Mark scheme

June 2025

Version: 1.0 Final



Mark schemes are prepared by the Lead Assessment Writer and considered, together with the relevant questions, by a panel of subject teachers. This mark scheme includes any amendments made at the standardisation events which all associates participate in and is the scheme which was used by them in this examination. The standardisation process ensures that the mark scheme covers the students' responses to questions and that every associate understands and applies it in the same correct way. As preparation for standardisation each associate analyses a number of students' scripts. Alternative answers not already covered by the mark scheme are discussed and legislated for. If, after the standardisation process, associates encounter unusual answers which have not been raised they are required to refer these to the Lead Examiner.

It must be stressed that a mark scheme is a working document, in many cases further developed and expanded on the basis of students' reactions to a particular paper. Assumptions about future mark schemes on the basis of one year's document should be avoided; whilst the guiding principles of assessment remain constant, details will change, depending on the content of a particular examination paper.

No student should be disadvantaged on the basis of their gender identity and/or how they refer to the gender identity of others in their exam responses.

A consistent use of 'they/them' as a singular and pronouns beyond 'she/her' or 'he/him' will be credited in exam responses in line with existing mark scheme criteria.

Further copies of this mark scheme are available from aqa.org.uk

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Mark Schemes for GCSE Religious Studies

This paper requires expert markers who have wide knowledge and understanding of the particular subject content of the Specification. With the exception of the multiple-choice question, many of the questions asked have many different credible answers and students are able to bring to their answers their own knowledge, understanding and background. They will offer details, arguments and evidence which the examiner, with the help of the mark scheme, will need to judge as credible or not. It is therefore important that the examiner has a good understanding of the principles and spirit of the mark scheme in order to be fair and consistent when marking students' answers. The Content included is designed to be as helpful as possible but in many cases is not exhaustive. So Content sections are introduced by the sentence:

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

this is to remind examiners that there may well be additional correct answers which, with their expertise, they will be able to allow. With all questions if an examiner has any doubt about answers being creditworthy they should consult their team leader.

Structure

The mark scheme for each question shows:

- the question; Each question is printed in full before its target and mark scheme. It is always important that examiners remind themselves of the exact question being asked. In particular, they will need to do this in instances where the answer appears to be 'straying' from the question set or perhaps offers a valid alternative not included in the mark scheme
- target; The target provides the specific assessment objective which the question is testing. It reminds examiners of the skills the question is designed to test, eg knowledge and understanding, evaluation
- the total marks available for the question and if Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar is assessed
- the typical answer(s) or content which are expected
- generic instructions related to the question target of how to award marks (ie levels of response grid).

Themes papers guidance (Specification A and Short Course)

In questions where students may choose religions from which to illustrate their answer, there may be some general Content, ie credible comments which students will make which could be applied to any religion or perhaps to a secular viewpoint as well. Where these are appropriate they are usually given first. The mark scheme will also include, under separate headings, Content sections for each of the six religions allowed within the Specifications.

General Guidance

.../. means that these are acceptable alternative answers in the mark scheme, eg Guru Har Krishan / Guru Tegh Bahadur / Guru Gobind Singh.

Answers may include specialist terms, in Hebrew or Arabic for example. If this is the case, the mark scheme will usually indicate this by providing in brackets the English as well, eg 'Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement)'. In such questions, answers will be credited whether provided in the original language or in English.

Some mark schemes use bullet points to separate content. Each bullet point refers to a different possible 'belief' or 'teaching' or 'way', depending on the question. Obliques (.../.) used within the bullet point indicate different ways in which the point may be expressed and points which may be made to give the further detail or development needed for the second mark.

Where a student has crossed out a complete answer, it should be marked if it remains legible, unless an alternative is provided in which case only the alternative should be marked. When part of an answer is crossed out, then only what remains should be considered.

In questions where credit can be given to the development of a point, those developments can take the form of:

- example or evidence
- reference to different views
- detailed information.

1-mark multiple-choice questions

Such questions have four alternatives and the one correct answer will be given together with the correct letter, eg 'Answer: D Trinity'.

2-mark short-answer questions

The principle here is provided in the mark scheme: 'One mark for each of two correct points.' Students may give **more than** the two answers required by the question. In such instances:

- **award for the first two answers only, wherever they appear**
- if a student gives more than one answer on the first line and another answer/other answers on the second line, the 'first two answers' will be the **first two** on the first line and **only these two** should be considered for marks. Other answers must be ignored
- if on the first line the first two answers given are correct, award two marks, regardless of what is written elsewhere in the answer
- if the first two answers can only be awarded one mark yet there is a third answer that is correct, this correct third answer must be ignored and no mark given for it
- however, if the student gives some **elaboration after the first answer**, which is clearly developing their first answer, (which they are not required to do), do not consider this elaboration to be their second answer (unless the elaboration happens to contain a second correct answer to the question asked), regardless of whether there are other answers provided. In this case, the second answer also, if correct, may be credited for the second mark.

4 and 5-mark answer questions

Examiners should take care to note the target of the question. Clear information is provided for these types of question on how to award marking points. Examiners should carefully read the additional instructions provided for each type of question (eg for influence questions the final sentence in the general guidance box reminds the examiner that the second mark (detailed explanation) awarded in each case must show clear 'influence').

12-mark answer questions

The 12-mark questions test Evaluation skills (AO2). The mark scheme for these answers is based on Levels of Response marking in which the examiner is required to make a judgement on the completed answer taken as a whole.

Level of response marking instructions

In GCSE Religious Studies, differentiation is largely achieved by outcome on the basis of students' responses. To facilitate this, level of response marking has been devised for many questions.

Level of response marking requires a quite different approach from the examiner than the traditional 'point for point' marking. It is essential that the **whole response is read** and then **allocated to the level** it best fits.

If a student demonstrates knowledge, understanding and/or evaluation at a certain level, he/she must be credited at that level. **Length** of response or **literary ability** should **not be confused with genuine religious studies skills**. For example, a short answer which shows a high level of conceptual ability must be credited at that level. (If there is a band of marks allocated to a level, discrimination should be made with reference to the development of the answer.)

Examiners should **refer to the stated assessment target** objective of a question (see mark scheme) when there is any doubt as to the relevance of a student's response.

Level of response mark schemes include either **examples** of possible students' responses or **material** which they might use. These are intended as a **guide** only. It is anticipated that students will produce a wide range of responses to each question.

It is a feature of levels of response mark schemes that examiners are prepared to reward fully responses which are obviously valid and of high ability but do not conform exactly to the requirements of a particular level. If examiners have any doubt about what level to award a response, they should consult their team leader.

Level of response mark schemes are broken down into levels, each of which has a descriptor. The descriptor for the level shows the average performance for the level. There are marks in each level.

Before examiners apply the mark scheme to a student's answer they should read through the answer and annotate it (as instructed) to show the qualities that are being looked for. They should then apply the mark scheme. It may be necessary to read the answer more than once to be sure of assigning the correct Level.

Step 1 Determine a level

Start at the lowest level of the mark scheme and use it as a ladder to see whether the answer meets the descriptor for that level. The descriptor for the level indicates the different qualities that might be seen in the student's answer for that level. If it meets the lowest level then go to the next one and decide if it meets this level, and so on, until you have a match between the level descriptor and the answer. With practice and familiarity you will find that for better answers you will be able to quickly skip through the lower levels of the mark scheme.

When assigning a level you should look at the overall quality of the answer and not look to pick holes in small and specific parts of the answer where the student has not performed quite as well as the rest. If the answer covers different aspects of different levels of the mark scheme you should use a best fit approach for defining the level and then use the variability of the response to help decide the mark within the level, ie if the response is predominantly level 3 with a small amount of level 4 material it would be placed in level 3 but be awarded a mark near the top of the level because of the level 4 content.

Step 2 Determine a mark

Once you have assigned a level you need to decide on the mark. The descriptors on how to allocate marks can help with this. The exemplar materials used during standardisation will help.

You may well need to read back through the answer as you apply the mark scheme to clarify points and assure yourself that the level and the mark are appropriate.

Indicative content in the mark scheme is provided as a guide for examiners. It is not intended to be exhaustive and you must credit other valid points. Students do not have to cover all of the points mentioned in the Indicative content to reach the highest level of the mark scheme.

An answer which contains nothing of relevance to the question must be awarded no marks.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG)

Spelling, punctuation and grammar will be assessed in 12-mark questions.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) will be assessed against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
High performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. • Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	3
Intermediate performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. • Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	2
Threshold performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	1
No marks awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning. 	0

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Sikhism: Beliefs

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Which one of the following describes the Mool Mantra?**[1 mark]**

- A** It is a place of worship for Sikhs
- B** It is a stage of liberation
- C** It is the cycle of birth, death and rebirth
- D** It is the opening prayer in the Sikh holy book

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

Answer: **D** It is the opening prayer in the Sikh holy book

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Give two reasons why Sewa (service to others) is important in Sikhism.**[2 marks]**

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

One mark for each of two correct points.

If a student provides more than two responses, only the first two responses should be considered for marking.

Students may include two of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

It is a Sikh duty / it helps a person break free from the cycle of samsara / it can be a way to achieving mukti / it brings positive karma / it makes other people's lives better / it makes the world a better place / it is recommended by Gurus / it is a central plank of the faith / established at the start of the religion itself in order to challenge inequalities / it is a way to challenge or undo injustice today / it develops virtues such as compassion / it puts key beliefs such as justice, compassion and service into action / it brings a person closer to God / it is gurmukh practice / it is selfless, etc.

0 1 . 3**Explain two ways in which belief in God's relationship with creation influences Sikhs today.****[4 marks]****Target: AO1:2 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including influence on individuals, communities and societies****First way**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
 Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

Second way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 1 mark
 Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate influence – 2 marks

To be a 'detailed explanation' the 'influence' of the way must be included.**Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:**

- Sikhs believe that the universe exists only because God exists and wills it (hukam) / so they should be thankful in any and every way / as God is responsible for their existence.
- Since God's will creates the universe and sustains it / God must be separate to the universe / which reminds Sikhs that God is absolutely other than human / so must be worshipped and deferred to.
- Sikhs believe God is separate to the universe / even though within it / so believe their goal to be 'at the feet of God' not in this universe.
- Believing that God is part of nature / immanent / 'All the creation is His body' (Guru Granth Sahib 937) / Sikhs chant 'waheguru' / which is an expression of awe for God and His creation.
- 'Millions are the species taking birth. By diverse means does He spread Himself ... Countless creatures of various kinds Come out of Him and are absorbed back.' (GGS 275-6) / ie, God is part of His creation, so all of creation should be respected / so Sikhs will show their respect through conservation / protection of environment / environmentally friendly living, etc.
- Believing God created the world might make Sikhs try to look after it / 'You created the vast expanse of the Universe' (GGS 3) / eg by getting involved in environmental action groups, by being environmentally conscious.
- Believing God created the world might make Sikhs take a job protecting it / eg in conservation / or in a 'green' company.
- Believing God created the world might make Sikhs worship God more / as they are thankful for God's creation / in awe of it / they show more commitment and devotion to their faith / eg by becoming a member of the Khalsa.
- Believing God created humans and watches them might make a Sikh believe in the sanctity of life / 'The Lord is kind and compassionate to all beings and creatures; His protecting hand is over all' (GGS 6) / this influences them to make their actions are to help not harm / encourages sewa (service to others) of all kinds / eg service to other people in the creation / such as helping the homeless / eg service to the whole of humanity / such as volunteering to help in a disaster zone / eg service to nature / such as giving to animal charities.
- Believing humans are part of God's creation, they might take a job helping others / eg aid work as a doctor / or working in the caring services, etc.

0 1 . 4 Explain two teachings from the Sikh holy book about the equality of all.

Refer to sacred writings or another source of Sikh belief and teaching in your answer.

[5 marks]

Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority

First teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Second teaching

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate teaching – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Sikh belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Equality is a central theme of the GGS / which says that as all humans are made by God / then all are equal / 'We are made from one clay' (Guru Arjan).
- Equality between the genders is expressed in the GGS / it forbids ill treatment of women / encourages education for girls and women / welcomes women to be granthi and take part in worship.
- The GGS recognises no divisions within society / it says there are no castes / no difference in social status / hence Sikhism is open to any member of society.
- The GGS says that racial divides are wrong / because all are made from the same substance by God / 'God pervades all persons unseen; He is the same in the Hindu as well as in the Muslim.' (GGS 483) / so Sikhs should welcome not reject those of other cultures or nations.
- The GGS describes all as welcome at the langar / after Guru Nanak set it up / and instructed that all should eat at the langar / same food and same seating / other Gurus entrenched this belief / such as Guru Amar Das insisting any who met with him, ate at the langar / this all came from the interpretation of the GGS.
- The GGS says anyone can become gurmukh / Sikhism and its aims are not exclusive, and can be followed by anyone.
- The GGS says that God made everyone from the same clay / 'There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same. The One Light pervades all the many and various beings.' (GGS 96) / so Sikhs should never discriminate against others, etc.

Sources of authority might include:

'Women and men, all by God are created. All this is God's play. Says Nanak, all thy creation is good.' (GGS 304).

'Come, my dear sisters and spiritual companions; hug me close in your embrace. Let's join together, and tell stories of our All-powerful Husband Lord' (GGS 17).

‘Recognise the Lord’s light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter.’ (GGS 96).

‘The gurmukh looks upon all beings alike, like the wind, which blows equally upon the king and the poor beggar.’ (GGS 272).

‘All beings and creatures are His; He belongs to all.’ (GGS 425).

‘Accept all humans as your equals, and let them be your only sect.’ (GGS 28).

‘He Himself creates, O Nanak; He establishes the various creatures. How can anyone be called bad? There is One Lord and Master of all; He watches over all, and assigns all to their tasks. Some have less, and some have more; no one is allowed to leave empty.’ (GGS 1238).

‘From woman, man is born; Within woman, man is conceived; to woman he is engaged and married. Woman becomes his friend; through woman, the future generations come. When his woman dies, he seeks another woman; to woman he is bound. So why call her bad? From her, kings are born. From woman, woman is born; without woman, there would be no one at all.’ (GGS 473).

Accept all other sources of authority that correctly support the beliefs given.

0 1 . 5 'For Sikhs, it is not difficult to achieve mukti (liberation).'

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Sikh teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]
[SPaG 3 marks]

Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10–12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7–9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons/evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4–6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1–3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) will be assessed against the following criteria:

Level	Performance descriptor	Marks awarded
High performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with consistent accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with effective control of meaning overall. • Learners use a wide range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	3
Intermediate performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with considerable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with general control of meaning overall. • Learners use a good range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	2
Threshold performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners spell and punctuate with reasonable accuracy. • Learners use rules of grammar with some control of meaning and any errors do not significantly hinder meaning overall. • Learners use a limited range of specialist terms as appropriate. 	1
No marks awarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The learner writes nothing. • The learner's response does not relate to the question. • The learner's achievement in SPaG does not reach the threshold performance level, for example errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar severely hinder meaning. 	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- As long as Sikhs can achieve mukti / at any of the five levels / it is wrong to suggest achieving mukti is too difficult / as there is proof it is not / Sikh teaching is clear on how to achieve mukti and its stages / making it straightforward for the believer to know what they have to do.
- Whatever happens in the world, a person can show self-discipline / they choose to be affected or to react / so they can choose to keep to their spiritual path / so can achieve mukti regardless.
- Part of the path to mukti is to be strong in the face of temptation / so everyday life actually helps achieve mukti / as it gives a Sikh the chance to show devotion and commitment / and to help others (sewa) / which are actually the first three Khands (duty, knowledge, spiritual effort) / so are steps to mukti / everyday life helps to shape their journey.
- Most Sikhs are at one of the Khands (stages of liberation) / as the first Khand requires only to make the effort to lead a spiritual life / which means that just by showing commitment to the faith, they are achieving a stage of mukti / so clearly everyday life does not hold them back / and mukti is achievable.
- It all depends on the mindset of the person / if they are committed and determined / even if they succumb to the vices occasionally / Sikhism still allows them a way back through God's grace / so they can still achieve mukti.
- The statement implies that everyday life is the opposite of a spiritual life / many people of every religion are able to live a spiritual life, making spiritual progress / that is their everyday life / so everyday life need not be an impediment, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- Part of the human condition is to be open to temptation / Sikhs are humans / which makes achieving mukti difficult if not impossible.
- The world is a corrupt place / or too free a place / so that every vice is visible / even made to seem normal / which is a temptation away from a spiritual path / so making it more difficult to achieve mukti at any level.
- The five vices are recognised by Sikhism / pride, anger, lust, greed, attachment / they are real in the world / Sikhs come into contact with them every day / might be affected by them / or experience them / making achievement of mukti very difficult.
- Few people live in completely religious communities / and most mix with people from other cultures and with other attitudes / hence Sikhs see examples of the vices / and behaviours which are contrary to Sikh teaching / it is possible that these may act as influences against working to achieve mukti.
- Many people have very busy lives / and find it difficult to devote enough time to their spiritual path / for example being married with a young family and in employment is a huge commitment / a person in these circumstances might feel they need to focus on their family and not their goal of mukti, etc.

0 2**Sikhism: Practices****0 2 . 1****Which one of the following names is given to Sikh women as a symbol of equality?****[1 mark]****A Divali****B Kaur****C Palki****D Singh****Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority**Answer: **B Kaur****0 2 . 2****Give two ways in which a gurdwara is designed for Sikh worship.****[2 marks]****Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority**

One mark for each of two correct points.

If a student provides more than two responses, only the first two responses should be considered for marking.**Students may include two of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:**

Prayer hall / houses the Guru Granth Sahib / features such as palki and takht direct one's focus to worship / holds services (diwan) for worship / hosts initiation ceremonies (Amrit Sanskar) / hosts Akhand Paths / is the focal point of religious celebrations, such as festivals begin at the gurdwara with lectures about the point of the festival / Sangat are based here, so a space for religious guidance and companionship is found here / langar to facilitate sewa / has images and decorations which support Sikh belief and teaching, etc.

0 2 . 3 Explain two contrasting ways in which Sikhs celebrate Guru Nanak's birthday. [4 marks]

Target: AO1:3 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs

First contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast– 2 marks

Second contrasting way

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast – 1 mark
Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate contrast– 2 marks

Contrast may mean opposing or may mean different views.

If similar ways are given, only **one** of them may be credited up to 2 marks max.

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- Make preparations for / and hold a gurburb / a celebration of the day / with associated religious and non-religious activities.
- An Akhand Path is read leading up to the start of the actual day of this gurburb.
- An act of worship begins after the end of the Akhand Path / in this the Guru Granth Sahib is read aloud / its focus is the life and teachings of Guru Nanak / reminding Sikhs of Guru Nanak's great importance to the religion.
- Stories from the life of Guru Nanak are told to the younger members of the community / many gurdwaras have teaching rooms which are used for this task whilst the main diwan continues.
- Hymns in praise of Guru Nanak are sung / by the ragis / some gurdwaras extend evening prayer by kirtan (hymns) until 1.20am / which is the time Guru Nanak was said to have been born.
- The langar is held / commonly sweets are given out.
- A procession may be held on the day before a gurburb / through the local community.
- Light is a theme / as Guru Nanak's teachings bring light in the darkness of the world / many communities have firework displays / many families light lamps or candles in their home / gurdwaras are decorated with flowers, ribbons and lights.
- Many Sikhs do sewa in the community / as Guru Nanak preached sewa as a fundamental element of Sikh practice / and reflection of Sikh beliefs.
- Some Sikhs make pilgrimages / for example to Nankana Sahib (birthplace of Guru Nanak) / or to Amritsar for worship at the Golden Temple.
- In India, the day is a national holiday / so schools and public buildings are closed / meaning that all public servants have the day off work, etc.

0 2 . 4**Explain two reasons why it is important for Sikhs to meditate on the name of God.****Refer to sacred writings or another source of Sikh belief and teaching in your answer.****[5 marks]****Target: AO1:1 Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and belief, including beliefs, practices and sources of authority****First reason**

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Second reason

Simple explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 1 mark

Detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate reason – 2 marks

Relevant and accurate reference to sacred writing or another source of Sikh belief and teaching – 1 mark

Students may include some of the following points, but all other relevant points must be credited:

- It is a duty for all Sikhs / Nam Japna / Khalsa Sikhs make a special commitment to doing Nam Japna / integral part of being a Sikh.
- It means that a Sikh is focused on God / so they can think and act in the right way (God's way) / which influences moral behaviour.
- Through meditating on the name of God, a person comes closer to God / even connects with the divine / which helps on the spiritual path / bringing peace and calm.
- Meditating on God's name brings blessings from God / and positive karma / which aids rebirth / making mukti more likely.
- Being able to keep God in mind, and meditate on God's name allows a person to worship anywhere and at any time / Sikhs must say prayers at the start and end of the day / which is a form of meditating on God's name.
- Nam Japna is meditation / meditation is good for health and well-being / so it brings a sense of calm, focus and peace / so is a form of respect for oneself / as well as for God's creation, etc.

Sources of authority might include:

'This human body has been given to you. This is your chance to meet God. All other works are of no use. Join the holy congregation and meditate on the name of God.' (GGS 378).

'Pray, pray, pray and be at peace.' (Guru Nanak).

'Meditating on your name, I achieved tremendous happiness.' (Guru Arjan).

'You are wasting your life on worldly pleasures, have not practised meditation, self-discipline and responsibility, not been of service, nor served holy people, nor recognised the divine.' (GGS 1103).

Accept all other sources of authority that correctly support the beliefs given.

0 2 . 5

‘Initiation into the Khalsa (Amrit Sanskar) is the most important activity which takes place in the gurdwara.’

Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you should:

- refer to Sikh teaching
- give reasoned arguments to support this statement
- give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- reach a justified conclusion.

[12 marks]

Target: AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence

Level	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. References to religion applied to the issue.	10–12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. Clear reference to religion.	7–9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information. OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons/evidence. Maximum of Level 2 if there is no reference to religion.	4–6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1–3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0

Students may include some of the following evidence and arguments, but all relevant evidence and arguments must be credited:

Arguments in support

- The Amrit Sanskar is the point of total commitment to the faith / is the step to a purer, more spiritual life / so is the foundation for a strong spiritual path / which will lead to mukti / which is the aim for all Sikhs.
- Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa / encouraged all Sikhs to become members / as a show of their true devotion to God / so this ceremony confirms that commitment and fulfils Guru Gobind Singh’s wishes / ‘Waheguru ji ka Khalsa – The Khalsa belongs to God’.
- It can be argued that by becoming a Khalsa Sikh, a person has achieved one or more of the Khands (stages of liberation) / which are the stepping stones to mukti.

- Members of the Khalsa are greatly respected within the community / can be involved in greater range of activities / eg organising festival activities / so this ceremony allows a Sikh to 'step up' / in effect it is the ceremony which opens many 'religious doors' for a Sikh, etc.

Arguments in support of other views

- Any event in the gurdwara is important / as long as it shows devotion to God, the creator / the Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib teach Sikhs to worship God, but do not say that any one particular activity is best / other than being part of the Sat Sangat.
- Some might say that engaging in acts of worship very regularly is a more important extended event / as it shows continued commitment / and aids understanding of the teachings of the faith / so it could be argued that these acts of worship lay the foundations for a person's faith / and keep it refreshed and in focus / and as such are the most important.
- Amrit Sanskar creates a separate set of Sikhs / who have more duties and follow more rules / so can be interpreted to be 'better' Sikhs / which is against Sikh beliefs about equality.
- Not everyone is ready to become amritdhari / eg for newcomers to the faith / so for them the ceremony is not the most important event / rather weekly diwan in the gurdwara are more important / or an Akhand Path as they get to hear the Guru Granth Sahib / and learn its teachings.
- Some might argue that the langar is a more important event / it allows service whilst meditating on the name of God / as it is common to sing hymns whilst preparing the langar / it allows the community to come together as one / and in complete equality / it was commanded by all the Gurus / it allows the community to make real such beliefs and values as service to others and justice / which are key elements of Sikh practice.
- Some might argue for any events for rites of passage to be more important / for example, the naming ceremony to be the most important activity / as it welcomes a new person into the community and into the faith / so continuing the faith / and supporting the upbringing both religious and secular of future active members of the group, etc.